



*BIOGRAPHIA
LITERARIA*

by

Samuel Taylor Coleridge

Edited by

Adam Roberts

Biographia Literaria
by Samuel Taylor
Coleridge

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Adam Roberts

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BIOGRAPHIA LITERARIA

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BIOGRAPHIA LITERARIA;

OR

Biographical Sketches

OF

MY LITERARY LIFE

AND

OPINIONS.

BY S. T. COLERIDGE, Esq.

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VOL. I.  
~~~~~

LONDON:

BEST FENNER, 23, PATERNOSTER ROW

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1817.

Illustration 1: Title page, first edition of *Biographia Literaria*

Introduction

1. The Project of the *Biographia Literaria*

It is common for editors who have expended much time and labour on a book to exaggerate its significance; but where the *Biographia Literaria* is concerned even the most extravagant exaggerations hardly overstep the mark. To put it plainly: Coleridge's account of his life and literary opinions remains one of the single most important and influential works of criticism ever written. René Wellek summarises:

Saintsbury eliminated one after another of possible contenders for the title of greatest critic and concluded; 'So, then, there abide these three, Aristotle, Longinus and Coleridge.' Arthur Symonds called *Biographia Literaria* 'the greatest book of criticism in English.' . . . I. A. Richards has hailed Coleridge as a forerunner of the modern science of semantics. Coleridge's 'step across the threshold of a general theoretical study of language was of the same type as that which took Galileo into the modern world.' Herbert Read considers Coleridge 'as head and shoulders above every other English critic' and sees him as anticipating existentialism and Freud. Most recent American literary critics discuss none of the older critics except Coleridge and Aristotle.¹

That was 1955, and literary criticism and theory has broadened and diversified considerably since then. Yet Coleridge's book remains crucial to any discussion of Romanticism, or literary criticism in a larger sense. Put simply: nobody interested in literature can afford to be ignorant of this book.

Mind you, a reader hoping properly to familiarise herself with Coleridge's critical masterpiece may not find it an entirely straightforward business. The *Biographia* is a complex, varied, allusive, macaronic and centripetal work. At the end of its fourth chapter Coleridge himself calls it 'an immethodical miscellany'. And few critics have disagreed. As James Engell puts it, the book contains

¹ René Wellek, *A History of Modern Criticism: 1750–1950* (5 vols, London: Cape, 1955), 2:151.

shades of *Tristram Shandy*, *Hamlet* and a ‘literary Quixote’ tilting against the indifferent machinery of the modern critical press. The lowest common denominator of all is a kind of madness or tainted wit, though with method in it . . . as Leslie Stephens remarked, the book seems ‘put together with a pitchfork’. Some critics, even while citing the book’s failures and unevenness, posit a unity or narrative direction in the book. Others see in its delays, eddyings and self-conscious addresses to the reader a vigilant, continually intentional strategy, for engagement, entertainment, digression and, ultimately, for an ingenious critical method shaping the whole.²

The primary aim of this edition is to make the *Biographia* easier to navigate for the modern reader. And, indeed, it is possible to overstate the formal ‘chaos’ of the *Biographia*: if its elements pull in diverse directions, that is at least in part because Coleridge genuinely believes that truth emerges from the dynamic tension of contraries in creative play. In fact, despite its myriad specific points, the book is really doing only two things – indeed, it is central to the work’s thesis that those two things are aspects of the same thing. It is trying to explicate poetry (and by extension, literary art as a whole); and it is trying to justify the author’s religious faith as a philosophically intelligible and emotionally sustaining praxis of belief. The biographical angle – Coleridge’s own life – is relevant because he sees both art and religion as individual, spiritual epiphanies, the actualisation in lived experience of greater universal truths. But the *Biographia* takes neither a passion for poetry nor a belief in God for granted. On the contrary, Coleridge attempts to argue both, and the relationship between the two, from first principles.

In fact we might accuse Coleridge not of producing a book that is scattered and various but, on the contrary, of making his book not formally scattered *enough*. The ‘personal’ account of poetry occupies the first four chapters; the ‘philosophical’ disquisition then replaces it, occupying chapters 5–13. Then the second volume of the work, from Chapter 14 onwards, returns us to the through line of the first four chapters. It might have served Coleridge’s larger argumentative ambitions better to have interspersed these three elements more evenly throughout the whole. Although Coleridge certainly did not regard them as such, more than one critic has objected to the philosophical chapters as an ‘interpolation’. For many years, for instance, the

² James Engell, ‘Biographia Literaria’, in Lucy Newlyn (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Coleridge* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 62–3.

standard edition of the book was George Sampson's 1920 Cambridge University Press edition, which simply omits Chapters 5–12, hopping straight across to the distinction between the two accounts (Chapters 4 and 13) of the imagination and fancy, in Chapter 13. This, though, is not only to miss crucial aspects of Coleridge's argument; it is to deprive the reader of what she needs properly to understand this famous, and often misrepresented, distinction between grades of imagination and fancy.

Coleridge argues that we cannot understand poetry unless we understand what a poet is; and the crucial thing about a poet for Coleridge is his or her access to a creative, esemplastic imagination that is, in essence, divine. As the line from Wordsworth's *Excursion* that Coleridge quotes three times makes plain, the *Biographia* believes 'the vision and the faculty divine' to be at the heart of the best art. This is why the book is divided between close attention to poetry and densely argued theological philosophy. Coleridge wants to do more than just show you the difference between good and bad poetry. He wants to do something more ambitious: he wants to make you believe in God.

2. Background

The generic context that helped to shape Coleridge's 'literary autobiography' was the late eighteenth-century vogue for literary lives. Johnson's *Lives of the Poets* (1779–81) was only the most prominent example of this widespread cultural fascination with the intersection of literature and biography. Coleridge's title, for instance, redeploys that of John Berkenhout's *Biographia Literaria, or a Biographical History of Literature, containing the lives of English, Scotch, and Irish authors, from the dawn of letters in these kingdoms to the present time, chronologically and classically arranged* (1777). In his introduction, Berkenhout explains that his title was in turn a variation on the multi-author *Biographia Britannica* (7 vols, 1747–66). Also worth mentioning are the *Biographia Classica: The lives and characters of all the classic authors* (2 vols, 1740) and, more immediately precedent to our interest here, David Erskie Baker, Isaac Reed and Stephen Jones (eds), *Biographia Dramatica, or the Companion to the Playhouse* (3 vols, 1812), from which Coleridge occasionally quotes in the *Biographia Literaria*.³ Autobiography, as opposed to biography,

³ We might also note Erasmus Middleton's *Biographia Evangelica, or an Historical Account of the Lives and Deaths of the most Eminent and Evangelical Authors and Preachers* (4 vols, 1779) – Middleton was a writer Coleridge liked (E. L. Griggs (ed.), *The Collected Letters of Samuel Taylor Coleridge* (6 vols, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1956–71), 5:205). Other

was a more recent phenomenon, given impetus by Rousseau's *Les Confessions* (1789), and the – for Coleridge – more proximate endeavour of Wordsworth's autobiographical epic *The Prelude*, which Wordsworth began writing in 1798 (though it was not published until 1850).⁴ The emphasis implied by Coleridge's choice of title, in other words, was not (auto)biography as such, but *literary* (auto)biography – his life as a writer. This explains the particular emphases in, as well as some of the omissions from, the resulting volume. It was never intended to be 'confessional' in the modern sense of the word.

Coleridge had been planning to write his own 'literary life' since at least 1803. A notebook entry for September/October that year reads:

Seem to have made up my mind to write my metaphysical works, as *my Life*, & *in my Life*—intermixed with all the other events / or history of the mind & fortunes of S. T. Coleridge.⁵

Almost as remarkable as the conviction that any account of Coleridge's 'metaphysical system' must be rendered as an account of his life-story is the faux-insouciant 'seem' with which this entry opens. It's as if Coleridge is declining any active responsibility for the decision to write his own life out; as if it is something that somehow happened outside him, of which he is now becoming aware. This complex relationship between activity and passivity in Coleridge's creative life informs a large part of the argument of the *Biographia* too. Students who know nothing else about Coleridge's life know that he was 'addicted to opium'. It is true that he habitually used laudanum (a tincture of opium in alcohol), and that he was acutely aware of the problem of his addiction. Indeed, wrestling with opium consumed a large part of his emotional and physical energy over the period of writing the *Biographia*, and after. Opium is morphine – in modern parlance, heroin. We understand today how much passivity is entailed

examples of this naming convention include John Charnock's *Biographia Navalis, or Impartial Memoirs of the Lives and Characters of Officers of the Navy of Great Britain, from 1600 to the Present Day* (5 vols, 1794–97), John Howie's *Biographica Scoticana, or a Brief Historical Account of the Lives . . . of the most Eminent Scots Worthies*, 3rd edn (1796) and Benjamin Hutchinson's *Biographica Medica, or the Historical and Critical Memoirs of the most Eminent Medical Characters* (2 vols, 1799).

⁴ See Huntington Williams, *Rousseau and Romantic Autobiography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983); Eugene Stelzig (ed.), *Romantic Autobiography in England* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2013).

⁵ *The Notebooks of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, ed. Kathleen Coburn, with Merton Christensen and Anthony John Harding (5 vols, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1957–2002), 1:1515.

in a long-term heroin addiction. Issues of the relationship between passivity (even, in places, its Christian analogue ‘the passion’) and activity reverberate through the book as a whole.

Between 1803 and the beginning of composition in 1815 a good deal happened in Coleridge’s life, both in terms of exterior events and interior anguish. His marriage was not a happy one, a circumstance not helped by Coleridge’s unrequited passion for another woman, Sara Hutchinson. Though (almost certainly) physically unconsummated, this affair nevertheless constituted emotional infidelity on a large scale. The first decade of the nineteenth century saw Coleridge pursue a restless, peripatetic existence. In 1804 he travelled to Malta to work as private secretary to Alexander Ball, the British High Commissioner. In 1805 he was in Italy. Returning to England in 1806, he resolved to separate from his wife and children. From then on he lived variously in Kendal, Keswick, Stowey, Bristol and London. Financially, he relied on an annuity from the Wedgwood brothers, which money he forwarded to his wife; his own income came (unreliably) from journalism and lecturing, supplemented by the hospitality of friends, covering his living costs and loaning or giving him money. He started a journal, *The Friend*, which ran to twenty-seven issues (1809–10) without ever becoming a financial success.

In 1810 there occurred a breach with Wordsworth, the man who had once been Coleridge’s closest friend, collaborator and mentor. They quarrelled over trivia, a situation exacerbated by the clumsy intercession of a friend; but the specifics of the fight matter less than the profound emotional depression it occasioned in Coleridge. The two eventually reached a rather chilly rapprochement, but were never again as close as they had once been. The years 1810–14, lived mostly in London, saw some first measures of public success for Coleridge. His lectures (on Shakespeare, and other topics) brought him fame, and his play – *Remorse*, at the Drury Lane Theatre, 1813 – was a commercial and critical hit. But physically and psychologically Coleridge was a mess: often ill, falling deeper into addiction, sometimes suicidal. We come to Coleridge’s letters and notebook entries aware of his propensity to melodramatise his own circumstances, but even so the material from 1814 and 1815 makes pitiful reading.

The Terrors of the Almighty have been around & against me—
and tho’ driven up and down for seven dreadful Days by restless
Pain, like a Leopard in a Den, yet the anguish & remorse of Mind
was worse than the pain of the whole Body.—O I have had a new

world opened to me, in the infinity of my own Spirit!—Woe be to me, if this last Warning be not taken.⁶

He was ready, he told his friend Joseph Cottle, with a characteristic touch of drama, to be committed to an insane asylum ‘where a medical attendant could be constantly with me for two or three months (in less than that time Life or Death would be determined)’.⁷ In fact he was not as close to death’s door as this implies. With the help of a London doctor he reduced – though he was never able to quit altogether – his opium intake. In September 1814 he moved to a cottage in the countryside outside Bristol, to stay with his friends the Morgans. John Morgan, a young admirer, was to act as Coleridge’s amanuensis throughout the writing of the *Biographia*.

His life improved. Early in 1815 Coleridge began looking to see which of his various manuscripts might be worth publishing. He approached a Bristol publisher, John Gutch (an old schoolfellow) with the idea of a collection of his best poetry, to be called *Sybilline Leaves*. The conception took firmer root in his mind when Wordsworth published his new edition of his *Poems* (1815). This two-volume edition began with a new preface that restated the theories of poetry that Wordsworth had originally articulated in the celebrated preface to *Lyrical Ballads* (1798). An increasing sense of disagreement with Wordsworth’s aesthetics, and the knowledge that the jointly authored *Lyrical Ballads* (1798) associated Coleridge and Wordsworth together in the public mind, moved Coleridge to embark on a parallel endeavour. He would write his own preface for *Sybilline Leaves* explaining how his theory of poetry differed from Wordsworth’s. At least as late as August 1815 it is clear that Coleridge believed his *Biographia* would mimic Wordsworth’s ‘Preface’ right down to the typeface and layout.⁸ At this stage, to quote James Engell, Coleridge ‘had no intention of producing a two-volume work, let alone a classic of humane letters fusing literary criticism, both deeply theoretical and brilliantly practical, with autobiography, philosophy, religion and poetry’.⁹

This larger conception grew by stages from 1815 to 1817. At first

⁶ Letter to Mrs J. J. Morgan (Griggs, *Collected Letters*, 3:463–4).

⁷ Griggs, *Collected Letters*, 3:477.

⁸ A letter from John Morgan to William Hood (14 August 1815) specifies that Coleridge ‘means it [the *Biographia*] to be printed like, in all respects, Mr Wordsworth’s last edition entitled “*Poems by Wm Wordsworth*” . . . the preface to these 2 volumes: that preface which precedes the poems, is the one which he has fixed on as a prototype for his preface’ (quoted in James Engell and W. Jackson Bate (eds), *Biographia Literaria* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1983), 2:284).

⁹ Engell, ‘*Biographia Literaria*’, 59.

Coleridge thought a short preface of half a dozen pages would suffice. On 30 March 1815, he wrote to Byron: could *he* recommend Coleridge's poems 'to some respectable Publisher'? The projected volume would include 'a general Preface . . . on the principles of philosophic and genial criticism relatively to the Fine Arts in general; but especially to Poetry'.¹⁰ This sounds like more than six pages worth of criticism. Then, in April 1815, Coleridge actually obtained a copy of Wordsworth's *Poems*. Reading it, and pondering his disagreements, moved Coleridge to expand his own prefatory ambitions. Though he wrote to Wordsworth that his preface would be ready 'in two or at farthest three days', dictating his thoughts to John Morgan, Coleridge found the work expanding. The next bulletin posterity has on his progress is two months later, 29 July 1815, when a letter refers not to a 'preface' but to 'an Autobiographia literaria, or Sketches of my literary Life & opinions, as far as Poetry and poetical Criticism is concerned'. It is worth bearing in mind (to quote James Engell again) that

at forty-two and under financial pressures, in dictating *Biographia Literaria*, Coleridge was preparing, incredibly, his first prose work published as a book. Despite lectures (he became, said Byron, a kind of 'rage' during his 1811–12 series on Shakespeare), and despite poems, reviews and essays in newspapers, the only things remotely approaching a prose volume were the *Omniana* (1812), co-authored with Southey, and the *Friend* (1809–10), later published in three volumes (1818), but originally a series of separate numbers. By early August 1815, Coleridge had dictated so much to Morgan that he began to think of the Preface as 'the main work', divided into 'Chapters'.

On 19 September 1815 Coleridge sent the (as he then thought) completed manuscript to Gutch. He believed it would make up a single octavo volume of approximately 500 pages. But the process of composing the *Biographia* was far from over.

3. Order of Composition

Daniel Fogel's generally accepted account of the composition of the *Biographia* emphasises haste.¹¹ Since I intend to take issue with Fogel's

¹⁰ Griggs, *Collected Letters*, 4: 561. The two following quotations are from 4:576 and 4:584–6.

¹¹ Daniel Fogel, 'The Compositional History of the *Biographia Literaria*', *Studies in Bibliography*, 3 (1977), 219–34.

version of events, and so de-emphasise that quality in the composition of the book, I need first to summarise what has been the standard view for many decades. According to Fogel, between April and July 1815 Coleridge first wrote (or rather dictated to Morgan) a single, more or less coherent, narrative of his life, his relationship with Wordsworth and his own theory of poetry – what is now Chapters 1–4, running on through Chapter 13 and into a good proportion of what became the second volume. At some point during this process he also began a piece of philosophical prose on ‘associationism’, which he mentioned and perhaps sent to a friend of his called Dr R. H. Brabant in July 1815. ‘By the end of July 1815, Coleridge thought the *Biographia* was finished’, says Richard Holmes; but immediately ‘he began to have second thoughts . . . Did the book have some sort of theoretical hole in its middle?’¹² Moved to revisit the project, he wrote what are now known as ‘the philosophical chapters’. To quote Nigel Leask:

The so-called ‘philosophical Chapters’, 5–13 were written last, under a great pressure from Gutch and other sponsors, a fact which is adduced to ‘explain’ Coleridge’s heavy plagiarism of German philosophical texts, and the strange fragmentation of Chapter 13. Given that both are matters of profound concern for interpreting the *Biographia*, it is important to assess just how much time pressure Coleridge was really under whilst writing these chapters. The orthodox account, now enshrined in W. Jackson Bate and James Engell’s long introduction to the *Collected Coleridge*, argues that the ‘philosophical chapters’ were written between 10 August (when Morgan wrote to Gutch sending him 57 ‘sides’ – manuscript pages – and announcing that 100 more were almost completed) and 19 September, when the completed manuscript was dispatched to Gutch.¹³

Leask dubs this the ‘rushed writing’ thesis – an apt name, given the amount of text under question, and the brief time period over which it is alleged to have been produced.

The first footnote in Chapter 12 is one of only two in the *Biographia* that gives us a hard date by which to peg Coleridge’s composition (I’ll come to the second shortly). It mentions ‘this morning (16 September 1815)’, when Coleridge records reading the most recent issue of the *Monthly Review*. If we take this as marking Coleridge’s progress in writing, and since the manuscript was sent off to Gutch on 19 September,

¹² Richard Holmes, *Coleridge: Darker Reflections* (London: HarperCollins, 1998), 390–2.

¹³ Nigel Leask (ed.), *Biographia Literaria* (London: Everyman, 1997), xlv.

then Coleridge must have written the remainder of the twelfth and the whole of the thirteenth chapter – nearly 14,000 words of complex, compacted philosophical disquisition – on Saturday afternoon, Sunday and Monday, the manuscript being dispatched on Tuesday. If so, in Leask's words, 'no wonder the borrowing from Schelling, Maass and Jacobi reached a crescendo in these two chapters, and that Coleridge needed to interrupt Chapter 13 to introduce "a letter from a friend" in fact written by himself' to justify breaking off from his mammoth, self-appointed task.

This is the narrative Engell and Bate endorse in their influential edition of the *Biographia*, and it remains the consensus.¹⁴ There have, though, been dissenting voices. Norman Fruman thinks 'there is no compelling reason to suppose Chapters 12 and 13 were written last, and good reason to think that they were not'.¹⁵ The reference to '16 September' pegs only the footnote, not the whole chapter, to that date; and Fruman thinks it unlikely that a man conscious of the sort of pressure of time that Coleridge was under would have wasted his Saturday morning reading the *Monthly Review*, and his Sunday (after, presumably, going to church) writing a long letter to Gutch.¹⁶ Fruman thinks it much more likely that Coleridge spent these days in the rather more leisurely business of rereading and correcting text earlier dictated to Morgan, adding the footnote (which is, after all, only marginally related to the main argument) and otherwise only titivating material already written. As Fruman notes, the reference in the last paragraph of Chapter 13, to an as yet un-, and as it turned out never-, written essay on the supernatural in poetry makes little sense if Coleridge were rushing towards a hard deadline for the printers. For when, realistically, did he think he was going to be able to add it?

¹⁴ 'The fatigue of these hurried final weeks, as he tried to insert a philosophical vestibule for the "Logosophia", had a catalytic effect on his own lack of confidence . . . it is now that he turned to J. G. E. Maass and other German sources, particularly in Chapter 12 to Schelling' (Engell and Bate, *Biographia Literaria*, 1:lvii–lviii). Richard Holmes says 'nowhere is this extreme shift between subjective and objective voice more striking than in the metaphysical section (the last to be written, at a point of near exhaustion) whose Olympian discourse hides a desperate resort to wholesale plagiarism from German sources . . . he must have produced something 14,000 words in about four days' (Holmes, *Coleridge: Darker Reflections*, 378). See also John Spencer Hill: 'written as it was in under four months, [it] shows signs of hasty composition; but nowhere has this haste left more clearly defined marks than in chapters 12 and 13, the last to be composed' (*A Coleridge Companion* (London: Macmillan, 1984), 218).

¹⁵ Norman Fruman, 'Review: Aids to Reflection on the New *Biographia*', *Studies in Romanticism*, 24 (1985), 163.

¹⁶ Griggs, *Collected Letters*, 4:973–5.

The main evidence that the metaphysical chapters were written earlier comes from the letter to R. H. Brabant already mentioned. Here is the relevant passage:

Saturday, 29 July 1815–

My dear Sir,

The necessity of extending what I first intended as a preface, to an *Autobiographia literaria*, or Sketches of my literary Life & opinions, as far as Poetry and *poetical* Criticism is concerned, has confined me to my Study from 11 to 4, and from 6 to 10, since I last left you.—I have just finished it, having only the correction of the *Mss.* to go thro'.—I have given a full account (*raisonné*) of the Controversy concerning Wordsworth's Poems and Theory, in which my name has been so constantly included—I have no doubt, that Wordsworth will be displeas'd—but I have done my Duty to myself and to the Public, in (as I believe) compleatly subverting the Theory & in proving that the Poet himself has never acted on it except in particular Stanzas which are the Blots of his Compositions. One long passage—a disquisition on the powers of association, with the History of the Opinions on this subject from Aristotle to Hartley, and on the generic difference between the faculties of the Fancy and Imagination—I did not indeed altogether insert, but I certainly extended and elaborated, with a view to your perusal.¹⁷

The material on Wordsworth mentioned here clearly refers to (at least an early version of) Chapters 17–22, and possibly to Chapters 4 and 14 as well. The 'disquisition on the powers of association, with the History of the Opinions on this subject from Aristotle to Hartley' must mean Chapter 5. It may be that it refers only to that chapter and that the remainder of Chapters 6–13 were written later. Alternatively, the two salients in the description Coleridge gives Brabant – 'extended and elaborated' – might be taken as implying that more, and perhaps much more, had already been added to the bare bones of Chapter 5 by 29 July. One thing that is clear from this letter is that at this stage in the process of composition Coleridge was not thinking of including this metaphysical discussion in the *Biographia* itself. Presumably he thought of publishing it separately, most likely as part of his planned *Logosophia*. Between 29 July and 19 September he evidently changed his mind, for he included the material in the MS sent to Gutch. But by how much Chapter 5 had been already 'extended and elaborated'

¹⁷ Letter to R. H. Brabant, 29 July 1815 (Griggs, *Collected Letters*, 4:971–2).

into what became Chapters 5–13 cannot be ascertained with any certainty. It is at least *possible* Coleridge had written a fair proportion of the metaphysical material before the end of July.

This has consequences for the question of the plagiarised material, to which I shall return. But, despite what Leask says,¹⁸ the story is not particularly clarified by the 19 September move to the printer. Certainly Coleridge regarded the book as completed at this stage. His letters make repeated reference to its imminent appearance, and he turned to the writing of other things. After readying the poetry of *Sybilline Leaves* for the press, and weeks of illness in November to December 1815 (Engell and Bate think this ‘partly from sheer exhaustion, partly from the growing congestive heart disease that was to trouble him henceforth’), he began writing his verse drama *Zapolya*. Then, moving to London in March 1816 hoping to get the play staged, he wrote the first of his ‘lay sermons’, *The Statesman’s Manual*. Gutch meanwhile began setting up in type and printing off proofs, various parcels of which Coleridge checked. Thereafter Gutch went ahead with printing the edition: 750 copies on demy octavo, and twenty-five on royal octavo (a higher quality paper). This happened by stages rather than all at once. Printed, unbound sheets were put on one side and the type reused. Accordingly it was not until April 1816 that it became clear there was too much copy for one volume, and not enough for two.

In April the Bristol printers discovered that the *Biographia* . . . was proving to be considerably longer than its ‘companion’ book of poems, *Sybilline Leaves*, which was to have been a book of the same size. Probably the printers had misestimated because Coleridge had been able to provide fewer poems for the second volume than he had led Gutch to expect . . . Gutch mentioned to Morgan, then on a visit to Bristol, that the two works – the *Biographia* and the poems – would be quite disparate in size, and made the poor suggestion that the *Biographia* itself be split into two volumes, ‘in order to prevent *disproportion*’.¹⁹

Coleridge agreed to this plan. At this stage the *Biographia* ended at the close of Chapter 22, presumably at the rousing declaration with which Coleridge justified his criticism of other poets’ works: ‘EVEN AS I HAVE DONE, SO WOULD I BE DONE UNTO.’ But if the work as

¹⁸ ‘From the moment Morgan dispatched the manuscript on 19 September 1815 . . . our problems understanding the genesis of the book become lightened’ (Leask, *Biographia Literaria*, xlviii).

¹⁹ Engell and Bate, *Biographia Literaria*, lix.

it stood were divided in half it would mean that Volume 2 would begin with the lengthy, metaphysical Chapter 12 – the culmination of the ‘philosophical Chapters’, not a new departure. Better would be to end Volume 1 with Chapter 13, and begin Volume 2 with the account of Wordsworth in Chapter 14. Through Morgan, he instructed Gutch to end Volume 1 with Chapter 13. Coleridge must have realised that this would entail a disproportion in size between the two volumes (although perhaps he did not grasp how large the difference would be), because, again via Morgan, on 6 May 1816 he promised extra copy for Volume 2: ‘an essay on the imaginative in Poetry’ to make the whole volume ‘about 350 pages quite large enough’. This essay was promised ‘this week’, but in fact never materialised. Presumably believing the extra copy would arrive soon, Gutch went ahead with the printing, and by July 1816 had reached a point halfway through Chapter 22. This was when he informed Coleridge that the second volume was 150 pages short. Coleridge’s reaction expressed the anger of somebody conscious of a guilty part-responsibility:

Having divided the Life (or rather acceded to your plan of dividing the Life) into two volumes in order to prevent *disproportion* . . . I am informed that by this very step the disproportion has been made so great, that (it being too late to recur to the original plan) I have no way to remedy it, but by writing *a hundred and fifty pages* additional—on *what*, I am left to discover—And the perplexity of planning, and the labor of executing this, are the true and only causes of the Delay, of which not You, but I, have the *right* to complain, tho’ both of us may have sufficient Cause to regret it.²⁰

It was agreed that the publication of the *Biographia* be taken over by the London firm of Gale and Fenner, a small house who specialised in religious books, but who had ambitious plans to expand – ambitious beyond their financial means, in the event, for they went out of business in 1819. What the move entailed in practical terms was that Gale and Fenner agreed to pay Gutch to obtain the sheets that had already been printed, as well as for the expense of moving the printed paper from Bristol to London by wagon and for various other costs. Negotiations for the exact amount of this payment were protracted; Gutch initially (December 1816) sent an itemised invoice for £284 18s. 4d for costs, and also asked that the advance Coleridge had been

²⁰ Coleridge to John Gutch, 6 August 1816 (Griggs, *Collected Letters*, 4:1022).

paid in 1815 (£107 5s. 6d) be repaid. This was not unreasonable; in the event Gutch was prepared to take a loss in order to get shot of the project, settling eventually for £265 0s. 4d. The printed sheets were sent to London in April 1817, although it was not until 13 May that Gale and Fenner – rather crossly – acknowledged receipt: ‘We have only just finished gathering and collating Coleridge’s Life and Poems—& from the slovenly & careless way in which they came packed to us very many of the sheets are spoild.’²¹ Of the 750 they had been promised, only 727 of Volume 1 and 739 of the portion of Volume 2 were of a quality to be bound into finished books. Gale and Fenner deducted £41 5s. 6d from the amount they had agreed to pay Gutch because of this.

While all this was going on, Coleridge was discussing how to generate the extra copy needed for Volume 2. His initial plan was twofold: to insert his recently written verse-drama *Zapolya*, and to compose a new final chapter (the present Chapter 24). We know that this latter was composed either very late in 1816 or (more likely) early in 1817, since it reacts to Hazlitt’s disparaging account of the *Statesman’s Manual*, angrily rebuffing what Coleridge took to be Hazlitt’s accusation of his religious infidelity. In fact, Hazlitt published two pieces, one on 8 Sept 1816, before he had even read the work, and another in the December 1816 edition of the *Edinburgh Review* (this latter did not reach Coleridge until January 1817). It seems to me that the specificities of reference in Chapter 24 indicate it was written after Coleridge read this second article, but the case cannot be proved, and actually it makes little difference. *Zapolya* was delivered to Gale and Fenner, and they began to set it up in type. But at some point late in 1816 or early in 1817 it was decided not to include the dramatic poem, and instead to reprint a different text as filler: the three ‘Satyrane’s Letters’ from 1809’s *The Friend*. Coleridge wrote to Thomas Curtis on 14 March 1817 of his surprise at seeing sheets of *Zapolya* set up as a *Biographia* chapter, reminding Curtis:

In order to prevent any further delay in the publication of the ‘Biographia Literaria’ and ‘Sibylline Leaves’ I consented that the *Zapolya* should fill the Gap—how reluctantly, I myself best know . . . When, however, [as] the result of the consultation (at Highgate) between us (yourself, to wit, and Mr Fennor, with me and Mr Gilman) my German Letters were consigned to this purpose as in every respect more appropriate, and Mr Fennor

²¹ Gale and Fenner to John Gutch, 13 May 1817 (Engell and Bate, *Biographia Literaria*, 2:295–6).

then spoke of publishing the *Zapolya* as a separate Poem, I instantly interposed my Veto.²²

Coleridge vetoed this separate publication because John Murray owned a share of copyright on the *Zapolya*. (In fact, Murray consented to the *Zapolya* being included as part of the *Biographia*, although not for it to be printed as a separate volume; Gale and Fenner later bought the copyright from him, and did publish the *Zapolya* as a stand-alone volume). It's not clear when the Highgate meeting mentioned in this letter to Curtis took place; presumably late 1816 or early 1817.

Then a third element was added to make up the pages of the second volume: Chapter 23, the 'Critique on Bertram', put together from the text of five letters Coleridge wrote to, and published in, the *Courier* between 29 August and 11 September 1816. Evidently this material was added to the *Biographia* at some point after September 1816. Engell and Bate describe these letters as 'appropriated' for the *Biographia*, although it is also possible that the material was originally written with a specific view to being included in the work. Perhaps they were published in the *Courier* in order to test the water, the sentiments they express being somewhat controversial. This latter would explain why Coleridge, at a time when his debts amounted to some £300, was content to give away for free some 10,000 words of entertaining and trenchant prose. One possibility (this, though, is only speculation) is that Coleridge wrote the *Bertram* critique for the *Biographia* at the time when he still believed *Zapolya* was going to be the final element in Volume two. He had offered *Zapolya* to the Drury Lane Theatre in 1816, but it had been turned down, and instead *Bertram* was staged. Perhaps Coleridge planned a two-part chapter on the modern drama to follow the pattern of Chapter 22 on Wordsworth's poetry – a critique of inadequacies, to be followed by a celebration of beauties. He may have got as far as writing the first part of this critique before the decision was made not to include *Zapolya*. At any rate, whether or not he *originally* planned it for the *Biographia*, Coleridge did include the critique of the *Bertram* as part of Volume 2. Since it trades only in negative criticisms, and of a play the success of which Coleridge had reason, personally, to resent, it looks spiteful; and as several critics have noted, it approaches illogicality to start the *Biographia* with an attack on anonymous negative reviewing, only to conclude with a long negative review, originally anonymously published (although James Engell has suggested that it is precisely this that may explain

²² Griggs, *Collected Letters*, 4:1045.

why Coleridge was moved to publish it in the *Biographia* in the first place, by way of atoning for its original anonymous appearance by reissuing it with its author's name clearly attached).²³

The narrative I have sketched out here, from the time (September 1815) when Gutch received the initial MS of the *Biographia* in Bristol, to its publication by Gale and Fenner in London (July 1817), has been long known. The consensus is: Gutch printed the whole of the first volume, and the first portion (up to the sixteenth paragraph of Chapter 22) of the second; Gale and Fenner took over these sheets, set up the remainder of the book in type and printed it, and then bound the whole thing together. That is to say, after receiving the sheets from Bristol in April 1817, and wasting a month or more sorting them, the London firm spent six weeks or more completing the process of publication.²⁴

But there is a second, hitherto unnoticed, fixed compositional date in the *Biographia*, and it complicates this picture considerably. This is the antepenultimate footnote to Chapter 10, which begins: 'Lord Grenville has lately re-asserted (in the House of Lords) the imminent danger of a revolution in the earlier part of the war against France . . .' The comments to which Coleridge here refers were made by Grenville in the House of Lords on 5 February 1817 in the course of a speech supporting the Bill that went on to become The Habeas Corpus Suspension Act of 1817 (57 Geo. III, c. 3).

This seemingly small datum has large consequences for our understanding of the latter stages of the *Biographia*'s composition. It was often Coleridge's practice, of course, to add footnotes to text he had composed earlier, either as he copy-edited his MSS or else at the proof stage. Resetting type at the proof stage is costly but possible; once the sheets have actually been printed, however, such additions become impossible. At one point in the *Biographia* Coleridge appears to have insisted on a note being added – or more precisely an existing footnote being expanded – *after* the point at which the printers could rearrange the type. As a compromise, the extra text was inserted into the blank space after the last paragraph of Chapter 2 (see Illustration 2). We can't say precisely when this text was added: perhaps Gutch put it in at a late stage of the Bristol printing; conceivably Gale and Fenner overprinted this page with the extra note – it does not spill over into a new page, and the text could have been dropped in without too much difficulty.

²³ Engell, 'Biographia Literaria', 62.

²⁴ 'The Bristol printing stopped at Vol II p. 144 . . . and Gale and Fenner printed the last 165 pages of Vol II.' (Engell and Bate, *Biographia Literaria*, 1:lxii)

shafts in the quivers of my enemies, of them that unprovoked have lain in wait against my soul.

“ Sic vos, non vobis mellificatis, apes !”

An instance in confirmation of the Note, p. 39, occurs to me as I am correcting this sheet, with the FAITHFUL SHEPHERDESS open before me. Mr. Seward first traces Fletcher's lines ;

“ More foul diseases than e'er yet the hot
Sun bred thro' his burnings, while the dog
Pursues the raging lion, throwing the fog
And deadly vapor from his angry breath,
Filling the lower world with plague and death.”—

To Spenser's Shepherd's Calendar,

“ The rampant lion hunts he fast
With dogs of noisome breath ;
Whose baleful barking brings, in haste,
Pyne, plagues, and dreary death !”

He then takes occasion to introduce Homer's simile of the sight of Achilles' shield to Priam compared with the Dog Star, literally thus—

“ For this indeed is most splendid, but it was made an evil sign, and brings many a consuming disease to wretched mortals.” Nothing can be more simple as a description, or more accurate as a simile ; which (says Mr. S.) is thus *finely* translated by Mr. Pope :

“ Terrific Glory ! for his burning breath
Taints the *red* air with fevers, plagues, and death !”

Now here (not to mention the tremendous bombast) the *Dog Star*, so called, is turned into a *real* Dog, a very odd Dog, a Fire, Fever, Plague, and death-breathing, *red*-air-tainting Dog : and the whole *visual* likeness is lost, while the likeness in the *effects* is rendered absurd by the exaggeration. In Spenser and Fletcher the thought is justifiable ; for the images are at least consistent, and it was the intention of the writers to mark the seasons by this allegory of visualized *Puns*.

But the Lord Grenville footnote to Chapter 10 is not like this; which is to say, it is not overprinted on a blank space left in the original Gutch pages. Instead it interrupts the flow of the main text (see Illustrations 3 and 4).

The existence of this footnote cannot be reconciled with the idea that Gale and Fenner only printed the final 165 pages of Volume two, binding them up with the already printed sheets from Gutch. Indeed Gale and Fenner can only have inserted this footnote by resetting at least the latter portion of this chapter in new type and reprinting it entirely. Doing this would have required them to reset all subsequent text in order to continue the pagination (Volume 2, which begins pagination again at 'p. 1', would not have been affected). Indeed, the existence of this footnote must mean that for whatever reason – and despite the considerable cost of such an undertaking – Gale and Fenner reset at least pages 208–96 of Volume 1, and conceivably some of the pages that precede p. 208 as well. If so, then the last portion of Chapter 10, the short Chapter 11, the lengthy 12 and the volume-ending 13, were all opened again for Coleridge to rework, rewrite or add text to. That he added this footnote means he availed himself of this opportunity once; and if he did it once, it is surely likely he did it more than once.²⁵ Chapter 12 is a crucial statement of Coleridge's core philosophical principles, and it is probable he worked it over again. If he did so, then the consequences for the 'rushed writing' theory of Chapters 12 and 13 are grave. So far from writing them over only four days, it may be that Coleridge started writing them in the summer of 1815 and was still working on them in the spring of 1817.²⁶

²⁵ My reason for believing extra material was also added to the *later* chapters is the balance of exigency. If the only addition required was a single footnote, Gale and Fenner would presumably have followed the cheaper option of adding it to the end of Chapter 10, as they (or Gutch) did with the extra footnote at the end of Chapter 2. If there was insufficient space at the end of the chapter to accommodate the whole note, it would have been possible to print it on an extra inset blank page. If several extra passages had to be accommodated, however, resetting the whole body of text would have been the only option.

²⁶ What reason might Gale and Fenner have had for agreeing to the expense and bother of resetting so much of the book? I can think of two possibilities. One is that Coleridge simply persuaded them he had vital extra material to add to Chapters 10–13. They might have agreed to this (a) because they thought the extra material made the book more saleable or otherwise valuable; (b) because they were overawed by Coleridge, or he otherwise browbeat them; or (c) because, once it had been agreed to add 'Satyrane's Letters', 'Bertram' and Chapter 24 to the second volume, it was found that the new copy rendered the *first* volume comparatively underlength. In a letter to Washington Allston (25 October 1815), Coleridge described the then forthcoming book as 'one volume of 500 pages Octavo' (Griggs, *Collected Letters*, 4:608). The actual two-volume work is more than 600 pages. (Of course, we may choose to doubt how accurately

sued the plans of Mr. Pitt. The love of their country, and perseverant hostility to French principles and French ambition are indeed honourable qualities common to them and to their predecessor. But it appears to me as clear as the evidence of facts can render any question of history, that the successes of the Percival and of the existing ministry have been owing to their having pursued measures the direct contrary to Mr. Pitt's. Such for instance are the concentration of the national force to one object; the abandonment of the *subsidizing* policy, so far at least as neither to goad or bribe the continental courts into war, till the convictions of their subjects had rendered it a war of their own seeking; and above all, in their manly and generous reliance on the good sense of the English people, and on that loyalty which is linked to the very* heart of the nation by the system of credit and the interdependence of property.

Be this as it may, I am persuaded that the Morning Post proved a far more useful ally to the Government in its most important objects, in consequence of its being generally considered

* Lord Grenville has lately re-asserted (in the House of Lords) the imminent danger of a revolution in the earlier part of the war against France. I doubt not, that his Lordship is sincere; and it must be flattering to his feelings to believe it. But where are the evidences of the danger, to

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as moderately anti-ministerial, than if it had been the avowed eulogist of Mr. Pitt. (The few, whose curiosity or fancy should lead them to turn over the Journals of that date, may find a small proof of this in the frequent charges made by the Morning Chronicle, that such and such essays or leading paragraphs had been

which a future historian can appeal? Or must he rest on an assertion? Let me be permitted to extract a passage on the subject from THE FRIEND. "I have said that to withstand the arguments of the lawless, the Antijacobins proposed to suspend the law, and by the interposition of a particular statute to eclipse the blessed light of the universal sun, that spies and informers might tyrannize and escape in the ominous darkness. Oh! if these mistaken men intoxicated and bewildered with the panic of property, which they themselves were the chief agents in exciting, had ever lived in a country where there really existed a general disposition to change and rebellion! Had they ever travelled through Sicily; or through France at the first coming on of the revolution; or even alas! through too many of the provinces of a sister island; they could not but have shrunk from their own declarations concerning the state of feeling, and opinion at that time predominant throughout Great Britain. There was a time (heaven grant! that that time may have passed by) when by crossing a narrow strait, they might have learnt the true symptoms of approaching danger, and have secured themselves from mistaking the meetings and idle rant of such sedition, as shrunk appalled from the sight of a constable; for the dire murmuring and strange consternation which precedes the storm or earthquake of national discord. Not only in coffee-houses and public theatres, but even at the tables of the wealthy, they would have heard the advocates of existing Government defend their cause in the language and with the tone of men, who are conscious that they are in a minority. But in England, when the alarm was at its highest, there was not a city, no not a town or village, in which a man suspected of holding democratic principles could move abroad without receiving some unpleasant proof of the hatred, in which his supposed opinions were held by

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We cannot identify with any certainty which other parts, if any, of Chapters 11, 12 and 13 were added at this later stage. It is possible that in spring 1817 Coleridge added not only the footnote to Chapter 10, but the whole latter section ‘opinions on religion and politics’ (the last seven paragraphs of the chapter). Writing the *Statesman’s Manual* in 1816 had moved Coleridge’s thoughts away from aesthetics and towards politics, something evident in the ‘Bertram’ material (written July to September 1816), where the focus is much more strongly on the supposed ‘jacobinism’ of Maturin’s writing than its stylistic and structural inadequacy. It’s also worth noting that the fierce defence of Coleridge’s religious integrity in Chapter 22 (perhaps written January or February 1817) accords with the *Lay Sermon* thesis (‘the Bible the best guide to political skill’) that religion and politics must be organically intertwined.²⁷ In this context – the much more leisurely run-in time between February or March 1817 and the actual publication date of July 1817 – it is more likely that Coleridge would have felt comfortable promising text on the supernatural in poetry (as he does at the end of Chapter 13). I also suspect that the long footnote quoting Synesius in Chapter 11 dates from this period – perhaps Coleridge’s childhood interest in Synesius had been rekindled by the appearance in early 1817 of Thomas Taylor’s new translation of Proclus and Synesius.²⁸ The note in Chapter 11 reworks material from the note-

Coleridge could have estimated the length of an as yet unprinted book.) It might have been that adding pages 183 to 309 to Volume 2 – a considerable amount of text – left Volume 1 short by fifty pages or more, and that Coleridge expanded Chapter 10, and perhaps added a few other things, to bring the two volumes back in proportion. The second possibility is that the state of the Bristol sheets was even worse than Gale and Fenner’s letter to Gutch of 13 May 1817 implies, such that, finding themselves obliged to reset a considerable number of pages anyway, the London printers gave Coleridge the opportunity to add new material. The carriage journey from Bristol to London would have taken many days. If the sheets were not well packed (as these, evidently, were not), water or other damage was very possible, and depending on *how* they had been packed it’s possible the later sheets of Volume 1 were more disproportionately damaged than the earlier ones. The main evidence against this reading, however is that the 13 May letter specifies the number of sheets they considered ‘perfect’: 727 out of 750. But it’s conceivable they revised their opinion of what was acceptable, or it could be that they decided they had to make up even this small undershoot by reprinting. This, however, seems to me a rather less likely scenario.

²⁷ According to David Calleo, it was not until 1816–17 that Coleridge’s political thought finally assumed its mature form: Calleo, *Coleridge and the Idea of the Modern State* (New Haven, CT, 1966).

²⁸ Thomas Taylor, *Select works of Plotinus, the Great Restorer of the Philosophy of Plato; and extracts from the treatise of Synesius on Providence, translated from the Greek* (1817). This was published by Black and Son, with whom Gale and Fenner on occasion collaborated on larger projects – for instance Chalmers’ thirty-two-volume *General Biographical Dictionary* (completed in 1817, and published by both houses together with certain others). Coleridge may or may not have seen an early copy of this work, but he would at least

books, but Taylor was a writer Coleridge liked, and the new edition might have put his thoughts back in the direction of Synesius. I have other speculations, but they are too tenuously evidenced to be worth mentioning here.

This much, of course, is hypothetical. What is less speculative is the way this second fixed date for the composition of the *Biographia* throws out the standard narrative. If Gale and Fenner were resetting the text during the spring and summer of 1817, and Coleridge was still adding material to Chapters 10–13, or revising what had previously been published, then the *Biographia* was in a much greater state of flux than has hitherto been realised, more or less all the way up to its publication in July.

To summarise, my suggestion for the timetable of the *Biographia*'s composition is as follows:

1. April to late July 1815: Coleridge dictates to John Morgan some of Chapters 1–4 and 14–22. He also dictates at least Chapter 5, and probably some portion of what later became Chapters 6–13, although at this stage he does not think this ‘philosophical’ material will be included in the *Biographia* itself.
2. August to September 1815: Coleridge expands some or all of the metaphysical chapters (5–13) and decides to include them in the *Biographia*.
3. By mid-September, Coleridge considers the *Biographia* finished. He reads through Morgan’s dictation, adding a few footnotes (for instance, the footnote to Chapter 12 that mentions him reading the *Monthly Review* on the morning of 16 September), by way of readying the text to send to Gutch. The MS is dispatched to the printer on 19 September.
4. October 1815 to March 1816: assuming the *Biographia* to be behind him, Coleridge writes *Zapolya*, moves back to London and begins work on the *Statesman’s Manual*.
5. April 1816: informed by Gutch of the inconsistency in size between the *Biographia* and *Sybilline Leaves*, Coleridge agrees to split the former into two volumes. Disinclined to open Volume 2 with Chapter 11, he promises Gutch new copy to bulk up Volume 2, enabling it to begin instead with the more suitable Chapter 14. Gutch moves ahead with printing the text on this basis. However, Coleridge does not provide him with any new copy.
6. July 1816: disagreement between Gutch and Coleridge, each

have heard of it. Either circumstance might have been enough to reignite his interest in Synesius.

- blaming the other for the inability to complete printing the *Biographia*. The book is transferred to the London firm of Gale and Fenner, who spend the rest of the year negotiating with Gutch to have the sheets already printed (i.e. the whole of Volume 1, and pages 1–144 of Volume 2) transported to London. Coleridge considers inserting *Zapolya* to make up the space in Volume 2.
7. August 1816: Coleridge writes the ‘Critique on Bertram’, conceivably intending it as the first half of a longer piece, to follow Chapter 22 (on the defects and beauties of modern poetry) with a chapter on the defects and beauties of modern drama. This may have been originally intended to stand before and introduce *Zapolya*, with which the *Biographia* would have closed. But at some point in the summer or autumn it is decided not to use the *Zapolya*, and instead to include ‘Satyrane’s Letters’. If it was ever intended as a longer piece, the ‘Critique of Bertram’ was broken off, rather abruptly (‘But we are weary’).
 8. August to September 1816: Coleridge publishes the ‘Critique of Bertram’ (anonymously) in the *Courier*, perhaps by way of testing public reactions to its negative perspective on a popular contemporary play.
 9. December 1816 or January/February 1817: Coleridge writes Chapter 24, in part reacting to Hazlitt’s swingeing reviews of the *Statesman’s Manual*.
 10. April 1817: Gale and Fenner finally receive the sheets from Gutch. These sheets have been dispatched in a ‘slovenly and careless’ way, and require several weeks of work sorting and readying. A proportion are unusable and are returned to Gutch.
 11. April/May 1817: Coleridge adds a footnote and (perhaps) an extra seven paragraphs to Chapter 10 (from ‘Soon after my return from Germany . . .’ to the end of the chapter as it now stands) on political matters. Gale and Fenner are persuaded to reset in type and reprint this latter part of Volume 1 in order to accommodate this new material, along with (perhaps) other notes and/or text added to Chapters 11, 12 and 13.
 12. July 1817: *Biographia* published.

4. An Account of the *Biographia Literaria*

Some of the *Biographia* can be easily grasped by the attentive reader without need for any sort of route map or explanatory account. Nevertheless, the present section of this introduction is designed to provide just such a map. In part this is because ‘easily grasped’

assuredly does *not* describe the so-called ‘philosophical’ chapters, 5–13, which have left many readers (including the present author when, as an undergraduate, he first encountered the work) baffled. Nor are these chapters a separate ‘insert’, without which the rest of the *Biographia* can be easily understood. But even beyond these chapters, the larger design and many of the specific arguments of the book have challenged the comprehension of many people.

There are four main components to the *Biographia*: Coleridge’s own life, strongly weighted towards the period 1796–1801; his literary opinions; his philosophical/theological views; and Wordsworth. Clearly, the latter three things all have to do with the first. Equally clearly, those three areas also naturally overlap with one another. That overlapping, iterated throughout the *Biographia* in complex ways, goes some way to explaining why the structure of the whole looks so intricate – or, if one prefers, so chaotic.

Talking structurally (as it were), the *Biographia* can be divided into four sequential sections: (1) Chapters 1–4, which trace Coleridge’s early life up to his collaboration with Wordsworth on the *Lyrical Ballads*, with a particular emphasis on his school education and early reading; (2) Chapters 5–13, the so-called ‘philosophical’ chapters, which densely retell Coleridge’s intellectual development away from the scientific ‘materialism’ of his youthful enthusiasm for Hartley’s associationism through to Trinitarian belief in a personal God; (3) Chapters 14–22, in which Coleridge engages in ‘practical criticism’ of a variety of poets, from Shakespeare to Wordsworth, back to Donne, Pindar, Chaucer, Herbert, and returning at length to Wordsworth – Coleridge’s collaboration with him, his weaknesses as a poet and his great strengths; and (4) Satyrane’s Letters (which we may, perhaps, consider a continuation of Chapter 22) and Chapters 23–4. The main emphasis in this final section is on Coleridge’s reaction to more contemporary literature – Klopstock, Maturin and contemporary reviews, from moral and political as well as aesthetic perspectives.

This short-long-long-short pattern (a kind of amphibrachic structural form: iamb-trochee) draws the reader into and then eases her out from the two longer, more complex central sections via two shorter, more readily comprehensible sections. Moreover, the sections all interrelate. So: (2) establishes the philosophical, and essentially divine, foundations of imaginative excellence; (3) assesses Wordsworth in precisely these terms, with his failings seen as fallings away from, and his beauties as most perfectly embodying, the place where ‘poetry’ and ‘philosophy’ coincide (‘The best parts of language the product of philosophers, not of clowns or shepherds’, as the heading to Chapter

17 puts it). The opening four chapters range from Coleridge's school-days to the culture of contemporary reviews; the final three – an equivalent length of text – step back to 1798, and then come forward to 1816, immediately before the publication of the book, again stressing the injustice of personal attacks in the reviews. The personal and contemporary is related, at all points, to the metaphysical and divine.

The most obvious way in which Coleridge complexifies this four-part 'structure' is by interspersing each section with elements from the other three. For example: though the first section is mostly concerned with Coleridge's early life and friendships, it also touches on his early philosophical beliefs, his reading of contemporaries (especially Bowles), and on the malign effect of contemporary reviews. The second, 'philosophical' section interrupts its densely worked metaphysical arguments to interpose a chapter (10) largely given over to reminiscences about Coleridge's own youth, and another (11) which dilates upon the disadvantages of a professional writer's life; and references to contemporary literature, including Wordsworth, are scattered throughout. The third 'Wordsworth' section reverts several times to philosophy (as for instance in Coleridge's metaphysical critique of Wordsworth's 'Immortality' Ode), and also includes a whole chapter (21) on the malign effect of negative reviews that have appeared in the *Edinburgh* and *Quarterly*. This section also, of course, repeatedly refers back to Coleridge's time as Wordsworth's friend and collaborator in the late 1790s. The final portion of the *Biographia* relates the events of the years 1798–9, when Wordsworth and Coleridge travelled together. It also critiques contemporary literature, and in the final chapter once again attacks the contemporary culture of personal animosity in reviews, before closing with a restatement of Coleridge's religious and philosophical views. Indeed, this latter section styles 'the true evidences of Christianity' as itself a four-part structure:

1. Its consistency with right Reason, I consider as the outer court of the temple—the common area, within which it stands. 2. The miracles, with and through which the Religion was first revealed and attested, I regard as the steps, the vestibule, and the portal of the temple. 3. The sense, the inward feeling, in the soul of each Believer of its exceeding *desirableness*—the experience, that he *needs* something, joined with the strong Foretokening, that the Redemption and the Graces propounded to us in Christ are *what* he needs—this I hold to be the true FOUNDATION of the spiritual Edifice. [And] 4, it is the experience derived from a practical

conformity to the conditions of the Gospel— . . . the actual *Trial* of the Faith in Christ, with its accompaniments and results, that must form the arched ROOF, and the Faith itself is the completing KEY-STONE.

I'm not suggesting that this maps precisely onto the structural logic of the *Biographia* (given the, to Coleridge, sacred truth embodied in this metaphor, such an analogy would be impertinent anyway). But the four-part structure does make clear *one* of the ways the organisation of the *Biographia* works. That is to say, it constellates (1) the action of 'reason' (as in the philosophical sections); (2) the miraculous soul-leap actualised in the poetry of genius – imagination, with its inspired creativity, rather than merely mechanical fancy; (3) *desire* itself, as a sense of spiritual lack or need; and above all (4) the need to actualise faith as a process not of mere reason, reading or writing, but as lived experience, as a day-to-day mode of structuring one's existence. This latter is particularly relevant to a project such as the *Biographia*, because it justifies what might otherwise look like a vainglorious or egotistical undertaking. Coleridge does not make himself the hero of his own story in order to boast about his accomplishments, or because he regards himself as extravagantly special or unique. He does so to actualise his core belief that Christian faith is *lived*, rather than rationalised, or thought through, or talked about, or studied. To be precise, Coleridge does think religious faith *can* be legitimately rationalised, thought through, talked about and studied, but that these are not the most important ways of apprehending it. Beyond reason is the desire of the heart, the experience of the miraculous in the world (something the best art can help bring to our attention), and above all of that is the wisdom only available to those who have lived Christianity as a quotidian experience.

In order to an efficient belief in Christianity, a man must have been a Christian, and this is the seeming argumentum in circulo, incident to all spiritual Truths, to every subject not presentable under the forms of Time and Space, as long as we attempt to master by the reflex acts of the Understanding what we can only *know* by the act of *becoming*.

Something like this gives the immethodical miscellaneity of the *Biographia* its organising logic; the 'argumentum in circulo' *has* to keep involuting back upon itself so as to establish the intricate interconnectedness between faith, great art, friendship and life.

Each of these main themes has its opposite, developed to varying degrees of personal involvement. Opposed to faith is the merely

materialistic philosophy of Hartley; opposed to great art is bad or insufficiently accomplished poetry; opposed to friendship is the hostility and malignancy that is so often discussed in the *Biographia* – and which can strike the reader as bitter or maudlin:

Strange as the delusion may appear, yet it is most true that three years ago I did not know or believe that I had an enemy in the world: and now even my strongest sensations of gratitude are mingled with fear, and I reproach myself for being too often disposed to ask,—Have I one friend?—

We can, if we like, read this sort of thing (and there's a surprisingly large amount of it in the *Biographia*) as mere self-pity. A less debilitating approach, however, would be to see it as Coleridge externalising the trials of 'experience derived from a practical conformity to the conditions of the Gospel' ('the sorrow that still rises up from beneath and the consolation that meets it from above; the bosom treacheries of the Principal in the warfare and the exceeding faithfulness and long-suffering of the uninterested Ally;—in a word . . . the actual *Trial* of the Faith in Christ').

From chapter to chapter, and throughout the *Biographia*, Coleridge is at pains to relate his aesthetic judgements to his autobiography, to link literary production to the moral and personal lived experience, to balance respect for tradition on the one hand with throwing off the dead hand of a (bad) literary past on the other; to articulate a set of political beliefs best characterised as 'Tory' while exploring a set of philosophical views – Germanic, metaphysical – that most Tories deplored. It is, in other words, a balancing act; or to use the simile Coleridge himself brings into play, a 'vital tension' similar to the one by which muscles act upon their skeletal hinges.

(a) Chapters 1–4

The first section of the *Biographia* develops themes that resonate throughout the whole; but in its most obvious sense it introduces Coleridge himself, as a schoolboy, in order to set up a discussion of *contemporaneity* in literature. One way to understand this first section is to hold in mind two key positions that are not specifically articulated until later in the *Biographia*, but which are nonetheless immanent in Chapter 1 (and, indeed, throughout the book as a whole). The first is the distinction between imagination and fancy from Chapter 13 – perhaps the single most famous idea in the *Biographia*, and something which I discuss in more detail below. For the moment the important thing is the sense Coleridge develops of something genuinely *creative*,

both intellectually and affectively, in the imagination. The fancy is not like this. It deals only with ‘fixities’, and is capable of nothing more than shuffling around prefabricated conventionalised phrases and sentiments (fancy is ‘a mode of memory’ and ‘must receive all its materials ready made from the law of association’). Related to this is the distinction between *ποίησις* and *μόρφωσις* from Chapter 18:

Could a rule be given from without, poetry would cease to be poetry, and sink into a mechanical art. It would be *μόρφωσις*, not *ποίησις*. The rules of the IMAGINATION are themselves the very powers of growth and production. The words to which they are reducible, present only the outlines and external appearance of the fruit. A deceptive counterfeit of the superficial form and colours may be elaborated; but the marble peach feels cold and heavy, and children only put it to their mouths.

ποίησις (*poiēsis*) means ‘a making, a creation, a production’ and is used of poetry in Aristotle and Plato. *μόρφωσις* (*morphōsis*) in essence means the same thing: ‘a shaping, a bringing into shape’. But when Coleridge uses it in the *Biographia* he has in mind the New Testament use of the word as ‘semblance’ or ‘outward appearance’, which the King James version translates as ‘form’.²⁹

The first chapter presents the reader with a series of examples of both modes. The secondary, fanciful or morphosic literature is what Coleridge’s schoolmaster Bowyer was trying to educate his charges *out of*. Conventionalised phrases had the form but not the reality of poetry, and had to be extirpated (‘Lute, harp, and lyre, muse, muses, and inspirations, Pegasus, Parnassus, and Hippocrene were all an abomination to him’). Any lines that sound machine-turned and that could be interchanged into other poems caused the whole exercise to be torn up. Later in the chapter Coleridge deprecates the ‘school of Pope’, exemplified by the popular success of Darwin’s *Botanic Garden*, in precisely these terms. He gives us other specific examples of fanciful morphosis – a passage from Gray’s *The Bard* set alongside the passage from Shakespeare’s *Merchant of Venice* from which its imagery is derived, to show the loss of power and force in the unimaginative reworking. Then he speculates whether ‘the custom of writing Latin verses, and the great importance attached to these exercises, in our public schools’ might not be one cause of this general unoriginality

²⁹ ‘An instructor of the foolish, a teacher of babes, which hast the form [*μόρφωσις*] of knowledge and of the truth in the law’ (Romans 2:20); ‘Having a form [*μόρφωσις*] of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away’ (2 Timothy 3:5).

in the literature of his day. A schoolboy writing Latin verses is effectively constrained to write according to ‘fancy’: picking out lines and half-lines from pre-existing masters. Such a writer must receive all his materials ready made from the *Gradus*. In a footnote, Coleridge gives a specific example: George Canning, whose own Latin poem *Iter ad Meccam* is charged with being mechanically constructed out of the metaphorical lego bricks of earlier Latin poetry.

At the beginning of the second chapter Coleridge discusses ‘genius’ as something possessing a political as well as a literary aspect, so the reference to Canning has more than just passing point. Nonetheless, the allusion is oblique enough for no critic in the nineteenth or twentieth centuries to have even realised that it was there. Perhaps Coleridge elects not to name Canning directly for reasons of tact – from a position of early mutual hostility, the two men became friends over the time that the *Biographia* was being written. But if he spares some others, Coleridge does not spare himself. He is painfully honest about the limitations of his own early poetry – the extent to which he produced it as a kind of mechanical, merely imitative exercise; the way he preferred conventionalised or stock phrases and epithets to plainer originality. The example he gives is the superiority of ‘*I will remember thee*’ over ‘the rag-fair finery’ of ‘thy image on her wing/ Before my FANCY’S eye shall MEMORY’. This latter is a version of a couple of lines from Coleridge’s own 1791 ‘On Quitting School for Jesus College Cambridge’ (‘Ah fair Delights! That o’er my soul/ On Memory’s wing, like shadows fly!’). But rather than merely quoting the original lines, Coleridge exaggerates the second-hand staleness by importing (precisely) ‘fancy’ and ‘memory’ into the pastiche.

This rewriting of earlier lines to stress their faults by exaggerating them is not limited to Coleridge’s own output. So, he evidently felt both the comic absurdity and lack of true imagination in Goldsmith’s:

My heart untravell’d fondly turns to thee;
Still to my brother turns with ceaseless pain,
And drags at each remove a lengthening chain. (Goldsmith, *The Traveller*, 8–10)

But he makes the case by caricature rather than quotation:

No more will I endure love’s pleasing pain,
Or round my heart’s leg tie his galling chain (Ch. 1)

There are several reasons for this, some of which have to do with rhetorical force. It’s also true that, ludicrous though Goldsmith’s original lines are, Coleridge’s pastiched couplet is funnier. Critics sometimes

downplay the extent to which Coleridge's engagement in the *Biographia* is comic; but not to grasp this is to miss something crucial about the book as a whole. Not all of his jokes work, but many do; and at its best the *Biographia* is a genuinely hilarious work. This is not only because Coleridge is working to entertain his readers (although of course he is doing that); it is because he sees a sort of profound irony, an awareness of the absurdity of individual poetic and other ambition, as being at the heart of critical and poetic insight. This reaches a kind of climax in the first chapter with the Nehemiah Higgenbottom sonnets: pastiche versions of the sort of unimaginative poetry being written by Charlotte Turner Smith, Charles Lamb, Charles Lloyd – and Coleridge himself. The point here is to stress the extent to which Coleridge sees the unimaginative not only as aesthetically lacking, but as ludicrously so.

Against this 'bad' art, Coleridge gives us the 'good' examples of three contemporary poets: Southey, Wordsworth and Bowles. The immediate thing to note here is that, beside those other two, Bowles's name strikes a dangerously bathetic note – for who reads Bowles today? And of those who have read him, who would call him in any sense a good poet? He is surely a distractingly *minor* figure on which to peg the poetical awakening of so major a poet and thinker as Coleridge.

It's worth exploring a little what Coleridge found so nurturing about Bowles's poetry. Two considerations here are particularly relevant. One is biographical: Bowles's sonnets are mentioned in this portion of the *Biographia* as a simple record of the fact that they impressed the young Coleridge. A second is affective: they are poems of strong emotion, recollected after the event in tranquillity. Here is R. H. White's account of their composition:

Bowles' immediate stimulus [in writing the sonnets] was the experience of being jilted by two fiancées, but his response was more Romantic than Petrarchan, since in poetry he found a soothing emotional connection to nature that distracted him from his amatory grief, rather than dwelling on feelings of unrequited love. He strives to express in verse his real feelings rather than relying on Petrarchan conventions. Descriptions of scenery and buildings, rivers and ruins are foregrounded, to the extent that the sequence becomes like a travelogue, encompassing sights from Scotland and the north of England, Oxford and Dover, and abroad from Ostend and the Rhine.³⁰

³⁰ R. S. White, 'The Sonnet from Milton to the Romantics', in A. D. Cousins and Peter Howarth (eds), *The Cambridge Companion to the Sonnet* (Cambridge University Press, 2011), 181.

Coleridge gave a later (1796) edition of the sonnets as a gift to Stella Thirlwell, with the following inscription:

Dear Mrs Thirlwell. I entreat your acceptance of this Volume, which has given me more pleasure, and done my heart more good, than all the other books, I ever read, excepting my Bible. Whether you approve or condemn my poetical taste, this Book will at least serve to remind you of your unseen, yet not the less sincere,

Friend,

Samuel Taylor Coleridge.³¹

Wordsworth was similarly struck: ‘When Bowles’s Sonnets first appeared . . . I bought them in a walk through London with my dear brother, who was afterwards drowned at sea. I read them as we went along, and to the great annoyance of my brother, I stopped in a niche of London Bridge to finish the pamphlet.’³² Whalley notes that ‘Coleridge sent Bowles a copy of his own *Poems* (1797) and in September of that year went to Bremhill to seek his criticism.’ Various letters of that period from Coleridge to Bowles survive, all indicative of genuine warmth of friendship – although the friendship did not last through to the period at which the *Biographia* was written. ‘I well remember’, he later told Sotheby, ‘that Southey observed to me, that you, I & himself had all done ourselves harm by suffering our admiration of Bowles to bubble up too often on the surface of our Poems.’³³ Whalley concludes that from 1802 to 1816 ‘Coleridge cultivated Bowles’ acquaintance’ and ‘received much kindness and encouragement from him’, but that ‘Bowles’ involvement in Tory church politics in 1817–18 became a cause of serious tension between them.’ Nonetheless, in 1821 Bowles gave Coleridge a copy of his latest pamphlet, *Two Letters to the Right Honourable Lord Byron*, of which more below.

The larger shape of the *Biographia* itself recapitulates the topographic trajectory of Bowles’s sonnet collection. In exactly the same way Bowles does in his sonnets, Coleridge pays close attention to the emotional education he received from certain key places in which he has lived; and the *Biographia* often works its critical or philosophical

³¹ George Whalley (ed.), *Samuel Taylor Coleridge: Marginalia I, Abbot to Byfield* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1980), 717. Subsequent quotations from Whalley in this paragraph are also from here.

³² Mary Moorman, *William Wordsworth: A Biography* (2 vols, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969–70), 1:125.

³³ Griggs, *Collected Letters*, 2:855.

purposes via natural images and precise landscaped observations. Like Bowles's volume, the *Biographia* moves first around the British Isles, then passes overseas to northern Europe, before returning home again. A reader who knows Bowles's sonnet sequence would find the inclusion of the 'Satyrane's Letters' chapter considerably less random than it might otherwise appear, since that chapter recapitulates the topographical trajectory of the Bowlesian sonnet sequence in which a poet's emotional *bildungs-poetik* involves a journey to Germany and a return.

There is also another element in play; for despite the distance that had opened up between the youthful Bowlesphilic Coleridge and the older, *Biographia*-composing Coleridge, Bowles serves the function of positioning the book's larger argument about – broadly – the mechanistic, fanciful 'school of Pope' and the organic, imaginative possibilities of what we now call 'Romanticism'.

Along with other compositions, Bowles produced an edition of Pope's verse in 1806. It was criticised by Thomas Campbell (and others) on the grounds that Bowles's own proto-Romantic fondness for a picturesque poetry of Affect disqualified him from editing a poet whose aesthetic was so differently configured. Replying to this criticism, Bowles published a sort of poetic manifesto: *The Invariable Principles of Poetry, in a Letter addressed to Thomas Campbell, Esq. occasioned by some Critical Observations in his Specimens of British Poets, particularly relating to the Poetical Character of Pope* (1819). This in turn ignited a literary spat, between Bowles on the one hand, and a group of friends who considered themselves 'defenders' of the genius of Pope on the other. In 1820, the *Quarterly* negatively reviewed Bowles's pamphlet ('It is with pain we have so long witnessed the attacks on the moral and poetical character of this great poet [Pope] . . . the Rev. Mr. Bowles, possesses the contest à l'outrance, with the appearance, though assuredly not with the reality, of personal hostility').³⁴ The review described Bowles as 'a sort of sentimental critic', a jibe that evidently stung. Bowles quickly published a pamphlet of his own rebutting the review: *A reply to an 'Unsentimental sort of critic', the reviewer of 'Spence's Anecdotes' in the Quarterly Review for October 1820* (1820), which announced Bowles's belief that the author of the anonymous *Quarterly* piece was Octavius Gilchrist, of whom Bowles announced 'his praise or blame may be held in equal contempt'. Gilchrist, in reply, published his own pamphlet, which was boisterously, and sometimes amusingly, rude at Bowles's expense. Soon everybody was pitching in. Bowles put out a second,

³⁴ 'Spence's *Anecdotes of Books and Men*', *Quarterly Review* (1820), 407–8.

expanded edition of his pamphlet: *Observations on the Poetical Character of Pope, further elucidating the invariable Principles of Poetry, &c.; with a Sequel, in reply to Octavius Gilchrist* (1821). Byron published a quarto pamphlet attacking Bowles's position, *Letter to John Murray, Esq. on the Rev. W. L. Bowles's Strictures on the Life and Writings of Pope. By the Right Hon. Lord Byron.* (1821). In response, Bowles published a (respectfully toned) reply, which ran to not two but three editions: *Letters to Lord Byron on a Question of Poetical Criticism: 3d Edition, with Corrections* (1822) – it was this pamphlet of which Bowles gave a copy to Coleridge. Gilchrist retaliated;³⁵ and Bowles spent several years writing his 190-page-long *A Final Appeal*.³⁶

Most of this, of course, post-dates Coleridge's writing the *Biographia*. I mention it here because it is nonetheless indicative of one important context out of which our book was produced. At the heart of the spat was a disagreement about whether great poetry must be written direct from Nature (Bowles's argument), or whether it could be written by copying 'art' – a debate that predated the *Quarterly* row by more than a decade. In namechecking Bowles so generously right at the start of the *Biographia*, Coleridge is among other things positioning his own biographical aesthetics on the Bowles/Wordsworth rather than the Pope/Byron side of the debate. What the former side entails is here summarised by Bowles, quoting his own earlier writing:

'All images drawn from what is Beautiful or Sublime in the Works of Nature, are more beautiful and sublime than images drawn from art, and are therefore more poetical. In like manner, those Passions of the Human Heart which belong to nature in general, are, per se, more adapted to the Higher Species of poetry, than those which are derived from incidental and transient manners'. The reader will instantly perceive, that these propositions are connected and consecutive; and to prevent the possibility of their being understood otherwise, I added, as illustrations, the following; instances, equally connected and consecutive. 'A description of a forest is more poetical than a cultivated garden; and the passions which are portrayed in the *Epistle Of*

³⁵ *A Second letter to the Rev. William Lisle Bowles, in answer to his Second Reply to the Reviewer of Spence's Anecdotes in the Quarterly Review for October, 1820* (1820) and *A Third Letter to the Rev. William Lisle Bowles concerning Pope's Moral Character: including some Observations on that Person's Demeanour towards his Opponents, during the recent Controversy on that Subject* (1821).

³⁶ *A Final Appeal to the Literary Public relative to Pope, in reply to certain Observations of Mr. Roscoe, in his Edition of that Poet's Works. To which are added some Remarks on Lord Byron's Conversations, as far as they relate to the same Subject, and the Author. In Letters to a Literary Friend* (1825).

Eloisa, render such a poem more poetical, (whatever might be the difference of merit in point of composition) intrinsically more poetical than a poem founded on the characters, incidents, and modes of artificial life, for instance, *The Rape of the Lock*.³⁷

As far as Chapter 1 is concerned, Coleridge sets out his lines of battle against ‘the very many who had formed their taste, and their notions of poetry, from the writings of Mr. Pope and his followers’, on the grounds that Pope’s was not a *poesis* but a *morphosis*, ‘matter and diction . . . characterized not so much by poetic thoughts, as by thoughts *translated* into the language of poetry’. It is in this context that Coleridge’s youthful enthusiasm for Bowles can be understood.

This mode of disagreement about literary values, or more specifically the irritability with which it is argued, forms the main focus of Chapter 2. We are assured that Shakespeare, Spenser and Milton were, as men, characterised by ‘calmness’ and ‘self-assurance’, something Coleridge believes is self-evident from their writing. Yet poets are commonly thought irritable. Why? Coleridge thinks it has to do with the decline of traditional literary values, swamped in the swarm of modern book production: ‘alas! the multitude of books and the general diffusion of literature, have produced other, and more lamentable effects in the world of letters’. Literature is now the province of

individuals below mediocrity not less in natural power than in acquired knowledge; nay, bunglers who have failed in the lowest mechanic crafts, and whose presumption is in due proportion to their want of sense and sensibility; men, who being first scribblers from idleness and ignorance, next become libellers from envy and malevolence; have been able to drive a successful trade in the employment of the booksellers, nay, have raised themselves into temporary name and reputation with the public at large, by that most powerful of all adulation, the appeal to the bad and malignant passions of mankind. (Ch. 2)

This in turn is linked to the practice of contemporary reviews, a topic to which Coleridge returns several times during the *Biographia*. Literary reviews treat their subject with much more irritability, and much less charity, than is habitual in other disciplines. Coleridge sarcastically imagines ‘a Review set on foot, the object of which should be to criticise all the chief works presented to the public by our ribbon-weavers, calico-printers, cabinet-makers, and china-manufacturers’ that ‘should

³⁷ Bowles, *The Invariable Principles*, 8–9.

be conducted in the same spirit, and take the same freedom with personal character, as our literary journals'. Since he disclaims personal affront ('Indignation at literary wrongs I leave to men born under happier stars. I cannot *afford it*'), he goes on in Chapter 3 to mount a defence from attacks by unnamed critics not of himself, but of his friends Wordsworth and Southey.

Coleridge starts Chapter 3 by deploring the tendency for people to read not literature, but anthologies of selected excerpts of literature, and second-hand accounts of literature in the journals. These sorts of things, he says, testify to the frivolity of the readers' engagement with art as a mere '*pass-time* or rather *kill-time*'. To reinforce his point he adds not one but two marvellously funny lists of ways in which people annihilate time instead of using it productively, from 'swinging or swaying on a chair', via smoking, snuff-taking, to picking lice out of one's hair and 'riding among a multitude of camels'. The serious point is to undermine any claims to artistic or (importantly) moral seriousness in the newly burgeoning culture of literary journalism. On the other hand, is not the *Biographia* itself as, among other things, an anthology of the 'beauties' of Wordsworth and Shakespeare, full of precisely the things – contemporary reportage and life-writing, gossip, jokes and games – that the passage here attacks? The third chapter moves rather jarringly from the pleasantries of Coleridge and Averbach's lists of distractions to an awkward smack of wounded pride. These same trivial 'periodical works' have 'for 17 years consecutively' dragged Coleridge forth, proscribed him and poured abuse upon him. The implied physicality of this rhetoric speaks to the intensity of Coleridge's hurt feelings; as does, in a different way, the lengths to which he goes in the following three paragraphs to emphasise his own personal inoffensiveness. He has never quarrelled with anyone; nobody could envy him his humble, unachieving life. Again, there is a rhetorical problem here: if Coleridge's literary life has been so quiet and unexceptional, then why should we bother to read a 150,000-word book devoted precisely to it? Perhaps this is best read as the same rhetorical device Mark Antony employs when, prior to delivering one of the most self-consciously finely crafted pieces of rhetoric in the whole of Shakespeare, he announces 'I am no Orator, as *Brutus* is;/But (as you know me all) a plaine blunt man.' His self-effacement is *part of* his rhetorical skill, not a contradiction to it. Something similar is at play here: the difference between tact and hypocrisy, between a manly self-deprecation and a slippery two-facedness.

Why do journals and reviews so comprehensively attack Coleridge? Not (he suggests) on his own account, but only because they associate

his name with Wordsworth and Southey. This leads the chapter into a lengthened defence of Southey, which alternates praise for his ‘splendor, pathos, dignity of language and metre’ with expressions of surprise – to call them mock-surprise would be unfairly to suggest, again, that there is something disingenuous about Coleridge’s rhetorical strategy – that critics and readers have failed to see Southey’s manifest excellencies.

There are two more steps in the chapter’s argument. The first is that reviewers tend to concentrate on the negative features of a literary work when they should be accentuating the positive. The second is a peroration to the moral excellence of Southey as a human being. This latter relates to one of the central themes of the *Biographia*, put thuswise in Chapter 14: that ‘What is poetry?—is so nearly the same question with, what is a poet?—that the answer to the one is involved in the solution of the other.’ Southey’s moral excellence as a person, Coleridge insists, informs the dignity and merit of his verse. Comparing him, as Coleridge does in this chapter, to Cato and Milton is, on one level, merely to instance two historical figures renowned for personal integrity. But there’s also an irony inherent in the parallel (comparing Southey – Poet Laureate and a major establishment figure – with two famously Republican anti-monarchists) that did not go unnoticed at the time. Mocking Coleridge in 1817, the pseudonymous ‘Imlac’ said:

Excellent bathos! Most goodly collection of vowels and consonants. What! The Poet Laureat like Milton and Marcus Cato the Stoic! Like the rigid Roman—the staunch supporter of *republican* liberty; so great a lover of discipline, that in whatever office he was employed, he always reformed its abuses, and restored its ancient regulations! Robert Southey, the servant of the Prince Regent, like Marcus Cato, of whom it is narrated that he was so displeas’d with the importuning civilities of King Dejotarus when at his court, that he hasten’d away from his presence! The friends are worse than the foes.³⁸

Coleridge is concerned less with praising Southey, and more with using praise of Southey to leverage *dispraise* of that ‘reading public’ who Coleridge despised, and the critics who serviced them. The conventional hope that posterity will vindicate Southey’s genius leads us into a two-paragraph digression on the way the relationship between books and readers has coarsened and worsened over the centuries:

³⁸ ‘Mr. Southey Subpoenaed’, in *Essay on Public Credit* (1817), 244.

‘In times of old, books were as religious oracles’; now they have sunk lower and ‘still lower’ until they are now ‘degraded into culprits to hold up their hands at the bar of every self-elected, yet not the less peremptory, judge, who chuses to write from humour or interest, from enmity or arrogance’. As evidence Coleridge adduces, of all things, a downward trend in *literary dedications*: from the high-flown commanding dedications of Bacon and Pindar – complete with a long eye-blocking quotation in Greek – to the modern era, when books were dedicated to ‘learned readers’, then to ‘candid readers’, then to ‘the town’, and finally to ‘the multitudinous PUBLIC’.

Why does Coleridge dilate at such length in this chapter on *dedications* of all things? Perhaps because they emblematised the point at which poet and audience meet, something formalised in Southey’s case by his position as Poet Laureate. Southey was by virtue of this position a *public* poet. Implicit in the contrast between writers who address ‘learned readers’ and those who pitch their work to the public is, presumably, a contrast between two writers such as Coleridge and Southey. The former’s *Biographia*, which we are reading, could hardly *be* more learned. The latter’s *The Poet’s Pilgrimage to Waterloo* (1816) – to take one example – was in effect dedicated to the British people, for the part they played in the defeat of Napoleon (the proem to that work ends: ‘Free in spirit as the mountain wind/That makes my symphony in this lone hour,/No perishable song of triumph raise,/But sing in worthy strains my Country’s praise’). Nor should this surprise us: after all, it’s part of the job of the national poet to address poems to the nation. To be clear, I am not suggesting that Coleridge’s aim here is to accuse Southey of hypocrisy. Rather, I’m suggesting this chapter treats its main theme *ironically*, or perhaps it would be better to say it excavates the irony in its argument as part of its rhetorical strategy. Southey is a case study of a figure (like Cato, or Milton) caught between an orientation upwards, to an ideal, and downwards, to the populace.

The chapter is, in a sense, strung between the praise of Southey’s personal qualities at the end and the dispraise of Jeffrey’s near the beginning. The long footnote attacking Jeffrey (so insulting, and so factually dubitable, that Henry Nelson and Sara Coleridge suppressed it in their 1847 edition of the *Biographia*) reads as the record of personal affront. And, indeed, the personal quality of Coleridge’s hurt feelings is important. But it is also important not to lose sight of the *political* context of his comments. The years of which Coleridge is talking immediately follow the founding in 1809 of the *Quarterly Review*, a journal specifically intended as a Tory riposte to the Whiggish *Edinburgh*. Southey was a prominent contributor to the *Quarterly*,

which aligns Coleridge's praise of him – as 'author' and 'critic' – with the larger ideological struggle embodied by the two journals. The footnote attacking Jeffrey needs to be read in that context. Coleridge is claiming that he and Southey, despite having been wronged by Jeffrey in print, nonetheless manifested the Tory virtues of individual restraint and hospitality. Jeffrey tried to agglomerate Coleridge, Southey and Wordsworth into a collective (a 'school' or 'sect'), but Coleridge insists that they are individuals defined by their respect for tradition ('the long-established models of the best time of Greece, Rome, Italy and England'). As against Jeffrey's whiggish or 'democratic' (in the early nineteenth-century negative sense of the word) ethics Coleridge tacitly opposes traditional, Tory values. The alteration to the quotation from the apocryphal book of Daniel with which the footnote closes picks out the salient. Coleridge says: '*Give me leave, O SOVEREIGN PUBLIC, and I shall slay this dragon without sword or staff*'. Of course he expects us to know that the original reads: '*Give me leave, O King, and I shall slay this dragon without sword or staff*'.

This, then, is the axis along which the terms of this chapter position themselves. Is art to be oriented 'downward', to the 'PUBLIC', or upwards to the king? It is a question, for Coleridge, with both a political and a religious dimension (not that those two terms can be disentangled in Coleridge's thought) – for the 'upward' orientation is for him always actually towards God. It also helps to contextualise the status of Southey in this chapter. Should we think of his work as Poet Laureate as directed towards the people, or towards the king? Actually, the bulk of his 'official' publications carried dedications that are, to adopt Coleridge's terminology, 'to Monarch, in which the honour given was asserted in equipoise to the patronage acknowledged'. Coleridge's quarrel with the *Edinburgh* is less the personal unreliability of its editor, and more the journal's political radicalism as a whole. If we recall Chapter 3's opening remarks on the vulgar vogue for literary selections with titles like 'Beauties of . . .' it becomes clearer that one thing Coleridge is doing with this jibe is aligning himself with a particular anti-*Edinburgh* tradition. A relevant text here is John Ring's satiric-polemical 1807 book, *The Beauties of the Edinburgh Review, alias the Stinkpot of Literature*, in which excerpts from the *Review* are used to paint it as a hotbed of Jacobin sympathy. Nor was Ring alone; from 1807 into the 1810s many books, pamphlets and articles were published attacking the *Edinburgh* in precisely these terms.³⁹ Coleridge's

³⁹ For example: R. Wharton, 'Remarks on the Jacobinical Tendency of the "Edinburgh Review"' (1808); *The Dangers of the Edinburgh Review; or a brief exposure of its principles*

aggressively anti-*Edinburgh* footnote takes its place in this context. The decline he posits, from books as ‘religious oracles’, treated with reverence and respect, to ‘the multitudinous PUBLIC’ occupying ‘the throne of criticism’ is also a kind of narrative of literary revolution and mob rule. To quote Lucy Newlyn:

Anonymous critics are imagined usurping the throne of criticism, in the same way that Satan, Cromwell, Robespierre, all gave themselves kingly powers. This is upstart republicanism, writ large. Coleridge saw the ‘multitudinous public’ (shaped not by the Logos but by the ‘magic of abstraction’) as a parodic version of the multiteity-in-unity which was his personal creed; and as a mockery of the monarchical values he held dear.⁴⁰

Newlyn goes on: ‘Yet the parody works against itself; for is there not also, in the development of his regal metaphor, a suggestion that monarchs themselves might be vulnerable, their status nominal and their power dependent on mystification?’

In working through these questions Coleridge is also restaging the political drama of his own life: the movement from radical sympathies in youth to traditionalist conservatism in middle age.⁴¹ In Chapter 4 Coleridge follows through the metaphor of political upheaval, redolent of post-1789 revolutionary anxiety. Critics, he implies, have attacked Wordsworth as in effect a Bonaparte of literature:

thought capable of corrupting the public judgement for half a century, and require a twenty years war, campaign after campaign, in order to dethrone the usurper and re-establish the legitimate taste. (Ch. 4)

in religion, morals and politics (1808); John Styles, *Strictures on two critiques in the Edinburgh Review on the subject of Methodism and missions: with remarks on the influence of reviews in general on morals and happiness, in three letters to a friend* (1808); ‘Apostasy of the Edinburgh Review’, Letter to Editor of *The Courier*, December 1809, signed ‘x.y.’ (‘Thomas Paine never published any thing more seditious than the last number of the Edinburgh Review’); [John Hope], *A letter, to the editor of the Edinburgh review, signed An Independent Anti-Reformer* (1811); and [John Joseph Stockdale], *Animadversions on the Calumnies of the Edinburgh Review, Against the Lord Bishop of Lincoln* (1813).

⁴⁰ Lucy Newlyn, *Reading, Writing, and Romanticism: The Anxiety of Reception* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 55.

⁴¹ ‘A new weekly paper, entitled *The Friend*, is on the eve of making its appearance in the metropolis of the British Empire. This Journal is to be conducted by the celebrated Coleridge, already advantageously known to the republic of letters by many ingenious performances both in Poetry and Prose. With the utmost cheerfulness we insert his Prospectus in *The Port Folio*, and this we do with the more alacrity, because it is plainly perceived that Time, Experience, and Observation, have totally changed the colour of this gentleman’s mind, and that the reign of right principle is fully restored’ (‘New Periodical Paper by Messers Coleridge, Southey and Others’, *The Port Folio*, 2 (1809), 104).

In fact this analogy is a sort of double-bluff. Coleridge, neatly inhabiting a dry bemusement of tone, concedes that there might be poets whose influence, combined with the beguiling nature of their delinquencies ('the seductive faults, the dulcia vitia of Cowley, Marini, or Darwin'), would merit sustained critical assault. But, he insists, the very terms of anti-Wordsworth criticism invalidate its intensity. If Wordsworth's poetry truly were 'downright simpleness, under the affectation of simplicity, prosaic words in feeble metre, silly thoughts in childish phrases' and so on, then the severity and duration of criticism would evidently have mismatched its topic: that poetry 'characterized as *below* criticism, should for nearly twenty years have well-nigh *engrossed* criticism' strikes Coleridge not only as funny, but as a self-refutation of the critics themselves. Folded, a little awkwardly, into this observation is the related one, that poetry so simple, feeble and silly could not have succeeded 'in forming a school of imitators, a company of almost *religious* admirers, and this too among young men of ardent minds, liberal education'. But this point cuts across the other. After all, the fact that Bonaparte had many ardent followers, even amongst the educated classes, did not dissuade the European allies from prosecuting twenty years of war against him.

It is in the fourth chapter that we get to one of the most important and influential arguments in the *Biographia*: the distinction between fancy and imagination.⁴² Indeed, so famous and so richly contested has this distinction become that its presence may tend to distort our understanding of the chapter in which it first appears. For that reason, if no other, it is worth dwelling for a moment on its actual appearance, coming as it does almost exactly in the middle of Chapter 4: the end of the fifth paragraph of an eleven-paragraph chapter. Before it, Coleridge wonders why poetry as magnificent as Wordsworth's should have occasioned so many negative critiques. He suggests three possibilities: (a) the presence of fewer than 'an hundred lines' of inferior quality amongst the many thousands of higher merit, as if some readers were unable to see past the occasional sunspots to the glory of the whole; (b) a quirk of human psychology, whereby clever and educated readers, realising that the poetry they were reading was of

⁴² A great many books have been written on this distinction alone, amongst them: I. A. Richards, *Coleridge on Imagination* (London: Kegan Paul, 1934); Basil Wiley, *Coleridge on Imagination and Fancy* (London: G. Cumberlege, 1947); R. L. Brett, *Fancy and Imagination* (London: Methuen, 1969); J. Robert Barth, *The Symbolic Imagination: Coleridge and the Romantic Tradition* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1977); Richard Gravil, Lucy Newlyn and Nicholas Roe (eds), *Coleridge's Imagination* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985).

superior merit but also seeing that it contradicted the canons of taste they had been taught, reacted to their own confusion by lashing out against Wordsworth. This latter is an astutely observed notion, I think ('in all perplexity there is a portion of fear, which predisposes the mind to anger'), and persuasive, although it is a completely different point to the first. But, strikingly, Coleridge then suggests, or implies, a third reason for the animadversion Wordsworth generated – that (c) his poems are both excellent and bad *at the same time*. As evidence for this, Coleridge notes that different people will praise or censure the same Wordsworth poem; and elaborates on this via two analogies – first, the 'bull', or comical semantic misprision, and second the sort of optical illusion where, staring at black spots on a white ground for a long time can lead, when one closes one's eyes, to seeing *white* spots on a *black* ground. The bull that Coleridge discusses, 'I was a fine child, but they changed me' (he means: 'I was a healthy child but then I was physically replaced by a sickly changeling'), is both funny and, actually, philosophically profound. Here, at greater length, is James Gregory's 1790s version of the bull:

A gentleman, when his old nurse came begging to him, harshly refusing her any relief, and driving her away from his door with reproaches, as having been his greatest enemy, telling her that he was assured he had been a fine healthy child till she got him to nurse, when she had changed him for a puny sickly child of her own. If I am rightly informed, France has the honour of having produced this immense and unparalleled bull; which is indeed *perfectum expletumque omnibus suis numeris et partibus* ['perfect in all its details and emblematic of the larger whole'], and perfect of its kind.⁴³

Coleridge's explanation for the operation of this 'bull' entails the idea that we have both subjective and objective perspectives on ourselves: the former because we *are* ourselves, the latter because we can *visualise* or *conceptualise* ourselves (we can, for instance, imagine how other people see us). He calls these two things the 'I that contemplates', and the 'I that is contemplated': 'the first conception expressed in the word "*I*," is that of personal identity—*Ego contemplan*s: the second expressed in the word "*me*," is the visual image or object by which the mind represents to itself its past condition, or rather, its personal identity under the form in which it imagined itself previously to have existed,—*Ego contemplan*tus'. Now, this is not the most lucid section of

⁴³ James Gregory's 'A Dissertation on Bulls', in *Philosophical and Literary Essays* (2 vols, 1792), 1:154.

the *Biographia*, it must be admitted. But the distinction can be grasped easily enough. It might be possible to have an aversion to an old nurse as the sort of woman who used to swap healthy children for sickly changelings; and that aversion would be strengthened if the children so abused were known to you, or close to you. Who is closer to you than you are yourself? Looked at externally (as it were), the man's hatred of the nurse is justified by the fact that she has done him personally a great wrong. The comedy derives from the fact that the nature of the wrong is such that it renders the grounds of personal connection impossible; although, like the man sitting on the bough of a tree as he cuts it off near the trunk (another of Gregory's 'bulls'), it is only at the last moment that this becomes apparent. The profound relevance of this anecdote to Coleridge's theory of poetry only becomes fully apparent after we have read the 'philosophical' chapters. Indeed, we can go further and say that the relationship between the subjective and objective versions of ourselves, between the subject that can say 'I am me' and that facility we all have to think of ourselves as others see us (to *objectivise* ourselves), is at the heart of the argument Coleridge develops across those chapters. The poet inhabits his or her 'I'-subjectivity more intensely in order to generate a me-subjectivity, to externalise what is internal. S/he is a sort of living 'bull'.

Still, the notion that Wordsworth's poems could be both black spots *and* white spots at the same time, depending on the perspective of the viewer, is rather more radically destabilising than Coleridge intends; he backs away from the idea, reverting immediately to his original hypothesis:

However this may be, it was assuredly hard and unjust to fix the attention on a few separate and insulated poems with as much aversion, as if they had been so many plague-spots on the whole work, instead of passing them over in silence, as so much blank paper, or leaves of a bookseller's catalogue; especially, as no one pretended to have found in them any immorality or indelicacy; and the poems, therefore, at the worst, could only be regarded as so many light or inferior coins in a rouleau of gold, not as so much alloy in a weight of bullion.

The first four words here have the effect of waving away the startlingly relativist implications of the previous two paragraphs. Instead, Coleridge acknowledges a small proportion of dross in Wordsworth's output while insisting that – since it tends neither to deprave nor corrupt – we should simply ignore it. These lines are mere dud coins, while the rouleau as a whole is overwhelmingly gold.

It is this intimation of metaphorical wealth, and the use of the French term for it, that leads us to the buried reference to the Revolutionary and Napoleonic wars. The implication is that critics have found something ‘low’ in Wordsworth in both an aesthetic and a political sense; and Coleridge plays with the implications of this. By quoting Aristophanes’s *Frogs* at some length he both mocks critics as monotonously croaking creatures, and also carries the ‘lowness’ theme below the earth and into the underworld itself. We remember, of course, that the reason Aristophanes’s Dionysus descended so far was to retrieve a poet from the afterlife in order to save Athens, at the end of a decades long, destructive war. Poets, Coleridge is implying, have important positive social roles to play.

The *Frogs* is a satirical play, and quoting it has a satirical purpose here too. Coleridge had been variously lampooned as froggish, or toad-like because he was ‘a lake poet’ and frogs live in lakes. The joke also related to the laker’s supposed radical political sentiments – alluding to the long-standing British libel on French people as ‘frogs’. An anti-Jacobin Gilray cartoon of 1798 (‘New Morality, or the promis’d Installment of the High Priest of the THEORPHILAN-THROPEs’) had ridiculed the Lake poets as a toad and a frog reading a book called ‘Blank Verse by Toad and Frog’.

The anonymous 1814 satire *Sortes Horatianae* mocked Coleridge by repurposing Pope’s description of the toadlike Buffo from the *Epistle to Arbuthnot*, ‘Proud as Apollo on his forked hill’:

Coleridge should mount some rock’s o’erjutting height,
And tell his tale in accents of delight;
Fancy his seat ‘Apollo’s forked hill,’
The high tribunal of poetic skill.⁴⁴

The *Biographia* is not the only place in which Coleridge switched the caricature around. His ‘To a Comic Author, on an Abusive Review’ (dated by J. C. C. Mays to November 1819)⁴⁵ begins:

What though the chilly wide-mouth’d quacking chorus
From the rank swamps of murk Review-land croak:

From these marshy, Jacobinical depths, Chapter 4 ascends to the mountaintops of the Wordsworthian sublime, with a striking description of a storm and then a clear sunset in the Alps from 1793’s

⁴⁴ *Sortes Horatianae: A Poetical Review of Poetical Talent, with notes* (1814), 729–36.

⁴⁵ J. C. C. Mays (ed.), *The Collected Works of Coleridge, 16: Poetical Works I* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001), 967.

Descriptive Sketches. The upward motion is reinforced several times: the poet rising ‘above the literary horizon’ like the sun; his poem a ‘gorgeous blossom’ of the sort that ‘rise out of a hard and thorny rind’. Even Wordsworth’s ‘occasional obscurities’ *rise* ‘from an imperfect control over the resources of his native language’ (although those obscurities have all but disappeared in the mature poetry). Instead of frogs we now have Wordsworth’s ‘fire-clad eagle’, immediately followed by Coleridgean butterfly ‘psyche’. The soul *rises*, according to the seven-line Coleridgean poem appended in a footnote, while the body crawls on the ground like a reptile. Indeed, this axis of depth and height, the one to have risen from, the other the mark of true poetic altitude, structures the whole middle section of this chapter. What was it that so impressed the young Coleridge about Wordsworth’s poetry?

It was the union of deep feeling with profound thought; the fine balance of truth in observing with the imaginative faculty in modifying, the objects observed; and above all the original gift of spreading the tone, the *atmosphere*, and with it the depth and height of the ideal world around forms, incidents, and situations, of which, for the common view, custom had bedimmed all the lustre, had dried up the sparkle and the dew drops.

Depth *and* height, we note; although the burden of this peroration is the altitude, and the prospect therefrom.

It is this that leads Coleridge into his first account of the difference between fancy and imagination. The distinction is introduced via three specifics: first that ‘Milton had a highly *imaginative*, Cowley a very *fanciful* mind’; second that the distinction ‘is no less grounded in nature, than that of delirium from mania’, and thirdly and most memorably with two lines of poetry, the first fanciful, the second imaginative:

Lutes, lobsters, seas of milk, and ships of amber.

What! have his daughters brought him to this pass?

The comparison between Milton and Cowley is about the kind, as well as the status, of the poetry they wrote – and in fact has as much to do with their *minds* as their verse. The Otway line is rendered more absurd by the insertion of a supernumerary lobster (Otway actually set out to capture the derangement of a mad woman’s speech with: ‘murmuring Streams, soft Shades, and springing Flowers,/ Lutes, Laurels, Seas of Milk, and Ships of Amber’). We can’t be sure whether Coleridge was just misremembering this or being deliberately

mischievous in introducing his crustacean – we can certainly imagine him wanting, consciously or otherwise, to remove the Apollonian ‘laurel’ from what is, undoubtedly, inferior verse. We can say more, actually: Otway hopes to convey derangement of an individual sensibility by aggregating a series of seemingly random, surreal objects, linked primarily by alliteration and assonance – the sibilance of the first line, the labial ‘flowers, lutes, laurels’, and the tumble of ‘s’s and ‘m’s at the end. Coleridge mocks the line precisely by emphasising this alliterative aspect, *lobsters* being as good an l-word in this sense as *laurels*. But what the substitution does is point up the counter-effective absurdity of the *content*. It is the content that makes the Shakespearian line stand out: its apprehension of insanity not as a kind of surreal disintegration of consciousness, but rather as the reorientation of the sane mind around the overwhelming lines of force of one obsession – in Lear’s case, the ingratitude of his offspring. This in turn speaks to Coleridge’s larger point: that the best poetry brings multitudinousness into harmonious profundity, rather than just displaying the original diversity.

There’s a meta-point, here, too though, which we might articulate by posing a question: does the sequence of Coleridge’s examples (Milton, Cowley, delirium, mania, lobsters, daughters, storm) more resemble Otway’s poetic logic, or Shakespeare’s? It would presumably be better for the coherence of the *Biographia*’s larger thesis if it were the latter; but it rather looks like the former, not least because two psychological conditions – modes of actual insanity – sort oddly with the otherwise specifically literary examples chosen. Conceivably, the quotation of the Otway and Shakespeare lines about the representation of insanity prompted Coleridge to insert actual insanity as a prior example (as, earlier in the chapter, quoting the lines from Aristophanes’s *Frogs* clearly prompted him later to add a textually prior footnote also quoting Aristophanes). But it surely undermines the key point by suggesting, even if only by implication, that the strong poetic imagination, drawing disparate elements together under the rubric of aesthetic unity, is actually like Lear’s insane obsession, under the eye of which everything, no matter how far-flung or diverse, is revealed to be another metaphorical-symbolic articulation of Monster Ingratitude. That, to put it another way, Imagination might level everything to the mania of the poet’s mind. This is a crucial point, I think: Coleridge valorises the bringing of multitude into unity, but he is aware that another facet of that process is obsession; mania; *monotony*. The Frogs can only say the same thing, over and over again. Aristophanes presents this as comic, but it has its sinister quality too

– a dog barking incessantly all through the night as if barking is the only idea left in its head.

The distinction between ‘delirium’ and ‘mania’ was first made by French doctor and alienist, Philippe Pinel (1745–1826), in his *Traité médico-philosophique sur l’aliénation mentale ou La manie* (1800). The work was reviewed in several British journals:

Mania without delirium is described to be continued, or marked by periodical accessions; to be unaccompanied by any alteration in the functions of the understanding, perception, judgment, imagination, or memory: but to be distinguished by a perversion of the affections, a blind impulse to acts of violence, or a sanguinary fury, without the existence of any prevailing idea or illusion of the imagination to account for them—*Mania with delirium* is marked by a lively nervous excitement, and by the lesion of one or more of the functions of the understanding, with gay or sad, extravagant or furious emotions.—Madness (*démence*) is described as consisting in the rapid, or rather alternate and uninterrupted succession of isolated ideas, and light and unsuitable emotions, inordinate movements, and continual acts of extravagance; a total forgetfulness of previous circumstances; an abolition of the faculty of perceiving objects by the impression made on the senses; an annihilation of judgment; a continual activity, without aim or design; and, in short, in a kind of automatical existence.⁴⁶

The striking thing about this is that Otway’s line looks (aesthetically speaking) more like demence than delirium. In fact the very distinction between delirium and mania was contested in early nineteenth-century medical discourse.⁴⁷ Nor is it immediately clear how the distinction helps us: one can have mania without delirium, it seems; but delirium without mania is simple fever, and has no mental health implications. At the very end of his life, Coleridge elaborated his use of these conceptions in the *Biographia* as follows:

⁴⁶ ‘Traité Médico-Philosophique sur l’Aliénation Mentale, &c. i.e. A Medico-Philosophical Treatise on Mental Derangement, or Madness. By Ph. Pinel, Professor in the School of Medicine of Paris, &c.’, *Monthly Review*, 42 (1803), 530.

⁴⁷ ‘Dr. Cox criticizes the definition which Dr. Cullen gives of insanity, as being without fever, which was no doubt done in order to distinguish mania from delirium. We believe it to be nearly impossible to discriminate between delirium and mania in some cases; and in the greatest number of instances, Dr. Cullen is correct, since fever is a necessary concomitant of delirium, but only an occasional attendant on mania’ (‘Cox’s Practical Observations on Insanity’, *Monthly Review*, 50 (1806), 271–2).

You may conceive the difference in kind between the Fancy and Imagination in this way,—that if the check of the senses were withdrawn, the first would become delirium, and the last mania. The Fancy brings together images which have no connection natural or moral, but are yoked together by the poet by means of some accidental coincidence . . . the Imagination modifies images, and gives unity to variety; it sees all things in one.⁴⁸

The missing element here, I think, is the *affective* one: mania may involve no derangement of the faculties of judgement or cognition (there may be no ‘alteration in the functions of the understanding, perception, judgment, imagination, or memory’) except insofar as they are overmastered by powerful negative emotions – a ‘perversion of the affections, a blind impulse to acts of violence, or a sanguinary fury’. This in turn reflects back upon the discussion of anger in the second chapter. There Coleridge devotes many pages to the ‘supposed irritability’ of genius-poets, only to conclude that the charge is unjust. One moral of that chapter is that (to quote a letter from 1802) ‘the “Genus irritabile” is a phrase applicable only to *bad* poets—Men of great Genius have indeed, as an essential of their composition, great sensibility, but they likewise have great confidence in their own powers—and Fear must always precede anger in the human mind.’⁴⁹ The second chapter is perfectly explicit about this. ‘Rage and fear are one disease’, Coleridge quotes himself, and adds:

The sanity of the mind is between superstition with fanaticism on the one hand; and enthusiasm with indifference and a diseased slowness to action on the other. For the conceptions of the mind may be so vivid and adequate, as to preclude that impulse to the realizing of them, which is strongest and most restless in those, who possess more than mere *talent*, (or the faculty of appropriating and applying the knowledge of others) yet still want something of the creative, and self-sufficing power of absolute *Genius*. (Ch. 2)

The ‘diseased slowness to action’ is Coleridgean self-criticism: later in Chapter 2 he talks of his ‘constitutional indolence, aggravated into languor by ill-health; the accumulating embarrassments of procrastination; the mental cowardice, which is the inseparable companion of procrastination’. Cowardice implies fear, which in turn supplies one of the unmanifested components of the fancy/imagination distinc-

⁴⁸ Coleridge, *Table Talk* (23 June 1834).

⁴⁹ Letter to Sotheby, 10 Sept 1802 (Griggs, *Collected Letters*, 2:863).

tion here. Fear and its cognate anger contaminate poetic creativity: delirious mania is more poisonous than mere *dementia*.

It is worth stressing this, because of the tendency, in some critical discussions of Coleridge's distinction here, to treat the desynonymisation of 'fancy' and 'imagination' as a kind of absolute separation. In fact, just as there is a close conceptual copula between delirium and mania, so fancy is presented as *a portion of genius*. As J. Robert Barth notes:

This Imagination 'fuses,' to use Coleridge's words, while fancy merely 'aggregates.' This said, however, we must hasten to disavow any total divorce of imagination and fancy. To distinguish is not necessarily to separate. If it is clear throughout that imagination and fancy are as distinct throughout as symbol and mere metaphor, and distinct in the same ways, it is equally clear that they often work together in the same poem . . . for all the priority given to imagination it is important to keep in mind that Coleridge never undervalued the work of the fancy. There is good poetry written under the aegis of the fancy, as is clear from Coleridge's admiration of some of the better eighteenth-century poets. There is poetry of fancy too that contains imaginative elements . . . for example in the work of Collins and Cowper.⁵⁰

It is striking, too, that having introduced this powerful fancy/imagination distinction, Coleridge then parks it. At the moment we might expect it to be unpacked and elaborated, we are instead offered a slightly uneasy apology to the reader – metaphysics is his hobby horse, the possession which amounts to a kind of vanity, and for which he begs the reader's indulgence ('I trust therefore, that there will be more good humour than contempt, in the smile with which the reader chastises my self-complacency'). After a glance at other accounts of 'synonyms', he winds up the chapter with a quotation from Jeremy Taylor. We are about to embark on a 50,000-word digression away from the literary-biographical and into the metaphysical. It will be a long time before Coleridge brings us back to further discussion of his fancy/imagination distinction.

(b) The 'Philosophical' Chapters

Chapters 5–13 pose problems of simple comprehension in ways not true of the rest of the book. Yet understanding this lengthy central section is essential if the reader is to grasp the scope and integrity

⁵⁰ Barth, *The Symbolic Imagination* (1977; 2nd edition, New York: Fordham University Press, 2001), 77–9.

of the *Biographia* as a whole. The questions Coleridge addresses are perennial ones – Is there a personal God? Do we have immortal souls? If we do, how do our spirits interact with the material, non-spiritual stuff of the world? – questions most people have pondered to some extent or another in their lives. For Coleridge, these questions impinge directly and necessarily on the process of the creative imagination, and therefore on what makes the greatest art meaningful.

Chapter 5. The purpose of the fifth, sixth and seventh chapters is to mount an attack upon the materialist philosophy of David Hartley (1705–57). In his youth, young Coleridge had been so enthusiastic a Hartleyian that he even christened his son ‘Hartley’; but by the time he came to write the *Biographia* he had changed his opinion, and reacted strongly against ‘associationism’. Without that knowledge it’s easy to miss the continuing biographical thread here: in Chapter 4 Coleridge recalls his first encounter with Wordsworth. In Chapters 5, 6 and 7 he first rehearses and then dismisses Hartley’s philosophy, recapitulating his own intellectual development. Chapter 5 makes the case that what Hartley presented as new was in fact reworked from Aristotle; Chapter 6 elaborates the (as Coleridge sees it) internal incoherency and error of Hartley’s system, and Chapter 7 carries this on by suggesting the reasons why Hartley, though both learned and devout, got things so wrong.

Now, unlike some of the other intellectual figures Coleridge discusses (Hobbes, Locke, Hume, Kant and Schelling), Hartley’s reputation as a philosopher has barely survived into the twenty-first century. It is worth, therefore, dilating upon why Coleridge thought he merited so detailed a discussion, and more generally upon what is at stake in these chapters.

David Hartley’s *Observations on Man, his Frame, his Duty and his Expectations* (1749) offers a materialist, non-spiritual account of the operation of the mind. There are two main elements to Hartley’s theory. The first is a hypothesis about the way the nerves transmit sense data to, and mental impulses from, the brain. The theory that prevailed before Hartley was that nerves are hollow tubes containing a subtle ‘fluid’ that somehow effected this intercourse. Hartley argued – rightly – that nerves are solid, not hollow. He thought, moreover, that they operated by means of certain ‘vibrations’. In this he has, of course, been overtaken by subsequent scientific research: for we now know that the nerves transmit *electrical* signals to and from the brain.⁵¹

⁵¹ This is precisely the theory mockingly dismissed by Coleridge in this chapter: ‘the nerves of the brain considered as solid fibres [animated by] an electric light at once the

Lacking the capabilities to recognise bioelectricity, Hartley's 'vibrations' theory is a reasonable guess as to the mechanism of nervous function, although developing it leads him into a complex cul-de-sac of smaller 'vibratiuncles' that figure in the brain as persisting echoes of nervous vibration.

The second main element to Hartley's theory is his doctrine of *association*. Hartley thought human beings are born with minds that are in effect blank slates, and that experience and self-reflection develop consciousness by means of four types of similar association: firstly by linking ideas with experience (as a child learns to fear an angry dog once the dog has bitten him, by *associating* the idea of the dog and the unpleasant experience of being bitten), and thereafter in more complex ways by connecting ideas in the brain as meanings, memories and developing correspondences that inform volition and creative mentation. 'The names, smells, tastes, and tangible qualities of natural bodies', he says, 'suggest their visible appearances to the fancy, *i.e.* excite their visible ideas and *vice versa*, their visible appearances impressed upon the eye raise up those powers of reconnoitring their names, smells, tastes, and tangible qualities.'⁵² From this starting point, Hartley believed he could explain the entire operation of the mind: from conscious thought to sleep, from memory to creativity. 'The human mind', says Hartley, 'may be considered as endued with the faculties of *memory, imagination, or fancy, understanding, affection and will.*' The two terms in this list which Hartley treats as synonymous (imagination and fancy) are, of course, precisely what Coleridge so influentially desynonymises in Chapter 4.

The *Biographia* interrogates this Hartleyan scheme, concentrating on memory in Chapter 6, affection in Chapter 7, with will (specifically the possibility or otherwise of *free will*) and understanding through all three Chapters 5–7. It is 'association' that is Coleridge's main target; but we may as well hold in mind that Hartley considered 'vibrations' and 'associations' to be intimately linked.⁵³

Sensations may be said to be associated together, when their impressions [in the brain] are either made precisely at the same

immediate object and the ultimate organ of inward vision, which rises to the brain like an Aurora Borealis, and there disporting in various shapes'.

⁵² David Hartley, *Observations on Man, his Frame, his Duty and his Expectations* (1749), 1:42.

⁵³ 'The doctrine of *vibrations* may appear at first sight to have no connexion with that of *association*; however, if these doctrines are found in fact to contain the laws of the bodily and mental powers respectively, they must be related to each other, since the body and mind are. One may expect that *vibrations* should infer *association* as their effect, and *association* point to *vibrations* as its cause' (Hartley, *Observations*, 1:4).

instant of time, or in the contiguous successive instants. We may therefore distinguish association into two sorts, the synchronous, and the successive . . . The influence of association over our ideas, opinions, and affections, is so great and obvious, as scarcely to have escaped the notice of any writer who has treated of these, though the word *association*, in the particular sense here affixed to it, was first brought into use by Mr. Locke.⁵⁴

The youthful Coleridge found in Hartley a deeply persuasive, more physiologically detailed version of Locke's prior notion of the *tabula rasa*. He was particularly impressed by the idea that consciousness is formed by habit, not by original sin, because he wanted to believe that a just and equal society could *habituate* men and women to virtue. The later Coleridge wanted to jettison the whole materialist account of consciousness as pernicious. What changed?

The most obvious objection to Hartley's philosophy that underpins Coleridge's critique – the reason he reacted so severely against it – is the same objection religious people tend to make to materialism more generally, even today: that it offers an explanation of the cosmos that has no need for 'God' or 'soul'. Since, for many modern thinkers, this is precisely the *appeal* of materialism, it is worth stressing that this was *not* what Hartley was trying to prove. He was himself a devout man, a minister of the Church of England, and he was anxious not to be thought to promote atheistical conclusions. To that end, he divides his *Observations* into two parts. The first develops the purely materialist account of human consciousness, but the second sets out a string of 'proofs' for the existence of the Christian God. 'I no where deny practical free will', he insists in his preface:

I do most firmly believe upon the authority of the Scriptures, that the future punishment of the wicked will be exceedingly great both in degree and duration . . . were I able to urge any thing upon a profane careless world, which might convince them of the infinite hazard to which they expose themselves, I would not fail to do it, as the reader may judge even from those passages for which I have above apologized.

Hartley's tone here registers the worry that many readers would take Part 1 of the *Observations* as a proof that the human animal is nothing more than a complex biological machine, that consciousness needs no hypothesis of 'spirit' or 'soul' (let alone an *immortal* soul) to explain

⁵⁴ Hartley, *Observations*, 1:41.

it, and that accordingly death entails the annihilation of individual consciousness. This is, vehemently, *not* the model in which Hartley himself believed.

So Hartley's *Observations* is a book in two, rather disconnected, parts. The 'associationist' first part reads as a persuasively thorough explanation of consciousness as a merely material phenomenon: the nerves vibrate sensations to the brain, where they become ideas; those ideas aggregate by the various operations of association into what we recognise as thoughts, feelings, desires, memories and so on. But the second part makes no reference to this non-spiritual theory, instead developing a detailed theodicy – the necessary existence of God, the immortal human soul, and the moral and doctrinal duties imposed on the latter by the former. Hartley himself offers nothing beyond plain assertion of his faith to bridge these two apparently contradictory narratives. It fell to Joseph Priestley, writing about Hartley's ideas after his death, to propose a way of conceptually bridging the two parts.⁵⁵

Now, Coleridge is not trying to deny the common sense idea that 'association' has a part to play in the functioning of consciousness. Rather, he attacks the idea that association explains everything. This is the view he attributes to Sir James Mackintosh as 'affirmed in the lectures, delivered by him in Lincoln's Inn Hall':

that the law of association as established in the contemporaneity of the original impressions, formed the basis of all true psychology; and that any ontological or metaphysical science not contained in such (i.e. empirical) psychology, was but a web of abstractions and generalizations.

Given that this is what Coleridge sets out to refute, the argument he develops may strike modern readers as a little counter-intuitive. It has to do with a sort of appeal to authority, or precedent philosophy. We start with Mackintosh's own proposed pedigree for the idea:

Of this great fundamental law, [Mackintosh] declared HOBBS to have been the original *discoverer*, while its full application to the whole intellectual system we owed to David Hartley; who stood

⁵⁵ Priestley does this in *Hartley's Theory of the Human Mind, on the Principles of Association of Ideas, with Essays Relating to the Subject of It* (1775) – a book we know Coleridge read. In a nutshell, Priestley's argument is that though a human being is indeed merely a biological machine, and that consciousness therefore perishes with the body, nonetheless God, in his infinite power, brings our consciousnesses *back to life* in the realm of immortal ideas at the day of judgement. For a modern version of this theory, see Frank J. Tipler, *The Physics of Immortality: Modern Cosmology, God and the Resurrection of the Dead* (New York: Random House/Anchor, 1994).

in the same relation to Hobbs as Newton to Kepler; the law of association being that to the mind, which gravitation is to matter.

This narrative Coleridge then attacks. First, he insists that Hobbes 'had been anticipated by Des Cartes' in this matter, quoting an example from Descartes's *De Methodo* (a child whose arm had been amputated and who suffered from what nowadays we would call phantom limb syndrome) to illustrate 'the uncertainty with which we attribute any particular place to any inward pain or uneasiness'. According to Coleridge, Descartes showed that 'not only general terms, but generic images (under the name of abstract ideas) actually existed . . . As one word may become the general exponent of many, so by association a simple image may represent a whole class.' By making this case, Descartes gazumped Hobbes. Long, however, before either Hobbes or Descartes 'the law of association had been defined, and its important functions set forth by Melancthon, Ammerbach and Ludovicus Vives; more especially by the last'. Coleridge pauses to note that Vives uses 'phantasia' ('fancy') to mean 'the *active* function of the mind' and 'imaginatio' ('imagination') 'for the *passive* perception', which is the opposite to the way Coleridge uses those terms. But no sooner has he established the prior claim of these thinkers to the idea of 'association' than he hurries past them 'to the source of his doctrines', indeed 'to the first, so to the fullest and most perfect enunciation of the associative principle': Aristotle. A paragraph then asserts that Aristotle's version of 'association' is the best (being 'unmixed with fiction') via a string of not very fairly caricatured articulations of more recent versions of the theory. Another paragraph summarises Aristotle's ideas:

Ideas by having been together acquire a power of recalling each other; or every partial representation awakes the total representation of which it had been a part. In the practical determination of this common principle to particular recollections, he admits five agents or occasioning causes: 1st, connection in time, whether simultaneous, preceding, or successive; 2nd, vicinity or connection in space; 3rd, interdependence or necessary connection, as cause and effect; 4th, likeness; and 5th, contrast.

The chapter ends with Coleridge's claiming that it still remains 'to state wherein Hartley differs from Aristotle; then, to exhibit the grounds of my conviction, that he differed only to err'. Why does it take Coleridge a whole chapter to work around to Aristotle? If his point is that Hartley is not the originator of the idea of association (as indeed Hartley never claimed he was) then surely that could be

stated in a few sentences. It is hard to see what is gained by dragging in Mackintosh, Hobbes, Descartes, Melancthon, Ammerbach and Ludovicus Vives. More, saying that Hartley's ideas on association were anticipated by other thinkers, going back to Aristotle, does nothing to refute those ideas themselves – on the contrary, in fact. But Coleridge's point here is not that Hartley has produced a new version of a long-standing aspect of philosophical discourse, but rather that he (and his disciple Mackintosh) are merely the latest in a series of learned *recyclings* of ideas from Aristotle. Coleridge's aim in this chapter, in other words, is to put Hartley's 'associationism' in the same conceptual space as plagiarism, by way of suggesting that Hartley's theory amounts to a kind of libel *upon consciousness itself*. In Chapter 4 Coleridge has distinguished between two modes of thought, one limited to shuffling around preformed ideas and impressions, and the other radically creative. He does not quite put it in these terms, but another way of saying this would be to describe fancy as plagiaristic and imagination as creative. The limitation of Hartley's doctrine of the associations is that it is nothing more than a mode of fancy.

Chapter 6. The sixth chapter begins by asking 'whether any other philosophy be possible, but the mechanical; and again, whether the mechanical system can have any claim to be called philosophy'. These are matters that still engage philosophers of mind: matters, in other words, upon which no more general consensus has been reached even today.

But it may be said, that, by the sensations from the objects A and M, the nerves have acquired a disposition to the vibrations *a* and *m*, and therefore *a* need only be repeated in order to re-produce *m*. Now we will grant, for a moment, the possibility of such a disposition in a material nerve, which yet seems scarcely less absurd than to say, that a weather-cock had acquired a *habit* of turning to the east, from the wind having been so long in that quarter: for if it be replied, that we must take in the circumstance of *life*, what then becomes of the mechanical philosophy? And what is the *nerve*, but the flint which the wag placed in the pot as the first ingredient of his stone broth, requiring only salt, turnips, and mutton, for the remainder!

Coleridge's 'weather-cock' is an ur-form of a thought experiment familiar to later philosophers of mind. For a modern version, we might instance David Chalmers's *The Conscious Mind* (1996), which discusses whether a thermostat might be considered to be conscious. Of course, the thermostat would not be conscious in the sense that

you or I are ('certainly', Chalmers drily observes, 'it will not be very interesting to be a thermostat'), but perhaps this simple device does experience some rudimentary or pared-down version of what goes on in our heads.⁵⁶ After all, a thermostat does *some* of the things a conscious mind does: it responds to stimuli (the temperature of the room) by switching off, or on, or remaining the same. We could argue that, though vastly more complex and varied, this is basically what human consciousness is – a reactive-active mechanism. Without mentioning weather cocks (or thermostats) this is what Hartley argues, more or less.

One objection to this might be 'but neither the thermostat nor the weathervane can *think*, even in rudimentary form – because they are not alive!' But, as Coleridge notes, this doesn't address the problem ('thinking life', after all, is what we're trying to get at). He believes that a thoroughgoing mechanist or materialist must agree that (in a small way) the thermostat *is* alive. And actually, there are materialists who would be happy to concede this point, although it seems so absurd to Coleridge as to be self-refuting. His argument is not only that things which appear to exhibit rudimentary forms of 'consciousness' (like weathercocks, or thermostats) are not alive – but more forcefully that no agglomeration of such unalive systems could ever explain the reality of human mentation. He goes on:

But if we waive this, and pre-suppose the actual existence of such a disposition; two cases are possible. Either, every idea has its own nerve and correspondent oscillation, or this is not the case. If the latter be the truth, we should gain nothing by these dispositions; for then, every nerve having several dispositions, when the motion of any other nerve is propagated into it, there will be no ground or cause present, why exactly the oscillation *m* should arise, rather than any other to which it was equally pre-disposed. But if we take the former, and let every idea have a nerve of its own, then every nerve must be capable of propagating its motion into many other nerves; and again, there is no reason assignable, why the vibration *m* should arise, rather than any other ad libitum.

Coleridge is objecting to the lack of any directing or shaping element in Hartley's theory. In effect he reacts in part against the *passivity* he sees in Hartley's model of the conscious mind:

⁵⁶ David Chalmers, *The Conscious Mind: In Search of a Fundamental Theory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 293.

Conceive, for instance, a broad stream, winding through a mountainous country with an indefinite number of currents, varying and running into each other according as the gusts chance to blow from the opening of the mountains. The temporary union of several currents in one, so as to form the main current of the moment, would present an accurate image of Hartley's theory of the will.

But he also argues that Hartley's ideas give us no means by which the mind can regulate the input of its own sense data. 'Consider', he says, 'how immense must be the sphere of a total impression from the top of St Paul's church; and how rapid and continuous the series of such total impressions.' The human mind is certainly capable of taking in a very great range and number of sense data at once; but obviously there *are* limits to what our brains can process. If we are standing on top of the dome of St Paul's Cathedral, seeing the whole of London spread out below, what stops our minds being overwhelmed by the dataflow? If the ideas passed unmediated directly into the mind, Coleridge says, it 'would be absolute *delirium*'. So perhaps a kind of index of sensation is formed – perhaps a *partial* impression of the vista enters the brain, but the brain possesses the power to extrapolate from that detail to the whole? This is Coleridge's second hypothesis, that 'any one part of that impression might recall any other part', something he considers the same as saying that '*any* part of any impression might recall *any* part of any *other*, without a cause present to determine *what* it should be'. What might those principles be?

For to bring in the will, or reason, as causes of their own cause, that is, as at once causes and effects, can satisfy those only who, in their pretended evidences of a God having first demanded organization, as the sole cause and ground of intellect, will then coolly demand the pre-existence of intellect, as the cause and ground-work of organization.

This is Coleridge's way of engaging with one of the main currents of eighteenth-century philosophy of mind.

The tradition of thought most associated with John Locke proposed the mind as a passively recipient entity, a *tabula rasa* upon which experience writes. Hartley added to Locke's more general proposal a physiological mechanism to explain how this 'writing' takes place: the action of nerves carrying sense data to the brain and carrying volition from the brain to the body via 'vibrations'. He also proposed a principle by which those various data are aggregated into thoughts,

feelings, memories and so on: association. But what neither he nor Hume was able to do is to explain how the mind *selects*, or *orders*, its experience. For surely some selection, or ordering, takes place. This is the point of Coleridge's 'dome of St Paul's' example: that we humans live continually drenched (as it were) under a Niagara of sense-inputs. How do we avoid being overwhelmed ('absolute *delirium*')? Since most of us are not overwhelmed, there must be something 'in' the mind that keeps us sane. Coleridge asks: what is it? More to the point, he declares that Hartley's theory lacks 'a cause present to determine *what*' amongst the chaos of sensory inputs is selected. This *what* is the thing called by the later eighteenth-century philosophers 'judgement'. Here's Isaiah Berlin:

One of the problems of Locke's original theory was to account for judgment – that is, the capacity to affirm and deny, believe and disbelieve, and in general reflect *about* data, rather than merely register them as they showered in upon the passive tabula rasa which the mind is conceived as being. Such experiences as reflection and judgment, which seem to require activities such as comparing, distinguishing, classifying etc., do not prima facie seem compatible with the purely passive photographic film that the tabula rasa resembles.⁵⁷

This remained a problem throughout the century. Condillac (with whom Coleridge also engages in the *Biographia*) thought he had solved it by proposing 'attention' as a faculty of pure sensation that is nonetheless capable of effecting judgement. But as Berlin notes, 'his theory cannot be regarded as successful, as anyone who troubles to read relevant discussions in the works of Kant can see for himself'.⁵⁸ Coleridge would have agreed; and in subsequent chapters he aligns his own understanding of the problem with Kant's.

So, one difficulty Coleridge has with Locke, and with Hartley, is the mechanistic passivity of their model of mind. Hartley, and Locke before him, tacitly concedes what Coleridge calls 'the absence of all interference of the will, reason, and judgment'; and without these things he thinks consciousness would surely be a chaos. Now, the

⁵⁷ Isaiah Berlin, *The Age of Enlightenment: The Eighteenth-Century Philosophers* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1956), 266.

⁵⁸ Berlin, *The Age of Enlightenment*, 267. He goes on: 'attention, comparison, belief, knowledge, cannot be identified with "pure sensation" which is, presumably, pure receptivity, incapable of rounding on itself and choosing, weighing, rejecting, and building theories out of the undifferentiated "raw materials" which, *ex hypothesi*, is all that it itself is. A succession of sensations cannot be turned into a sensation of succession.'

reader might object that a simpler explanation for Coleridge's 'St Paul's dome' problem would be to posit an *imperfect* process of assimilating sense data. I daresay many people would argue that actually we forget a lot, and fail to notice a good deal more. But Coleridge won't have this. He wants to argue that the mind forgets nothing and omits nothing from the myriad sense data that flows into it. Although the reason why he was so committed to this version of our mental capacity does not become fully apparent until Chapter 13, he insists on it here. To support his model of the mind he brings in a strange story he heard during his time in Germany in the 1790s. An illiterate serving maid began speaking Latin, Greek and Hebrew. The locals assumed she was possessed by a learned devil, but a doctor traced her history back to a time in her youth when she had lived with an uncle who used to read aloud from books in those languages in her presence. She did not herself speak or understand anything other than German, but – and this is Coleridge's point – the childhood memory of her uncle's recitations was so precise that, under later hysterical conditions, she was able to repeat them verbatim.

It's an odd tale. Coleridge insists it is 'authenticated' (although it doesn't appear in any printed materials from the period); but it seems a slim reed to prop up so large a claim. 'This authenticated case furnishes both proof and instance, that reliques of sensation may exist for an indefinite time in a latent state, in the very same order in which they were originally impressed.' How so? Because 'all thoughts are in themselves imperishable'. If we could only find a way of 'rendering' our 'intelligent faculty more comprehensive' (as, we assume, this unnamed serving girl did partially via her fever) then we would remember everything that ever happened to us, and every thought we ever had. Every single thing we saw from the top of St Paul's that day, down to the smallest detail, would come back to us. Should this happen to the 'body terrestrial' it would be a kind of madness; but '*the body celestial*' would be a different matter:

And this, this, perchance, is the dread book of judgement, in the mysterious hieroglyphics of which every idle word is recorded! Yea, in the very nature of a living spirit, it may be more possible that heaven and earth should pass away, than that a single act, a single thought, should be loosened or lost from that living chain of causes, to all whose links, conscious or unconscious, the free-will, our only absolute *self*, is co-extensive and co-present.

Coleridge, we might note, has produced no *evidence* that this is the case, beyond the hearsay story of one possible explanation for

one otherwise unrecorded case of hysteria in eighteenth-century Germany. More, as soon as he proposes it, he backs away ('not now dare I longer discourse of this, waiting for a loftier mood, and a nobler subject, warned from within and from without, that it is profanation to speak of these mysteries') with a quotation from Plotinus to the effect that we could not see sunlight unless we possessed within us a spiritual illumination.

Chapter 7. Having made the (I think) startling claim that our minds contain within them literally everything we have ever sensed or thought, Coleridge returns to his critique of what he considers the debilitating passivity of associationism. Though Chapter 7 starts with a description of Locke and Hartley's theory of mind as 'the phantasma chaos of association', it quickly moves on from Chapter 6's focus on perception to a consideration of *action*. How do human beings *do* things, according to Hartley's theory? Coleridge says that they can't – at least, not according to Hartley's account:

According to this hypothesis the disquisition, to which I am at present soliciting the reader's attention, may be as truly said to be written by Saint Paul's church, as by *me*: for it is the mere motion of my muscles and nerves; and these again are set in motion from external causes equally passive, which external causes stand themselves in interdependent connection with every thing that exists or has existed. Thus the whole universe co-operates to produce the minutest stroke of every letter, save only that I myself, and I alone, have nothing to do with it, but merely the causeless and *effectless* beholding of it when it is done.

This paragraph needs a little unpacking. In it, Coleridge is saying more than that Hartley views human agents as passive Aeolian harps – although elsewhere in this chapter he goes on to say precisely that: that Hartley posited consciousness as 'the common product of the breeze and the harp'; 'the inventor of the watch . . . did not in reality invent it; he only looked on, while the blind causes, the only true artists, were unfolding themselves'; 'Mr. SOUTHEY and LORD BYRON [only] *fancied* himself composing his "RODERICK," and the other his "CHILDE HAROLD"', and so on. But he is also making a larger point. Coleridge attacks the notion that 'I myself, and I alone, have nothing to do with it, but merely the causeless and *effectless* beholding of it when it is done'. In fact, he says, this is to say not that 'blind causes' (whatever they are) act, but rather that *everything in the universe* does so. In other words, Coleridge extrapolates Hartleyan 'association' to the point where literally *everything* is associated directly with every-

thing else, such that therefore nothing at all is left with any individual agency. The mention of Saint Paul's is a little distracting, since only a few paragraphs earlier the dome of that famous cathedral was being invoked as an eminence from which the mind perceives. Now, it seems, Coleridge wants to use the edifice as a rebus not only for perception, but for *action*. James Engell and Walter Jackson Bate think 'Coleridge's example of St Paul's . . . actually producing his prose' has 'a close analogue in Jacobi's *Über die Lehre des Spinoza*', which we know he read and reworked in this portion of the *Biographia*. They quote the relevant passage:

What you adopt from the doctrine of fatalism is enough for me; since one needs no more than to establish that St Peter's in Rome built itself; that Newton's discoveries were made by his body; and that in all such instances the soul is occupied only with looking on.⁵⁹

'St Peter's in Rome built itself' may indeed have prompted Coleridge's 'the disquisition may be as truly said to be written by Saint Paul's church, as by *me*'. To be clear: he is not suggesting that St Paul's built itself; he is making the rather more disjointed conceptual connection (as lutes lead to lobsters) that St Paul's Cathedral wrote the *Biographia Literaria*. The proximity of the passage to the end of the previous chapter suggests one way of reading his analogy ('my book is written by the sum total of everything I have taken in as sense data'), which seems, at first blush, less improbable than the Jacobian thesis that (according to Hartley's theory) 'the builders of a cathedral, as the writers of books, are mere passive onlookers', and *considerably* less improbable than what Coleridge actually implies – that 'since Hartley believes everything in the universe is directly associated with every other thing, we may as well say that St Paul's wrote my book'.

It seems to me that these various, not really compatible, interpretations of Coleridge's objection are all in play here to different degrees. One purpose of Chapter 7 is to explode further the legitimacy of Hartley's theory; and a perfectly useful rhetorical strategy for doing that is to use exaggeration to imply absurd consequences from Hartleyan premises. A cathedral writing a book is one such absurdity – or it *would* be, if a major part of the larger project of the *Biographia* weren't precisely to show how crucial a rôle Coleridge's religious faith, his *church*, has played in his own creative life. For each absurdity he proposes, Coleridge implicitly implies an un-absurd truth of

⁵⁹ Engell and Bate, *Biographia Literaria*, 118.

imaginative consciousness: ‘everything is associated with everything’ is both saying that a large stone building in London has written a book, *and* saying that there is a sacred oneness that informs all creative actions (‘Thus the whole universe co-operates to produce the minutest stroke of every letter’).

‘Church’ is at the heart of what is being argued here. The chapter’s third paragraph in effect accuses Hartleyan associationism of blasphemy:

The existence of an infinite spirit, of an intelligent and holy will, must, on this system, be mere articulated motions of the air. For as the function of the human understanding is no other than merely (to appear to itself) to combine and to apply the phenomena of the association; and as these derive all their reality from the primary sensations; and the sensations again all their reality from the impressions *ab extra*; a God not visible, audible, or tangible, can exist only in the sounds and letters that form his name and attributes. If in *ourselves* there be no such faculties as those of the will, and the scientific reason, we must either have an *innate* idea of them, which would overthrow the whole system; or we can have no idea at all. The process, by which Hume degraded the notion of cause and effect into a blind product of delusion and habit, into the mere sensation of proceeding life (*nisus vitalis*) associated with the images of the memory; this same process must be repeated to the equal degradation of every *fundamental* idea in ethics or theology.

This is strong stuff; a kind of belated tact leads Coleridge, in the very next paragraph, to pull back from calling Hartley a heretic (‘the excellent and pious Hartley’), on the grounds – hardly flattering to Hartley’s memory – that ‘God only can know, *who* is a heretic’. The paragraph that claims Hartley reduces ‘the existence of an infinite spirit, of an intelligent and holy will’ to ‘mere articulated motions of the air’ does so on the logic that sense data and ‘association’ leave no room for divinity. But, again, Coleridge’s expression is curiously tangled. It would be one thing to say: ‘a God not visible, audible, or tangible, only exists as a story that people tell themselves’. But it is quite another to say that an intangible God exists ‘only in the sounds and letters that form his name and attributes’. For Coleridge, sounds and letters are very far from being unsanctified: the Mosaic ‘I AM THAT I AM’ and the Johannine *λόγος* were central to his theology. The second half of the paragraph (from ‘If in *ourselves* there be no such faculties as those of the will, and the scientific reason . . .’) returns to

the argument made in the previous chapter: that consciousness must contain some structure of judgement to stop the Niagara of sense-impressions from overwhelming it. Coleridge does this to recapitulate a common exception to that theory – that if this judgement is innate it overturns Hartley’s theory, and that if it is *not* innate associationism cannot explain how it comes to be there. Coleridge then brings in Hume’s celebrated degradation of ‘cause and effect’ from law to habit, arguing that a similar degradation must ensue with respect to every moral or religious assumption. But it’s easy to miss the crucial term, buried in parentheses towards the end. That term is: *nisus vitalis*.

It means ‘vital tension’. ‘Nisus’ is a Latin poetic term meaning ‘a pressing or resting upon or against’, ‘a striving, exertion, labour, effort’. Coleridge here is drawing on a footnote in David Hume’s *A Treatise of Human Nature* (1749), Section 7 ‘Of the Idea of Necessary Connexion’:

It may be pretended, that the resistance which we meet with in bodies, obliging us frequently to exert our force, and call up all our power, this gives us the idea of force and power. It is this *nisus*, or strong endeavour of which we are conscious, that is the original impression from which this idea is copied. But, first, we attribute power to a vast number of objects, where we never can suppose this resistance or exertion of force to take place; to the Supreme Being, who never meets with any resistance; to the mind in its command over its ideas and limbs, in common thinking and motion, where the effect follows immediately upon the will, without any exertion or summoning up of force; to inanimate matter, which is not capable of this sentiment. Secondly, this sentiment of an endeavour to overcome resistance has no known connexion with any event: What follows it we know by experience, but could not know it a priori. It must, however, be confessed, that the animal *nisus* which we experience, though it can afford no accurate precise idea of power, enters very much into that vulgar, inaccurate idea, which is formed of it.

Coleridge reacts against this model that ‘association’ operates according to a principle similar to the action of muscles on the human skeleton. Yet at the same time he is drawn to precisely that action. As with the notion of an atheistical reduction of God to ‘mere articulated motions of the air’ that is simultaneously an empty naming and, somehow, the holy sounds and letters that form his *λόγος* and (I AM THAT I AM) attributes; so this blind mechanical hinge is also the principle by which God works in the world.

Chapter 7 is itself a *nisus*, a fulcrum chapter in the larger structure of the whole, moving forward by going backwards. It has its place in the larger narrative of Coleridge's life as he works towards expressing his sense of having suffered setbacks and misery *in order* to come to fuller joy and wisdom. This is embodied formally in the chapter as well as on the level of content. The first three paragraphs mock Hartley's system in increasingly severe terms – as ridiculous as the *Spectator's* cat-harpsichord; an empty 'puppet notion'; it fails as an explanation; it blasphemes against God. Then, abruptly, Coleridge reverses the rhetorical direction of the chapter ('far, very far am I from burthening with the odium of these consequences the moral characters of those who first formed, or have since adopted the system!'); and the last three paragraphs develop a different theory of action-counteraction:

In every voluntary movement we first counteract gravitation, in order to avail ourselves of it. It must exist, that there may be a something to be counteracted, and which by its re-action, aids the force that is exerted to resist it. Let us consider, what we do when we leap. We first resist the gravitating power by an act purely voluntary, and then by another act, voluntary in part, we yield to it in order to alight on the spot, which we had previously proposed to ourselves. Now let a man watch his mind while he is composing; or, to take a still more common case, while he is trying to recollect a name; and he will find the process completely analogous.

This in turn leads to one of the most celebrated images in the *Biographia*:

Most of my readers will have observed a small water-insect on the surface of rivulets, which throws a cinque-spotted shadow fringed with prismatic colours on the sunny bottom of the brook; and will have noticed, how the little animal *wins* its way up against the stream, by alternate pulses of active and passive motion, now resisting the current, and now yielding to it in order to gather strength and a momentary *fulcrum* for a further propulsion.

This is a rhetorical device of a rather different sort to those employed in the first half of the chapter. There, unthinking entities (the cats in the cat-harpsichord; St Paul's Cathedral; Butler's automaton) are invoked to dissuade the reader via mockery; here, an unthinking entity, a water boatman, is described to *persuade* via its beauty and singularity. And it *is* beautifully done; not least because we, as readers, feel that Coleridge has really captured something important about

our own thought processes: ‘This is no unapt emblem of the mind’s self-experience in the act of thinking.’ His point, though is larger:

There are evidently two powers at work, which relatively to each other are active and passive; and this is not possible without an intermediate faculty, which is at once both active and passive. (In philosophical language, we must denominate this intermediate faculty in all its degrees and determinations, the IMAGINATION)

It is only at this point that we realise that the argument has reached back to reconnect with Chapter 4: this, in other words, is a different way of coming at the distinction between fancy and imagination. As in that chapter, both powers are ‘at work’. Coleridge is not denying that sense data do somehow make their way to the mind, or that there is such a thing as ‘association’ (‘seeing a mackerel, it may happen, that I immediately think of gooseberries, because I [previously] ate mackerel with gooseberries as the sauce’). But, as with Fancy in the composition of poetry, this is not enough in and of itself. More pointedly, this passage functions as a kind of intermediary point on the journey from the bipartite model of fancy/ imagination in Chapter 4, and to the tripartite model of primary imagination/secondary imagination/ fancy in Chapter 13. Here, clearly, ‘the IMAGINATION’ has to find its place somehow in between ‘the active’ and ‘the passive’ principles of consciousness, partaking in some unexplained way of both.

Chapter 8. The eighth chapter declares itself as a critique of two mutually exclusive ‘explanations’ of the relationship of body and mind (or body and soul), neither of which persuades Coleridge. One is ‘materialism’: that there is nothing in the cosmos except matter, and that ‘mind’ somehow derives from a material basis. The other is ‘hylozoism’, the belief that everything is, in some sense, mind – from people and animals down to trees, rocks and even atoms. Some thinkers have taken this latter to be self-evidently absurd, as if atoms buzzed around having thoughts inside tiny brains. For others, hylozoism promised to unite the new materialist ‘science’ and traditional theology.⁶⁰ Now, the use of this terminology (‘hylozoism’, ‘associationism’, ‘materialism’) may strike some modern readers as offputting, as if Coleridge is engaged here in a piece of dusty territorial bickering over the specifics of some long-forgotten intellectual

⁶⁰ In 1798 Novalis gushed: ‘Die Verknüpfung des Spinozism und Hylozoism würde die Vereinigung des Materialism und Theism herbeiführen!’: ‘The linking of Spinozism and Hylozoism would bring about the unification of Materialism and Theism!’ (Paul Kluckhohn (ed.), *Novalis: Schriften* (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer Verlag, 1988), 324).

argument. Nothing could be further from the truth. None of the questions Coleridge addresses here have gone away; for even today there is no consensus among either scientists or philosophers as to how to answer the question he poses here.

This is what philosophers call ‘the hard problem’. How can consciousness be the product of non-conscious matter? Jerry Fodor summarises: ‘it is widely supposed that the world is made entirely of mere matter’; but, if so ‘how could mere matter be conscious? How, in particular, could a couple of pounds of grey tissue have experiences?’ He outlines a couple of possible solutions to this problem, starting with the idea that consciousness is immaterial:

One might hold that the world isn’t made entirely of matter . . . [that] there is also a fundamentally different kind of stuff – mind-stuff, call it – and consciousness resides in that. Notoriously, however, this view has hard problems of its own. For example, if matter-stuff and mind-stuff are of fundamentally different kinds, how are causal relations between them possible? How is it possible that eating should be caused by feeling peckish or feeling peckish by not eating? For this and other reasons, mind-stuff has mostly fallen out of fashion.⁶¹

Now, all the key eighteenth-century philosophers were exercised by the ‘hard problem’ (though they didn’t call it that), and the big names all advanced various solutions to it. But unlike Fodor, for them ‘mind stuff’, or more precisely ‘soul stuff’, was still very much in the conceptual mix. Descartes suggested that human beings are material bodies and immaterial souls in a peculiar union, the mind-stuff going through a magic router called ‘the pineal gland’ that enables it to interact with the matter-stuff. But, for reasons akin to the ones to which Fodor alludes, many thinkers were unpersuaded by that. Other philosophers (Locke, Hartley and Priestly, to name three whom Coleridge mentions several times in the *Biographia*) claimed that only matter-stuff exists, and mind-stuff was just an effect of the way the matter-stuff of the brain operated, not unlike (although this isn’t, of course, an analogy any of those gentlemen used) ‘speed’ emerges from the proper operation of the various non-speed-ish components of a motorcycle. Berkeley approached the problem from the other side, and denied that there was anything called ‘matter’. He thought, in effect, that everything in the cosmos is ‘mind-stuff’.

⁶¹ Jerry Fodor, ‘Headaches Have Themselves’, *London Review of Books*, 29:10 (May 2007), 9.

But Coleridge refused to agree, in part because he did not want to give up his belief that there *is* a knowable ‘external world’ (what Kant calls the ‘thing-in-itself’) outside the human mind. Berkeley’s idealism, according to Coleridge in Chapter 8, ‘removes all reality and immediateness of perception, and places us in a dream-world of phantoms and spectres, the inexplicable swarm and equivocal generation of motions in our own brains’.

This potential breach between ‘soul’ and world haunted the thinkers of the eighteenth century. It haunted them in part because they worried that the path of truth might compel them to give up ‘soul’ (and with it, Christianity) altogether. This is one reason why Kant proved so influential. He argued in the *Pure Reason* critique that ‘mind’ and ‘world’ were not separate entities after all, because key aspects of the world (dimension, causality and so on) are actually *the way the mind is structured*. Coleridge was only one of several British Romantics who took this to be a great healing of the breach.

Chapter 8 works through these questions. Coleridge begins by dismissing ‘Cartesian dualism’ (‘the absolute and essential heterogeneity of the soul as intelligence, and the body as matter . . . [soul] a *thinking* substance; and body a *space-filling* substance’) essentially on the grounds Fodor mentions above. Radically dissimilar substances can have no way of influencing one another: ‘the law of causality holds only between homogeneous things, i.e. things having some common property; and cannot extend from one world into another, its opposite’. Coleridge then dismisses Leibniz’s ingenious but counter-intuitive solution to the mind/body problem, ‘pre-established harmony’, although he does so on the rather flimsy grounds that it is ‘repugnant to our *common sense*’. Hylozoism is disposed of on the grounds of Okham’s razor – that it replaces the problem of how one body interacts with one soul with the problem of how one body interacts with a million souls. The solution to the mind/body problem

cannot consist with the arbitrary power of multiplying attributes by occult qualities . . . we can acquire [no] clearer notion of our soul, by being told that we have a million of souls, and that every atom of our bodies has a soul of its own.

Okham’s razor (although Coleridge does not invoke it by name here) is at least a recognised philosophical principle. Coleridge’s objections to Berkeley are not nearly so substantive – Coleridge may not *like* the idea of existing in a phantom cosmos of ideas rather than a ‘real’ cosmos of things, but that doesn’t prove that Berkeley is wrong. And his objection to Leibniz (that his philosophy offends common

sense) is turned wholly around in the chapter's last paragraph, where the appeal to common sense is roundly mocked:

By the very same argument the supporters of the Ptolemaic system might have rebuffed the Newtonian, and pointing to the sky with self-complacent grin have appealed to *common sense*, whether the sun did not move and the earth stand still.

Does this look like inconsistency? The train of Coleridge's argument here is not easy to follow, especially in the latter paragraphs of this chapter. It is, I think, possible to tease out something fairly conceptually coherent, although the pay-off does not come until Chapter 13 – a long way ahead. Folded in amongst his objections to Cartesian dualism, materialism and hylozoism is Coleridge's own suggested solution to 'the hard problem'; but – again – this is adverted to so obliquely that the reader could be forgiven for missing it. I'll come back to this in a moment.

The 'self-complacent grin' and appeal to common sense that Coleridge mocks here belong to the unthinking individual who asserts 'that's just the way things are'. The proximate cause of his scorn are Hartleyan-Priestleyan 'associationists', but the chapter as a whole has a larger brief. How can the mere motion of material atoms 'metamorphose itself into perception or will'? This, Coleridge thinks, is a problem 'the materialist has hitherto left, not only as incomprehensible as he found it, but has aggravated it into a comprehensible absurdity'. He poses a series of questions to his straw-man materialist, including: How can particles create 'sensuous intuitions'? How does the 'outside' world of objects get 'inside' consciousness? If an object like a chair can somehow 'get inside' the soul, Coleridge asks, then wouldn't it be able to 'permeate and wholly possess' the soul? To all such questions, he says, the materialist can only answer: 'that's just the way things are'. Coleridge refuses to accept this, seeing it (rightly, I think) as an abdication of the responsibilities of inquiry, a version of the shrug of the shoulders, 'we just don't know':

The most consistent proceeding of the dogmatic materialist is to fall back into the common rank of *soul-and-bodyists*; to affect the mysterious, and declare the whole process a revelation *given*, and not to be *understood*, which it would be profane to examine too closely. *Datur non intelligitur*.

There's a neat scene early in Kim Stanley Robinson's novel *Green Mars* (1994) in which schoolchildren, learning science, taunt their

teacher by replying to all his explanations about the physical universe with the question ‘why?’:

He would start at the blackboard, and behind his back they would roll their eyes and make faces as he droned on about partial pressures or infrared rays. Then one of them would see an opening and begin the game. He was helpless before it. He would say something like, ‘In nonshivering thermogenesis the body produces heat using futile cycles,’ and one of them would raise a hand and say, ‘But why, Sax?’ and everyone would stare hard at their lectern and not look at each other, while Sax would frown as if this had never happened before, and say, ‘Well, it creates heat without using as much energy as shivering does. The muscle proteins contract, but instead of grabbing they just slide over each other, and that creates the heat.’

Jackie, so sincerely the whole class nearly lost it: ‘But how?’

He was blinking now, so fast they almost exploded watching him. ‘Well, the amino acids in the proteins have broken covalent bonds, and the breaks release what is called bond dissociation energy.’

‘But why?’

Blinking ever harder: ‘Well, that’s just a matter of physics.’ He diagrammed vigorously on the blackboard: ‘Covalent bonds are formed when two atomic orbitals merge to form a single bond orbital, occupied by electrons from both atoms. Breaking the bond releases thirty to a hundred kcals of stored energy.’

Several of them asked, in chorus, ‘But why?’

This got him into subatomic physics, where the chain of whys and because could go on for a half hour without him ever once saying something they could understand. Finally they would sense they were near the end game. ‘But why?’

‘Well,’ going cross-eyed as he tried to backtrack, ‘atoms want to get to their stable number of electrons, and they’ll share electrons when they have to.’

‘But why?’

Now he was looking trapped. ‘That’s just the way atoms bond. One of the ways.’

‘But WHY?’

A shrug. ‘That’s how the atomic force works. That’s how things came out – ’

And they all would shout, ‘*in the Big Bang.*’

They would howl with glee, and Sax's forehead would knot up as he realized that they had done it to him again.⁶²

What's particularly strong here, I think, is the sense this passage conveys that this repeated stepping-back along the chain of causation, this reiterated 'why?' is simultaneously something childish – kids love this kind of game – *and* something profound, and profoundly unsettling. Robinson gets at something important about the way science 'explains' the universe; and his point is actually very Coleridgean. As far as Coleridge is concerned, this ultimate 'shrug' is unacceptable. Not that 'the whole process' is 'a revelation *given*, and not to be *understood*', but that the whole process entails a chain of cause and effect that is finally grounded only in 'well that's just how things are'. In an anticipation of the celebrated story about the lady who supposedly told Bertrand Russell that 'it's turtles all the way down',⁶³ Coleridge notes:

It would be easy to explain a thought from the image on the retina, and that from the geometry of light, if this very light did not present the very same difficulty. We might as rationally chant the Brahmin creed of the tortoise that supported the bear, that supported the elephant, that supported the world, to the tune of "This is the house that Jack built."⁶⁴

To those who might object that religion surely faces the same problem as science in this regard, Coleridge says that 'the *sic Deo placitum est*' is enough to satisfy the faithful, but that a physical scientist cannot permit herself to use 'God' as a stopgap: 'an answer to the whence? and why? is no answer to the how? which alone is the physiologist's

⁶² Kim Stanley Robinson, *Green Mars* (New York: Random House, 1994), 2–3.

⁶³ 'A well-known scientist (some say it was Bertrand Russell) once gave a public lecture on astronomy. He described how the earth orbits around the sun and how the sun, in turn, orbits around the centre of a vast collection of stars called our galaxy. At the end of the lecture, a little old lady at the back of the room got up and said: "What you have told us is rubbish. The world is really a flat plate supported on the back of a giant tortoise." The scientist gave a superior smile before replying, "What is the tortoise standing on?" "You're very clever, young man, very clever," said the old lady. "But it's turtles all the way down!"' (Stephen Hawking, *A Brief History of Time* (London: Bantam, 1988), 1)

⁶⁴ Coleridge must have been aware of the passage by David Hume: 'How can we satisfy ourselves without going on in infinitum? And, after all, what satisfaction is there in that infinite progression? Let us remember the story of the INDIAN philosopher and his elephant. It was never more applicable than to the present subject. If the material world rests upon a similar ideal world, this ideal world must rest upon some other; and so on, without end. It were better, therefore, never to look beyond the present material world' (David Hume, *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion* (1779), 94).

concern. It is a mere *sophisma pigrum*, and (as Bacon hath said) the arrogance of *pusillanimitas*.'

This in turn has its relevance to the slightly clotted line of argument in Coleridge's eighth chapter. What Coleridge objects to in Leibniz's 'pre-established harmony' and Berkeley's idealism is not that they can be proved wrong, but precisely that they *can't* – they float free of proof, either way. They evade the proper responsibility of chasing up the rigorous chain of reasoning.

And what of Coleridge's own solution to 'the hard problem'? The short answer is that nowhere in *this* chapter does Coleridge clearly spell out what his solution is. He does *have* a solution, I think; and in Chapter 8 there are two places where he intimates it – although he doesn't finally spell it out until Chapter 13. One is right at the beginning, hidden in the middle of his dismissal of Cartesian dualism:

Des Cartes was the first philosopher, who introduced the absolute and essential heterogeneity of the soul as intelligence, and the body as matter. The assumption, and the form of speaking, have remained, though the denial of all other properties to matter but that of extension, on which denial the whole system of dualism is grounded, has been long exploded. For since impenetrability is intelligible only as a mode of resistance; its admission places the essence of *matter* in an act or power, which it possesses in common with *spirit*; and body and spirit are therefore no longer absolutely heterogeneous, but *may* without any *absurdity* be supposed to be different modes, or degrees in perfection, of a common substratum. To this possibility, however, it was not the fashion to advert. The soul was a *thinking* substance; and body a *space-filling* substance.

'This possibility' – the one which followers of Descartes do not consider it 'the fashion to advert' – is that 'mind' and 'body', since they cannot be made of *different* substances, must be made of the *same* substance. Coleridge's logic is as follows:

1. 'Impenetrability' (a characteristic of matter, or at least of the fundamental building blocks of matter, atoms) is 'a mode of resistance'.
2. Resistance, in turn, is 'an act or power'.
3. The ability to act (or the power to act) is characteristic of spirit.
4. Therefore matter and spirit are the same thing (specifically, they are both modes, or 'degrees in perfection', of a common substratum).

That Coleridge buries this away rather than spelling it out speaks to an understandable reticence. It is not a strong argument. If I push

at a locked door, the door resists my attempts to penetrate beyond it; but to attribute that resistance to (let's say) stubbornness on behalf of the door would be only to employ a figure of speech. An actual belief that the door was consciously and stubbornly resisting me would be an index of naivety, or perhaps of animism. Worse, in a way (from Coleridge's point of view at any rate), is that this argument comes close to Berkeley's idealism: for Berkeley also believed that body and soul were made out of the same substance – soul.

The second place in this chapter where Coleridge proposes a solution to the 'hard problem' is even more oblique:

I shall not dilate further on this subject; because it will (if God grant health and permission) be treated of at large and systematically in a work, which I have many years been preparing, on the PRODUCTIVE LOGOS human and divine; with, and as the introduction to, a full commentary on the Gospel of St. John.

This intimates that a solution is to be found in the divine word without spelling out exactly what that solution will be. He raises our hopes by continuing, 'To make myself intelligible as far as my present subject requires, it will be sufficient briefly to observe . . .'. But what briefly suffices is to provide another three-part dismissal of Hartleyan associationism, not to prove his own case. We are left with the reiterated sense (a) that this solution will not be Cartesian dualism, or Berkleyan idealism, or Leibnizian monads, or Hartleyan materialism; and (b) that it will not fall back on the too-facile *sic Deo placitum est*. This is the position from which the *Biographia* moves into its lengthy ninth chapter.

Chapter 9. This chapter begins briskly: Coleridge has studied Locke, Berkeley, Leibnitz, and Hartley, and in none of them (as Chapter 8 made plain) has he found a satisfactory answer to the 'hard problem' of how 'mind-stuff' exists in and interacts with a cosmos not made of mind-stuff. Indeed, the first two paragraphs rattle rather hec-tically through the whole history of philosophy. A footnote mentions Kant's *Kritik der Reinen Vernunft*, and Kant is an unspoken presence behind the summary. Coleridge's

How can we make bricks without straw? Or build without cement? We learn all things indeed by *occasion* of experience; but the very facts so learned force us inward on the antecedents, that must be pre-supposed in order to render experience itself possible.

– is his way of framing Kant's 'are synthetic *a priori* truths possible?' But when Coleridge says that reading Plato, Plotinus, Ficino, Proclus,

Gemistius Pletho, Giordano Bruno, Sir Philip Sidney and Fulke Greville ‘all contributed to prepare my mind for the reception and welcoming of the Cogito quia Sum, et Sum quia Cogito; a philosophy of seeming hardihood, but certainly the most ancient, and therefore presumptively the most natural’ – the ‘seeming’ is doing quite a lot of hidden work there. Descartes’s ‘I think therefore I am’ is, of course, powerfully critiqued by Kant, who (in a nutshell) argues that we do not ‘think’ in the abstract, but always think *about specific things*, and moreover in ways structured by the twelve categorical forms Coleridge mentions in his footnote: Quantity (Unity; Plurality; Totality) – Quality (Reality; Negation; Limitation) – Relation (Inherence/Subsistence; Cause/Effect; Reciprocity) – Modality (Possibility/Impossibility; Existence/Inexistence; Necessity/Contingency).

In the third paragraph of this chapter, Coleridge puts this process of analytically philosophising the spirit on hold to explore an alternative to rational philosophy – the mystic vision that directly apprehends the divine, like Jacob Böhme. From a network of metaphysics too complex for adults to grasp to a plain truth in the light of which we become again as little children. Or, to quote the passage Coleridge actually cites (Luke 10:21): ‘In that hour Jesus rejoiced in spirit, and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes’.

This is an important step in the larger argument of the *Biographia*. It is not, of course, that Coleridge here gives up rational metaphysical logic altogether (far from it!), but rather that he, for the first time in the ‘philosophical chapters’, brings in a parallel metaphysics of the *affect*. The arguments here are about the heart as well as the head.

O! it requires deeper feeling, and a stronger imagination, than belong to most of those, to whom reasoning and fluent expression have been as a trade learnt in boyhood, to conceive with what *might*, with what inward *strivings* and *commotion*, the perception of a new and vital TRUTH takes possession of an uneducated man of genius.

‘Imagination’ is not a carelessly deployed piece of nomenclature here; and its linkage with ‘deep feeling’ is part of the larger process of defining it.

The feeling of gratitude, which I cherish toward these men, has caused me to digress further than I had foreseen or proposed;

but to have passed them over in an historical sketch of my literary life and opinions, would have seemed to me like the denial of a debt, the concealment of a boon. For the writings of these mystics acted in no slight degree to prevent my mind from being imprisoned within the outline of any single dogmatic system. They contributed to keep alive the *heart* in the *head*; gave me an indistinct, yet stirring and working presentiment, that all the products of the mere reflective faculty partook of DEATH, and were as the rattling twigs and sprays in winter, into which a sap was yet to be propelled from some root to which I had not penetrated, if they were to afford my soul either food or shelter.

Straight away, however, Coleridge begins to reel this argument back in. Mere feeling is not a reliable guide. These mystics may lead the souls ‘into an irreligious PANTHEISM, I well know’. Then it’s back to hard-core philosophical metaphysics, (via a brief potshot at Spinoza) to Kant, that least ‘mystic’ of all thinkers. Coleridge lists those Kantian works he has read, praises their ‘clearness’ and ‘evidence’ and tells the reader plainly that Kantian thought ‘took possession of me as with a giant’s hand’.

In other words, Chapter 9 takes the form of a loose dialectic. On the one hand, we have the increasingly baffling thicket of various analytic and philosophical traditions, none of which provided Coleridge with the answers he needed, and which are represented in this portion of the *Biographia* as a wilderness of multifariously branching disquisitions of the reason; on the other hand, the holy cloud of unknowing represented by naïf mystic apprehension of spiritual and divine ‘oneness’. The synthesis of these two approaches is: Kant.

A couple of observations may occur to the attentive reader at this point. One is that no sooner has Coleridge introduced Kant as the intellectual framework within which his own solution to ‘the hard problem’ will be framed than he spells out three key places where he thinks Kant is wrong. These are not minor disagreements. Indeed, they are so substantive that Coleridge suggests in all three cases that *Kant himself* can’t actually believe his own assertions, but was compelled to assert them to placate ‘that strange compound of lawless debauchery, and priest-ridden superstition’ of eighteenth-century Prussia. ‘In spite therefore of his own declarations’, Coleridge says, we must refuse to credit that even Kant believed that his *ding-an-sich*, or ‘thing-in-itself’ of absolute reality, was radically unknowable; or his description of human consciousness as ‘a shaping intellect’ that in turn leaves external reality mere ‘matter without form’; and finally he

rejects the categorical nature of Kant's moral imperative.⁶⁵ We might think that this leaves precious little core Kant at play in the intellectual work of the *Biographia*; and this suspicion is not allayed by the fact that Chapter 9 goes on not to elaborate Kant, but (first) to dismiss Fichte, and then – at length – to extol the merits of Schelling.

But we need to keep in view the larger project of the 'philosophical' chapters of the *Biographia*. They are not (whatever critics sometimes imply) an *omnium gatherum* of all matters metaphysical, an attempt to establish a comprehensive philosophical position. Such a work *was* one of Coleridge's larger ambitions, of course; but we should take seriously his repeated insistence that the *Biographia* is not the proper place for it, and that he is reserving it for a later book. His philosophical ambition in the *Biographia* is considerably more modest, and (again, despite what later critics have tended to say) it is directly related to his autobiographical and literary-critical ambitions. That aim is to establish (a) that human consciousness or subjectivity is *an immortal, individual spirit* that partakes of the divine; and (b) that only this can account for the greatness of the greatest art. On the latter count his examples are literary, because he is himself a literary artist; but the case can equally be made for other arts. He is not saying that Beethoven's Ninth Symphony, Michelangelo's sculptures or *King Lear* prove that there is a God. He is saying, more particularly, that what elevates great (imaginative) art from mediocre or merely competent (fanciful) art is a shaping originality that cannot be explained by merely scientific, mechanistic accounts of consciousness. The relevance of this claim to Coleridge's literary autobiography is, partly, that stepping through these philosophical positions enables us to trace his own intellectual development. More than this, the argument grounds the fundamental appeal of biography in the first place – that life is not merely a series of external events that happen to one person, but is rather the unfolding of a transcendent individual reality.

⁶⁵ Coleridge was far from alone in this. As Desmond Hogan notes, Kant's 'peculiar' doctrine that there exists a noumenal world 'out there' which we are radically unable to know attracted opposition as soon as the *Critique* was published. 'F H Jacobi [in 1787] challenged the coherence of the claim that the mind is affected by noumenal entities that are distinct from it and by Kant's own light's radically unknowable . . . one early response, still upheld by several prominent scholars today, argues that Kant's insistence on affection by unknowable noumenal entities must not be taken at face value but calls for some deflationary translation' (Desmond Hogan, 'Noumenal Affection', *Philosophical Review*, 118:4 (2009), 502). This is the position Coleridge takes, although (as Hogan also notes) it rather flies in the face of 'apparently unequivocal textual evidence, including Kant's public repudiation of Fichte's contention that the *Critique of Pure Reason* did not really mean to affirm affection by unknowable noumena.'

A key Schelling idea that Coleridge found particularly crucial was that (in the words of G. N. G. Orsini) ‘the only example of absolute conformity of thought and object is “the I, or self-consciousness”, where the object known, “me”, is the same as the subject knowing, “I”’.⁶⁶ Getting our head around this idea enables us to see the way in which many of the (otherwise apparently disparate) elements of the *Biographia* come together. Coleridge is writing himself: turning his subjectivity into textual objectivity. The book you are holding in your hand is an emblem of this superposition of subjective ‘I’ and objective ‘me’. The greatest art, Coleridge insists, always does this. When he insists that ‘*What is poetry?*’ is so nearly the same question with, ‘*what is a poet?*’ that the answer to the one is involved in the solution of the other’, he is not doing so to reach forward in time and bait the ‘death of the author’ school of criticism. He is doing so because he sees the coalescence of textual objectivity and authorial subjectivity as a transcendental guarantor of the spiritual truth of art. This is also why the *Biographia* is so often *funny* – that aspect of the text that critics find so hard to apprehend. Many of Coleridge’s personal reminiscences are hilarious; much of the text is given over to humorous play, from learned jokes to pastiche and parody. He finds puns irresistible, and thinks long and hard about ‘irish bulls’ and why they are so amusing. At the root of this, I think, is one of the roots of comedy itself – the difference (as Simon Critchley puts it) between *having* a body and *being* a body.⁶⁷ We tend to laugh when, as in slapstick, the former sense intrudes upon the latter.

The remainder of Coleridge’s argument in Chapter 12 cleaves closely to Schelling, to the point of translating long passages directly from him. There are a few earlier places where Coleridge’s slapdash way with citation might be said to raise the question of plagiarism, and to invite us to excuse Coleridge on grounds of carelessness or haste; but we are now coming to the place where that charge becomes hardest to shrug off. This chapter ends with a long peroration to the genius of Schelling that reads, in a slightly tangled way, as an attempted exculpation from plagiarism that is also a hidden-in-plain-view admission of plagiarism.

In Schelling’s ‘NATUR-PHILOSOPHIE’, and the ‘SYSTEM DES TRANSCENDENTALEN IDEALISMUS,’ I first found a genial coincidence with much that I had toiled out for myself, and a powerful assistance in what I had yet to do.

⁶⁶ G. N. G. Orsini, *Coleridge and German Idealism* (Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 1969), 194–5.

⁶⁷ Simon Critchley, *On Humour* (Routledge, 2002).

‘Genial’, here, means more than ‘pleasant’ or ‘agreeable’; it means that the *genius* of Schelling has aligned itself with the genius of Coleridge – it is, in other words, a way of talking about the nature of genius, rather than the specific debts of one writer for another.

It would be but a mere act of justice to myself, were I to warn my future readers, that an identity of thought, or even similarity of phrase, will not be at all times a certain proof that the passage has been borrowed from Schelling, or that the conceptions were originally learnt from him. In this instance, as in the dramatic lectures of Schlegel to which I have before alluded, from the same motive of self-defence against the charge of plagiarism, many of the most striking resemblances, indeed all the main and fundamental ideas, were born and matured in my mind before I had ever seen a single page of the German Philosopher; and I might indeed affirm with truth, before the more important works of Schelling had been written, or at least made public. Nor is this coincidence at all to be wondered at.

‘Coincidence’ is a word so often used in a negative or disparaging sense nowadays, it may be hard to excavate a stronger sense of it. But Coleridge uses it to mean that his incidence and Schelling’s are aligned, and not because he has plagiarised the German. The problem here is that this passage in effect asks us to take Coleridge’s word for it. He concedes Schelling’s precedence at length:

God forbid! that I should be suspected of a wish to enter into a rivalry with SCHELLING for the honors so unequivocally his right, not only as a great and original genius, but as the *founder* of the PHILOSOPHY OF NATURE . . . whatever shall be found in this or any future work of mine, that resembles, or coincides with, the doctrines of my German predecessor, though contemporary, be wholly attributed to *him*: provided, that the absence of distinct references to his books, which I could not at all times make with truth as designating citations or thoughts actually *derived* from him; and which, I trust, would, after this general acknowledgment be superfluous; be not charged on me as an ungenerous concealment or intentional plagiarism.

But this is problematic as well. The statement that Coleridge could not provide specific references and citations because he didn’t have the books to hand (‘I have not indeed . . . been hitherto able to procure more than two of his books’) would be more persuasive if so much of the disputed text did not consist precisely of close translation from

Schelling – something, we might think, hard to do without having access to the books. Coleridge’s tone is one of generous magnanimity, which again would touch a less jarring note if the material in question were properly attributed rather than (the core of the delinquency where plagiarism is concerned) stolen – as if a burglar, carrying off the crown jewels, were to shout over his shoulder ‘God forbid I should be suspected of a wish to enter into a rivalry with H.M. the Queen for the honors so unequivocally her right!’ Two denials of plagiarism in a few lines rather intimate a guilty conscience on the matter. That Coleridge then offers three not-very-compatible justifications in quick succession does not improve his position. First he presents himself as a mere channel by which Schelling’s philosophy can reach English-speakers:

To me it will be happiness and honor enough, should I succeed in rendering the system itself intelligible to my countrymen, and in the application of it to the most awful of subjects for the most important of purposes.

He then immediately implies that mere chronological precedence does not give Schelling the right to claim the ideas in the *Biographia*:

Whether a work is the offspring of a man’s own spirit, and the product of original thinking, will be discovered by those who are its sole legitimate judges, by better tests than the mere reference to dates.

Coleridge does not vouchsafe who these ‘sole legitimate judges’ are, but we sense a bristling of tone. He felt himself to be the originator of these key ideas; he was aware people would suspect him of stealing them from Schelling, and wanted to forestall the charge. Accordingly, his famous assertion:

I regard truth as a divine ventriloquist: I care not from whose mouth the sounds are supposed to proceed, if only the words are audible and intelligible.

knocks its ‘I care not’ awkwardly against the sense we get from these pages that Coleridge cared very much. What’s at stake here, I think, is more than just Coleridge’s *amour propre*. Plagiarism is a central component of his larger argument, a mode of ‘fancy’ from which the true imagination of creativity is to be distinguished. Since that creativity is, ultimately, divine rather than mortal, Coleridge’s ventriloquist analogy is not disingenuous; but since he is also certain that he is expressing his own unique (and divine) individuality in what he is

writing here, he sees no misalignment between describing himself as a mere mediator and stressing his own creative primacy.

It is not coincidental, and may even be a sly piece of Coleridgean humour, that this important passage on plagiarism and second-handness in literary art closes with a series of quotations from other authors – Milton (complaining that ‘the world’ does not appreciate the divine truths he seeks to communicate); Simon Gynaecus making a similar point less laconically (‘the rudeness and rusticity of our age, that ensnaring meretricious *popularness* in Literature, with all the tricky humilities of the ambitious candidates for the favorable suffrages of the judicious Public . . . will break up and scatter before it all robustness and manly vigor of intellect, all masculine fortitude of virtue’), and similarly withering observations from Hooker (‘this present age, full of tongue and weak of brain . . . common imbecility’) and Salvator Rosa (‘present-day men are “asses”’). There’s some intimation that Coleridge quotes this by way of excusing the abstruseness, and therefore the audience-unfriendliness, of his philosophical theme. But the reader is entitled to suspect that it is actually a pre-emptive thrust at the legitimacy of the court of public opinion to judge him for plagiarism.

Chapter 10. Chapter 10 begins with a couple of Coleridge coinages (esemplastic, intuition, objective-subjective) embedded in a mid-length defence of the need for such neologism, that itself concludes with a repeated stress on the need to distinguish ‘reason’ from ‘understanding’. This provides Coleridge with the opportunity to continue his discussion of Kant (in whom this distinction is central). But instead of developing his account of Kant, Coleridge instead diverts discussion into an account of *The Friend*. The rationale for this segue is a slightly forced insistence that ‘to establish this distinction’ between reason and understanding ‘was one main object of THE FRIEND’ – something that will be news to anyone who has actually read the journal in question. Nonetheless, rather than elaborate on how, or in what way, this distinction was to be developed, Coleridge falls at once into a pleasantly humorous recollection of the failure of that journal.

. . . if even in a biography of my own literary life I can with propriety refer to a work, which was printed rather than published, or so published that it had been well for the unfortunate author, if it had remained in manuscript!

He professes bitterness, implying that the public in effect gave him a beating as far as this literary project went (like ‘an oriental professor of the bastinado, who during an attempt to extort per argumentum

baculum a full confession from a culprit, interrupted his outcry of pain by reminding him, that it was “*a mere digression!*” All this noise, Sir! is nothing to the point, and no sort of answer to my QUESTIONS! *Ah! but* (replied the sufferer) *it is the most pertinent reply in nature to your blows*³). But the tone of the whole is benign, and often actively amusing, as with the hilarious *de haut en bas* rudeness of the Earl of Cork, who subscribed to *The Friend* but then, instead of paying for it, rebuked Coleridge for his impudence in sending unsolicited trash, holding on to the copies to use as toilet paper. This leads to a series of wittily written anecdotes illustrative of the commercial precariousness of a literary life, and the many ways it conspires to mortify an individual’s pride. Mild-mannered vicar James Newton and the failure of his self-published *New Theory of Redemption*; the indignities Coleridge suffered hawking *The Watchman* for sale around Birmingham and the north – reminiscences leavened by a nicely judged sense of the young author’s serious-minded priggishness as well as his earnest purity of intention. This in turn leads Coleridge back to the chronological account of his life interrupted by Chapters 5–9: he recalls moving to a cottage in Stowey at the end of 1796, studying poetry and philosophy (‘so profound was my admiration at this time of Hartley’s Essay on Man, that I gave his name to my first born’) and meeting Wordsworth. Remembering the volatile political situation at the time of the Napoleonic wars leads to a paragraph praising Edmund Burke, not merely for his Conservatism but more broadly for his insistence that political engagement must be based not on pragmatism but principles. There follows one of the best-loved sections of the *Biographia*, where Coleridge recalls wandering the countryside as a young man with Wordsworth, discussing poetry. Suspected of being French agents by the local magistrate, the pair were followed.

A SPY was actually sent down from the government *pour surveillance* of myself and friend . . . At first he fancied, that we were aware of our danger; for he often heard me talk of one *Spy Nozy*, which he was inclined to interpret of himself, and of a remarkable feature belonging to him; but he was speedily convinced that it was the name of a man who had made a book and lived long ago.

This is surely too excellent a gag to be true – not even a West Country accent can convert the short ‘i’ and flat ‘a’ of *Spinoza* into the medial diphthong and long ‘e’ of ‘spy nosy’. But scrupulous autobiographical verisimilitude matters less here than the broader rhetorical flourish – not just that Coleridge is aiming to make his reader laugh, but that

the butt of the joke is the very philosophical earnestness of the previous four chapters of the *Biographia*. The briefly dramatised dialogue between this blithe but honest spy and the bumptiously suspicious local Dogberry is pleasant, if not *quite* as like an exchange from one of Shakespeare's comedies as Coleridge perhaps hoped.

The chapter as a whole is not tightly structured – as I argue above, it shows signs of having been written, reopened, rewritten and added to, perhaps more than once. Nonetheless, a prevailing theme of incompleteness does emerge. *The Friend* and *The Watchman* began publication but closed down due to lack of success; attempts to convict Wordsworth and Coleridge of spying come to nothing; now Coleridge recalls his plans for an ambitious long poem, to be called *The Brook*, following a watercourse ‘from its source in the hills . . . to the first break or fall, where its drops become audible, and it begins to form a channel . . . to the sheep-fold; to the first cultivated plot of ground; to the lonely cottage and its bleak garden won from the heath; to the hamlet, the villages, the market-town, the manufactories, and the seaport’. This also comes to nothing; Coleridge follows his account of it with a more oblique intimation of his youthful political radicalism, presented as an ideological cul-de-sac. From politics to philosophy and religious faith:

Somersetshire at the foot of Quantock, and devoted my thoughts and studies to the foundations of religion and morals. Here I found myself all afloat. Doubts rushed in . . . The *idea* of the Supreme Being appeared to me to be as necessarily implied in all particular modes of being as the idea of infinite space in all the geometrical figures by which space is limited . . . Still the existence of a being, the ground of all existence, was not yet the existence of a moral creator, and governor.

His doubts at this point do not concern the existence of God as such; merely the existence of a personal, Christian deity, a moral principle actively engaged in the world. Many people have found themselves in a similar place, mentally (or spiritually): prepared to believe that there is a ‘God’ in the cosmos whilst unable to see how such an entity could care about the specific ethical codes of human tribes on one small planet in a galactic backwater. Coleridge quotes Kant to the effect that God defined only as ‘a blind necessary ground of other things . . . would be distinguished from the FATE of certain ancient philosophers in no respect’. Of course, maybe those ancient philosophers were right in imagining a God cosmically indifferent to the ant-scurrying of human affairs; but Coleridge finds that thought intolerable.

In other words, after several chapters discussing the nature of ‘mind’, or soul, Coleridge is now moving to the question of the existence or inexistence of God.

For a very long time, indeed, I could not reconcile personality with infinity . . . Yet there had dawned upon me, even before I had met with the Critique of the Pure Reason, a certain guiding light. If the mere intellect could make no certain discovery of a holy and intelligent first cause, it might yet supply a demonstration, that no legitimate argument could be drawn from the intellect *against* its truth.

This may strike the modern-day reader as weak beer. Having granted that the intellect cannot prove God’s existence, it seems but poor consolation to add that it cannot prove His non-existence either. Richard Dawkins, arguably the world’s most prominent early twenty-first-century atheist, happily admits as much (his preferred choice of words for his anti-religious publicity is: ‘there’s probably no God’). But Coleridge makes much more of this position. The lack of rational grounds for the belief in a personal, moral God is used as a lever to open the *emotional* grounds for that very belief. A lengthy quotation from the Biblical book of Job serves both to repeat the argument that (rational) knowledge is not the same thing as (affective) wisdom, and to embody the force of the right words in the right order.

I become convinced, that religion, as both the corner-stone and the key-stone of morality, must have a *moral* origin; so far at least, that the evidence of its doctrines could not, like the truths of abstract science, be wholly independent of the will. It were therefore to be expected, that its *fundamental* truth would be such as MIGHT be denied; though only, by the *fool*, and even by the fool from the madness of the *heart* alone!

This nicely picks up the line from Psalms 14:1 – ‘The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God’ – and shifts the rhetorical emphasis from the ‘fool’ part to the ‘heart’ part. Atheists do not *rationaly disprove* the existence of God, he is saying (for such disproof is impossible); instead they *feel*, in their hearts, that there is no God. The terms of the larger argument have been reoriented into the realm of the affective.

The sciential *reason*, the objects of which are purely theoretical, remains neutral, as long as its name and semblance are not usurped by the opponents of the doctrine. But it *then* becomes an

effective ally by exposing the false shew of demonstration, or by evincing the equal demonstrability of the contrary from premises equally logical. The *understanding* mean time suggests, the analogy of *experience* facilitates, the belief. Nature excites and recalls it, as by a perpetual revelation. Our feelings almost necessitate it; and the law of conscience peremptorily commands it. The arguments, that at all apply to it, are in its favor; and there is nothing against it, but its own sublimity. It could not be intellectually more evident without becoming morally less effective; without counteracting its own end by sacrificing the *life* of faith to the cold mechanism of a worthless because compulsory assent. The belief of a God and a future state (if a passive acquiescence may be flattered with the name of *belief*) does not indeed always beget a good heart; but a good heart so naturally begets the belief, that the very few exceptions must be regarded as strange anomalies from strange and unfortunate circumstances.

This paragraph, though not easily parsed, is nonetheless a crucial statement of Coleridge's spiritual development. It is the baldest argument Coleridge offers by way of 'proving' that God exists.

His reasoning goes like this: there are grounds for believing in God and there are grounds for disbelieving in God. From this we can deduce that 'sciential reason', or 'logic', is (in Coleridge's terms) 'neutral' on the existence or otherwise of God. Now, we may feel that, straight away, there is a degree of sleight of hand to Coleridge's case (after all, that there are reasons for and against a proposition does not necessarily mean that the reasons for *are as persuasive or numerous* as those against). But to put that on one side in order to follow Coleridge's own argument: he suggests that science and reason, equally balanced between pro and contra, are therefore effectively 'neutral' on the question of the existence of God. Coleridge then adds to 'sciential reason' five more apperceptions. Firstly and secondly that both 'understanding' and 'experience' facilitate the belief – they do not prove the existence of God, but they make it possible, they enable it. Thirdly that 'Nature' functions as 'a perpetual revelation' ('the heavens declare the glory of God'; this is something close to Paley's 'watchmaker' argument). Fourthly Coleridge brings 'our feelings' to bear, claiming they '*almost* necessitate' belief in God – the *almost* relating back to the previous paragraph. On the one hand, Coleridge has discussed many sage and wise individuals who have felt the existence of a benevolent moral deity; on the other, there are people who feel that there is *no* God. But there are fewer of these latter, and they are

fools by virtue of that very belief (a cosmos without God being, for Coleridge, so patently less desirable, or even bearable, than one with). The balance, therefore, is *almost* wholly on the affective assent of the believer. Finally, Coleridge insists, ‘the law of conscience peremptorily commands’ belief in God. This last probably does not strike many modern readers as a very strong argument; but Coleridge is far from the only person to believe that, without divine sanction, morality and law would be unworkable.

The result is a kind of actuarial tabulation of religious assent. Science neither proves nor disproves the existence of God. In the ‘credit’ column Coleridge claims that understanding, experience and feeling all incline us towards belief (though without proving it), something which Nature and morality more strongly reinforce. In the ‘debit’ column Coleridge places only one item – and, cleverly, it is a ground that speaks to the transcendent splendour of divine reality. There is, he says, ‘nothing against [belief in God] but its own sublimity’. That human beings are incapable of conceiving the sublimity of God may explain why some atheists cannot conceive of Him; but in fact this speaks to precisely the transcendental splendour of divinity. Tot up the results, and Coleridge finds his religious faith, while not proven, much more probable than the alternative.

An atheist operating in (if you’ll pardon the phrase) good faith would have grounds for objecting to the argument compressed into this paragraph; and a neutral reader will probably agree that its neatness doesn’t stand up particularly well to closer examination. In essence, Coleridge implies that reasons to believe in God are reasons to believe in Him; but reasons to disbelieve in God are *also* reasons to believe in Him – a position surely more likely to convince those either who already believe, or else who *want* to believe. Since one of the projects of the *Biographia* is to demonstrate faith from more solid grounds than these, it is not out of place to note that a desire for something to be true, no matter how earnest that desire, does not make the thing more likely actually to be true – or (to speak personally) the England football team would have won the World Cup many more times than it has.

In Coleridge’s defence, we must note that he is not offering this paragraph as an attempt to convert the unbeliever, but rather as a shorthand for a process he himself undertook, away from viewing God as an impersonal cosmic Fate and towards finding in Him the personal salvation of Jesus Christ. More, the force here is towards probabilities, not proofs: ‘whatever is deducible from the admission of a *self-comprehending* and *creative* spirit may be legitimately used in proof

of the *possibility* of any further mystery concerning the divine nature'. He quotes Leibniz (*'possibilitatem* mysteriorum vindico; haud quidem *veritatem*, quæ revelatione solâ stabiliri possit') to the effect that he is vindicating only the possibility of divine mystery, since divine truth comes only via personal revelation.

From here Coleridge touches on the generosity of the Wedgwoods, whose financial support enabled him to go to Germany. Personal reminiscence shifts quickly into a potted history of German letters. The return from Germany leads Coleridge into his time as a journalist on the *Morning Post*, which returns the argument to his developing political opinions. He spends some time defending the reputation of his old employer against charges of unpatriotism and knee-jerk hostility to the government, before adding: 'yet in these labours I employed, and, in the belief of partial friends wasted, the prime and manhood of my intellect. Most assuredly, they added nothing to my fortune or my reputation.'

This large chapter moves our sense of Coleridge's life onward via a series of anecdotes, comical and otherwise, the common thread of which is incompleteness. With a slightly mournful timbre, he notes that 'to have lived in vain must be a painful thought to any man, and especially so to him who has made literature his profession'. He goes on to challenge the notion (widely held, he implies) that he is 'a man incorrigibly idle', who 'intrusted not only with ample talents' has 'nevertheless suffered them to rust away without any efficient exertion either for his own good or that of his fellow-creatures'. Not so, he insists – for he has written much ('if the compositions, which I have made public . . . had been published in *books*, they would have filled a respectable number of volumes, though every passage of merely temporary interest were omitted' he says, thereby contradicting the tenor of the very first paragraph of Chapter 1). But then he goes on: even if he *hasn't* written much, influence can be communicated in other ways apart from writing – 'are books', he demands, thinking of his lectures, and perhaps also of his table talk, 'the only channel through which the stream of intellectual usefulness can flow?' The defensiveness of tone here is reinforced rather than defused by the repeated declarations of disinterest (it is not vanity that prompts him, he insists, but justice). 'By what I *have* effected, am I to be judged by my fellow men', he announces, ringingly. 'What I *could* have done, is a question for my own conscience.'

Chapter 11. After a long chapter, a very short one: the tone here is more wryly humorous than mournful. Although the sentiment extends the theme of failure from the conclusion to Chapter 10,

there is a wryness, almost a jauntiness, to Coleridge's itemisation of the many disadvantages of making literature one's profession. Get a day job, Coleridge advises, because literary earnings are meagre and unreliable – advice as pertinent today as it was two centuries ago. Happiness depends on regular habits, which literature cannot provide. Better to work for the church than the republic of letters. Literary production may augment a happy life, but cannot be the foundation thereof. Finally: analyse your own impulses – it is likely that your desire to be an author does not proceed from a healthy psychological motivation. When read as a pendant to the preceding chapter, this is straightforward enough. As a stepping stone on the path of the larger argument it is more ironic – a statement that denies the validity of the literary life at the near-central point *of* a literary life.

Chapter 12. The twelfth chapter is the most philosophically complex and challenging in the entire book; so much so, that Coleridge begins with a preliminary attempt to defang potential objections to the obscurity of what is to come. There are, he says, two kinds of obscurity: one indicative of conceptual muddle on behalf of the writer, and another indicative of the imperfection of language in attempting to communicate deep and complex truths. It would be unkind to accuse Coleridge of positioning himself as a kind of modern-day Plato – especially considering how extensive has been his (often witty) self-deprecation in the previous pages. Rather, he is acknowledging here his own inadequacy in the face of the scale and profundity of the questions he addresses. Kant and transcendental philosophy taught Coleridge the sublime necessity of God's existence, but gave him no emotional or personal purchase on the deity. Böhme and other humble, inspired mystics touched his heart and made him feel the moral and individual presence of God, but lacked the rational rigour necessary to distance what they were saying from 'Spinozan' pantheism, or mere gush of any 'religious fanatic, full of dreams and supernatural experiences'. One rebuked him with obscurity; the other dissatisfied him with ignorance.

What this suggests, of course, is that Coleridge will work towards a plausible synthesis of these two positions.

If a man receives as fundamental facts, and therefore of course indemonstrable and incapable of further analysis, the general notions of matter, spirit, soul, body, action, passiveness, time, space, cause and effect, consciousness, perception, memory and habit; if he feels his mind completely at rest concerning all these,

and is satisfied, if only he can analyse all other notions into some one or more of these supposed elements with plausible subordination and apt arrangement: to such a mind I would as courteously as possible convey the hint, that for him the chapter was not written.

‘But it is time to tell the truth; though it requires some courage,’ he says – the truth in this case being ‘that it is neither possible nor necessary for all men, or for many, to be PHILOSOPHERS’. A paragraph follows that tries to allegorise Knowledge as a continent like Europe, and human apprehension of knowledge as an empire; as the Romans divided Europe into cis- and trans-Alpine territory, so much knowledge can be divided into natural sciences and ‘transcendental philosophy’. In a later marginalium, Coleridge repudiated his metaphorical extravagance here (‘I am ashamed and humbled. S T. Coleridge’). Nonetheless, there is something important about the descriptive landscape-symbolism of Coleridge’s theme. Like the topographical specificity of the poetry by Wordsworth and Bowles – and Coleridge himself – and on a par with the turn to nature rather than culture, the *Biographia* represents thought as a countryside in part precisely to naturalise it.

The argument goes on: philosophers recognise themselves not because they know, but because they are conscious of a particular kind of *lack* of knowledge:

They and they only can acquire the philosophic imagination, the sacred power of self-intuition, who within themselves can interpret and understand the symbol, that the wings of the air-sylph are forming within the skin of the caterpillar; those only, who feel in their own spirits the same instinct, which impels the chrysalis of the horned fly to leave room in its involucre for antennæ, yet to come. They know and feel, that the *potential* works *in* them, even as the *actual* works *on* them! In short, all the organs of sense are framed for a corresponding world of sense; and we have it. All the organs of spirit are framed for a correspondent world of spirit; tho’ the latter organs are not developed in all alike. But they exist in all, and their first appearance discloses itself in the *moral* being. How else could it be, that even worldlings, not wholly debased, will contemplate the man of simple and disinterested goodness with contradictory feelings of pity and respect? “Poor man! he is not made for *this* world.” Oh! herein they utter a prophecy of universal fulfilment; for man *must* either rise or sink.

This paragraph starts by talking about a sensitivity to certain modes of knowledge. As it goes on, it slides into a much more general observation about the relationship between mundane life and divine afterlife. The elision, though it involves a degree of rhetorical sleight of hand, is to Coleridge's purpose. This, he concedes, is what he takes philosophy to be: 'the first principle of [philosophy] is to render the mind intuitive of the *spiritual* in man'. By way of elaborating what he means by 'spiritual' he adds: 'that which lies *on the other side* of our natural consciousness'. The allegorical landscape becomes more Bunyanesque; we are to travel along it, intellectually, in order the better to orient ourselves with respect to arriving at Zion. The world mediates our consciousness, but Coleridge wants to talk about unmediated – or as he puts it, 'immediate' – experience. To that end, without attributing the fact, he quotes Schelling:

The medium, by which spirits understand each other, is not the surrounding air; but the *freedom* which they possess in common, as the common ethereal element of their being, the tremulous reciprocations of which propagate themselves even to the inmost of the soul. Where the spirit of a man is not *filled* with the consciousness of freedom (were it only from its restlessness, as of one still struggling in bondage) all spiritual intercourse is interrupted, not only with others, but even with himself.

'Freedom' here means free will: the decisions we make as a result of choices that are presented to us in time – unlike the timeless immediacy of the hereafter – as well as in the imperfections of our knowledge. And there is an acuteness of psychological portraiture here too: Coleridge is, tacitly, acknowledging his own restlessness of spirit by attempting to redeem it via an eternal and divine perspective.

A footnote, perhaps added late in the process of composition, offers a glimpse of Coleridge's own spiritual development. He constellates three statements from Synesius's third hymn (which, perhaps because the deductive process it embodies takes him one step beyond the three, he misremembers as the fourth):

SYNESIUS, in his Fourth Hymn:

Ἐν καὶ Πάντα—(taken by itself) is Spinozism.

Ἐν δ' Ἀπάντων—a mere *anima Mundi*.

Ἐν τε πρό ποντων—is mechanical Theism.⁶⁸

⁶⁸ The errors in the Greek here may be due to sloppy transcription by Morgan: it should read Ἐν καὶ Πάντα / Ἐν δ' Ἀπάντων / Ἐν τε πρό Πάντων.

But unite all three, and the result is the Theism of Saint Paul and Christianity.

The last bulletin we, as readers, had received on Coleridge's intellectual development is the one posted in Chapter 10: back from Germany, his political views were beginning to mature, yet his religious position was stuck in Unitarianism.⁶⁹ This footnote supplies the missing step on his evolution towards Trinitarianism. It is debatable whether Coleridge's decision to 'unite all three' has more than neatness to recommend it. Presumably the last, 'one before everything', is God the Father; but it is not clear which of the other two descriptions ('one and everything'; 'one of everything') refers to the Son and which to the Holy Spirit. Nor does it follow – except, of course, via the leap of faith itself – that these three 'onenesses' themselves constitute a 'higher' oneness. It could be argued, on the contrary, that they are mutually exclusive (Ἐν καὶ Πάντα and Ἐν τε πρό Πάντων situate oneness outside everything; Ἐν δ' Ἀπάντων identifies the oneness *with* everything). Of course, this could itself be considered part of the mystery of the Trinity, itself an aspect of what Synesius calls the Μύστας δέ Νόος – or more specifically the Μύστας δέ Νόος Θεού, mysteries of the divine consciousness. Actually, in the hymn that Coleridge quotes, the line is altered: not Μύστας δέ Νόος, but Μύσας δέ Νόος – not the mystery, but the *music* or *harmony* of consciousness. This might, of course, be another of the errors of transcription that leave most of the Greek in the first edition of the *Biographia* spotted with errors and bare of accents and breathings. Or perhaps it is a more pointed emendation. 'Mystery' can become too facile a rhetorical device – a mere black box, and therefore an abdication of intellectual responsibility. When it comes to explaining the divine, Coleridge works hard to avoid using it in the *Biographia*. If so, then the trinity is as a quasi-musical harmonisation of doctrines, rather than as a point specifically to be argued cognitively. It looks forward to the last paragraph of the work, with its reference to the cosmos as the 'choral echo' of God.

The main body of the text of Chapter 12 continues with a series of Schelling-derived postulates relating to 'inner sense', which explore the proposition that 'All knowledge rests on the coincidence of an object with a subject'. Here, our consciousness is the subject, and the natural world is the object, although the circumstance is complicated by the previously mentioned oddity that we can objectify our own

⁶⁹ 'In respect of revealed religion I remained a zealous Unitarian. I considered the *idea* of the Trinity a fair scholastic inference from the being of God, as a creative intelligence; and that it was therefore entitled to the rank of an *esoteric* doctrine of natural religion.'

subjectivity – make our subject an object by contemplating it, as it were, from the outside. There is, Coleridge insists, an objective exterior world (his rejection of Kant’s idea that the ding-an-sich is radically unknowable is part of his certainty on this point), and he quotes Schelling’s ‘one fundamental presumption, THAT THERE EXIST THINGS WITHOUT US’ to support it. There is also an *interior*, subjective world of consciousness. How do these coincide? Does consciousness layer itself over a pre-existing external world?

This then is the problem of natural philosophy. It assumes the objective or unconscious nature as the first, and has therefore to explain how intelligence can supervene to it, or how itself can grow into intelligence.

Once again, we return to the ‘hard problem’ of philosophy.

Since the majority of the twenty-first century’s scientists and many of its philosophers of mind believe that ‘mind’ grew, or emerged, out of pre-existing and purely material circumstances, Coleridge’s objections to precisely this argument may be of particular interest to readers today. These objections are not very clearly elaborated in the paragraph that follows, although the earlier chapters have discussed the problem at some length. In a nutshell, Coleridge does not believe that unconscious matter can ever be arranged into structures that are conscious, howsoever complex those structures might be. Unthinking matter can only ever be built into unthinking structures. An anachronistic way of putting this would be to wonder whether, were he alive today, Coleridge would accept that computers could ever reach a stage of cognitive complexity characterised by self-consciousness. The answer, clearly, is that he wouldn’t. Soul (he would surely argue) cannot emerge from the arrangement of soulless components, no matter how ingeniously or complexly they are put together. But this leads to the second question: if the ‘Subjective is taken as the first’, then ‘the problem is, how there supervenes to it a coincident objective?’ If consciousness did not grow out of a pre-existing material reality, then how is it that our consciousness happens to coincide with the world the way it does? Coleridge spends much longer on this question. He begins by insisting, mostly through quotations from Schelling, that the real world *is* real, and again repudiates idealism (‘a land of shadows, surrounds us with apparitions, and distinguishes truth from illusion only by the majority of those who dream the same dream’). It could be argued that Coleridge does not show how his earlier intimation that ‘natural science, which commences with the material phenomenon as the reality and substance of things existing . . .

end[s] in nature as an intelligence' differs from idealism ('nature as an intelligence' is an almost Berkleyan position). Nor does this insistence on the reality of reality answer the question posed at the head of this section. Indeed, it looks – and not for the first time – as if Coleridge is going to postpone his answer beyond the *Biographia* altogether:

In the third treatise of my *Logosophia*, announced at the end of this volume, I shall give . . . the demonstrations and constructions of the Dynamic Philosophy scientifically arranged.

But, no: the question *is* answered. Or at least Coleridge rehearses Schelling's answer to it. How is it that subjectivity does not grow out of objective reality and yet coincides to it so well?

The answer is spread across the ten theses of Chapter 12, and then spills over into Chapter 13. Thesis 1 is that knowledge is never knowledge in the abstract, but always knowledge *of something*. Thesis 2 discriminates between absolute and mediated knowledge, and Coleridge adds a scholium reiterating his dislike of 'turtles all the way down' arguments, quoting William Wollaston's *The Religion of Nature Delineated* (2nd edition, 1724):

A chain without a staple, from which all the links derived their stability, or a series without a first, has been not inaptly allegorized, as a string of blind men, each holding the skirt of the man before him, reaching far out of sight, but all moving without the least deviation in one strait line. It would be naturally taken for granted, that there was a guide at the head of the file: what if it were answered, No! Sir, the men are without number, and infinite blindness supplies the place of sight?

That 'infinite blindness supplies the place of sight' is patently absurd strikes Coleridge as self-evident. Thesis 3 follows on from this: if not infinite blindness, then what *does* provide sight? There must be a first cause, an absolute truth, underlying all the relative truths; a first causer behind the chain of cause and effect. Schelling's Thesis 4 is that there can only be one such absolute causal truth, to which Coleridge appends a scholium drawing out the distinction between Kant's a priori and a posteriori truths. He does this because the thesis itself uses the terms 'a priori' and 'a posteriori', although Coleridge's examples of a blue board and a circle do not speak to the substance of the thesis very directly. Thesis 5 is that this absolute cannot be a thing *in* the cosmos; but neither can it be pure consciousness – since we've already agreed that perception cannot exist without something to perceive, that thought must have something to think about. What

follows from this (according to Schelling) is that the Absolute must be both subject *and* object.

Thesis 6 is that the human ability to think about our own process of thinking – our ability to objectivise our subjectivity – is a unique mode in which subjectivity and objectivity come together. Schelling puts a deal of emphasis on this, and Coleridge is also very impressed by it as an idea – he reads the Old Testament divine ‘I AM THAT I AM’ and the New Testament Johannine λόγος as related articulations of its profound spiritual truth. Thesis 7 asserts that ‘the essence of a spirit’ is ‘that it is self-representative’. Without a soul, self-consciousness would be impossible, or so Coleridge claims.

Thesis 8 claims that subjectivity must be infinite, or more precisely ‘the most original union of both’ infinite and finite. This explains, retrospectively, why Coleridge puts the emphasis he does in his earlier chapters on the idea that the mind never actually forgets any of the vast number of sense data it receives (the observer standing on the top of the dome of St Paul’s, the ignorant servant girl perfectly recalling the Hebrew she had overheard in her childhood). It is something to which Coleridge returns in Chapter 13.

Thesis 9 concerns meta-knowledge – knowledge about knowledge (‘the science of science’). What stops an infinite regression of this sort of knowledge – ‘the science of the science of science . . .’ and so on? According to Coleridge, only the fixed point, the divine ‘I AM THAT I AM’. At the same time, this idea of consciousness raised (as it were) to the higher power of self-consciousness, the reflexivity of knowledge *about* knowledge, is something Coleridge considers very important. Thesis 10 (‘The transcendental philosopher does not enquire, what ultimate ground of our knowledge there may lie out of our knowing, but what is the last in our knowing itself, beyond which *we* cannot pass’) has some resemblance to Wittgenstein’s later famous ‘whereof we cannot speak . . .’ statement; except that Schelling – and Coleridge – believe the self to be an infinite, not a finite, quality. This is another way of addressing the disparity of grounds of proof: science is required on its own terms to offer a better proof than ‘that’s just the way things are’; religion is different.

That the self-consciousness is the fixed point, to which for *us* all is morticed and annexed, needs no further proof.

By ‘self-consciousness’, Coleridge (or Schelling) means specifically consciousness of self as a consciousness, awareness of the fact that we have awareness: the moment when our subjectivity objectivises itself.

But that the self-consciousness may be the modification of a higher form of being, perhaps of a higher consciousness, and this again of a yet higher, and so on in an infinite regressus; in short, that self-consciousness may be itself something explicable into something, which must lie beyond the possibility of our knowledge, because the whole synthesis of our intelligence is first formed in and through the self-consciousness, does not at all concern us as transcendental philosophers.

This is by way of acknowledging that our perspective on our self-consciousness may not be the whole picture. Perhaps what we perceive as self-consciousness is actually a part of a larger subjectivity–objectivity nexus. But Coleridge (Schelling) acknowledges this idea only to dismiss it. Why?

For to us self-consciousness is not a kind of *being*, but a kind of *knowing*, and that too the highest and farthest that exists for *us*. It may however be shown, and has in part already been shown in pages 115–16 that even when the Objective is assumed as the first, we yet can never pass beyond the principle of self-consciousness. Should we attempt it, we must be driven back from ground to ground, each of which would cease to be a Ground the moment we pressed on it. We must be whirl'd down the gulph of an infinite series.

In other words, Coleridge thinks ‘self-consciousness’ (in this special sense) is a ‘fixed point’ and sufficient unto itself, because the alternative is that self-consciousness is part of an infinitely regressing chain of higher consciousnesses – and this latter is impossible because *self-consciousness* is a knowing, not a being. This line of reasoning doesn’t make clear why a ‘knowing’ could not fall foul of the same infinite-regression problem as a ‘being’. Earlier we are told that knowledge must be a knowledge of something, so an ‘infinite regressus’ of knowledge must involve an infinity of knowable things – but why might there not be such an infinity? Coleridge would presumably answer with reference to the infinitely dangling chain, or infinite procession of blind men clutching one another’s coat tails, from his scholium to Thesis 2. But the thought experiment *there* was by way of establishing that there must be a first cause. It does not preclude the notion that a first cause may cause a *subsequent* infinite series of things. Indeed, there’s a strong whiff, in this tenth thesis, and especially in Coleridge’s elaboration of it, of a thumb in the balance. The whole is structured and argued to arrive at the conclusion that ‘the true system of natural philosophy

places the sole reality of things in an ABSOLUTE, which is at once *causa sui et effectus*'.

Still, the focus of the argument at this point is not the necessity of the existence of God, but the self-sufficiency of consciousness itself – the thought processes inside your head, and mine. Coleridge thinks he has, with Schelling's help, proved that consciousness 'is a self-development, not a quality supervening to a substance'. It wasn't, he says, the case that there was an objective world within which, at some later date, consciousness and subjectivity arose. Nor does he believe that our consciousness somehow *conjures* the objective world into being. He goes on:

we may abstract from all *degree*, and for the purpose of philosophic construction reduce it to *kind* . . .

(that is, we can ignore the fact that some people are more clever or less clever, more or less knowledgeable, and instead discuss what it is that all consciousness has in common)

under the idea of an indestructible power with two opposite and counteracting forces, which, by a metaphor borrowed from astronomy, we may call the centrifugal and centripetal forces. The intelligence in the one tends to *objectize* itself, and in the other to *know* itself in the object.

Subjectivity objectivises itself by, as it were, projecting a version of itself outwards. We might do this, for instance, by picturing our own thought processes in the same way we picture other people or other things; or, for another instance, by writing a version of ourselves into a book. This is Coleridge's centripetal force. The centrifugal one is the tendency to draw the diverse aspects of one's own subjectivity into the coherence that enables us to say 'this is I'. Coleridge folds both forces together under the rubric 'power':

It will be hereafter my business to construct by a series of intuitions the progressive schemes, that must follow from such a power with such forces, till I arrive at the fulness of the *human* intelligence. For my present purpose, I *assume* such a power as my principle, in order to deduce from it a faculty, the generation, agency, and application of which form the contents of the ensuing chapter.

Coleridge's 'power', here, has not been very well understood. It is not, despite the broader indebtedness to Schelling in this chapter, Schelling's *Potenz*. Rather it is – as he says in the following paragraph

– a specifically mathematical term, ‘in imitation of the Algebraists’. To raise a number to the n th power is to multiply it by itself n times. This is what Coleridge is getting at: the self-reflexive, selfhood-operating-upon-selfhood of objectivised subjectivity. It looks back to the terms of Thesis 9, the notion of ‘knowledge of knowledge’ as a kind of ‘knowledge squared’.

Chapter 13. Perhaps the most famous in the entire *Biographia*, the thirteenth chapter both carries through the philosophical argument – about the relationship of (immortal, spiritual) subjectivity to (finite, material) objectivity – and also picks up the definition of the ‘fancy’ and ‘imagination’ from Chapter 4. It brings both threads to a degree of argumentative conclusion, with two pieces of creative conceptualisation that are both genuinely original and suggestive. That only one of these has gone on to have wider influence beyond the covers of the book is, perhaps, surprising – although not as surprising as the almost complete consensus that Chapter 13 represents the point at which the larger project of the *Biographia* breaks down.⁷⁰

‘Surprising’ is perhaps the wrong word. It is, actually, easy enough to see why critics believe the *Biographia* stumbles and falls here – it is because Coleridge, in effect, *says that it does*. Chapter 12, though both long and complex, presents itself as only the prelude to a much longer and more radically transcendently-philosophising Chapter 13. The actual chapter, when it comes, is not only short, but truncated by the rather arch device of a supposed ‘letter from a friend’ – actually from Coleridge himself. We start with a paragraph translated (again without acknowledgement) from Schelling; a second paragraph praises Kant for the mathematical rigour of his logic (maths, Coleridge insists, is ‘the only province of knowledge, which man has succeeded in erecting into a pure science’, a position that would find favour with many mathematicians working today). The end of the second paragraph, and the brief third, begin to elaborate Coleridge’s ‘two force’ hypothesis – these opposing impulses having been previously discussed as ‘centrifugal’

⁷⁰ Paul Hamilton, for instance, talks starkly about ‘Coleridge’s failure to achieve what he set out to do’, identifying the breach at this point. ‘Deep in the heart of English critical theory, at the centre of Coleridge’s exposition of his own views on the relation which philosophy bears to a proper understanding of poetry, there is a disabling gap in the argument . . . the two volumes of the *Biographia* slide inexorably apart . . . The abstruse, technical discussion towards the end of the first volume becomes increasingly disreputable with the accumulation of more and more unacknowledged borrowings, mostly from German philosopher Schelling. With little warning, and for no apparent philosophical reason, the argument halts. On opening the second volume the reader is plunged into a lucid practical criticism of poetry.’ (Paul Hamilton, *Coleridge’s Poetics* (Blackwell, 1983), 8.)

and ‘centripetal’, or as ‘infinitely expansive objectivity’ and ‘infinitely inward-focussing subjectivity’, which in turn have some essential relationship with ‘fancy’ on the one hand, and ‘imagination’ on the other.

Two equal forces acting in opposite directions, both being finite and each distinguished from the other by its direction only, must neutralize or reduce each other to inaction. Now the transcendental philosophy demands; first, that two forces should be conceived which counteract each other by their essential nature; not only not in consequence of the accidental direction of each, but as prior to all direction, nay, as the primary forces from which the conditions of all possible directions are derivative and deducible: secondly, that these forces should be assumed to be both alike infinite, both alike indestructible. The problem will then be to discover the result or product of two such forces, as distinguished from the result of those forces which are finite, and derive their difference solely from the circumstance of their direction. When we have formed a scheme or outline of these two different kinds of force, and of their different results, by the process of discursive reasoning, it will then remain for us to elevate the Thesis from notional to actual, by contemplating intuitively this one power with its two inherent indestructible yet counteracting forces, and the results or generations to which their inter-penetration gives existence, in the living principle and in the process of our own self-consciousness.

There must be two forces, Coleridge believes, because (as the Leibniz quotation that furnishes the chapter with one of its three epigraphs makes plain) a purely ‘physical material’ cosmos would be a cosmos of fancy (‘phantasia’): inert building blocks arranged in varying degrees of complexity, but never coming properly alive. An automaton cosmos. Coleridge insists that a *living* universe, containing (for instance) the kinds of consciousness and self-consciousness capable of great art, must involve something else, an ‘addendum’ that is formal or structural – not merely layered over the top, but immanent, part of the whole. This is the philosophical position that Coleridge’s fancy/imagination distinction restates in aesthetic terms.⁷¹

⁷¹ One of Coleridge’s intellectual descendents, George Steiner, makes the same general case – and many of the same specific points as the *Biographia* – in his *Real Presences* (London: Faber, 1989): ‘any coherent understanding of what language is and how language performs, any coherent account of the capacity of human speech to communicate meaning and feeling is, in the final analysis, underwritten by the premise of God’s presence’ (3).

It is worth noting that Chapter 13 elaborates three, not two, varieties of imagination and fantasy. We have:

1. 'The primary Imagination', which is 'the living Power and prime Agent of all human Perception, and as a repetition in the finite mind of the eternal act of creation in the infinite I AM'.
2. 'The secondary Imagination', which is 'an echo of the former, co-existing with the conscious will, yet still as identical with the primary in the *kind* of its agency, and differing only in *degree*, and in the *mode* of its operation. It dissolves, diffuses, dissipates, in order to re-create; or where this process is rendered impossible, yet still at all events it struggles to idealize and to unify. It is essentially *vital*, even as all objects (*as* objects) are essentially fixed and dead.'
3. 'Fancy', which 'has no other counters to play with, but fixities and definites. The Fancy is indeed no other than a mode of Memory emancipated from the order of time and space; and blended with, and modified by that empirical phenomenon of the will, which we express by the word CHOICE. But equally with the ordinary memory it must receive all its materials ready made from the law of association.'

There are several ways to take this. One that has proved particularly enduring is: God created the cosmos as an act of primary imaginative power. When creative artists create their work, they are engaged in a finite imitation, in a kind of ratio inferior, of that primary act – what J. R. R. Tolkien, influenced directly by this passage, called 'subcreation'. Such work is necessarily secondary to the divine creation, but only in degree, not in kind. Lesser artists do not partake of this divine power; they simply pick up prefabricated elements and shuffle them about. Running alongside this aesthetic or literary argument is a theory of human consciousness itself – since, as he has already said, Coleridge regarded the question 'what is poetry?' to be essentially the same question as 'what is a poet?' *This* theory is that human perception and consciousness itself (or more precisely, human self-awareness and self-consciousness) can only be explained by reference to an infinite divine perception and consciousness. Our capacity for imagination is, according to this argument, an index of this divine, primary imaginative power.

The shift from a binary to a triune logic is worthy of remark. Two forces have become three here. How do subject/object or centrifugal/centripetal map onto Imagination-1/Imagination-2/Fancy? It won't do to invoke Coleridge's own evolution from Unitarian to Trinitarian belief (the tripartite schema in this chapter is unmistakably ranked,

primary imagination greater than secondary and both greater than fancy, in a way that does not apply to the Christian Trinity). More confusingly, it seems that Coleridge himself later altered his thoughts on this matter, crossing out the lines ‘and as a repetition in the finite mind of the eternal act of creation in the infinite I AM’ in his copy of the 1817 *Biographia*. We can speculate, and no more, as to why. Presumably the reference to the human mind as ‘finite’ outraged his sense of argumentative consistency – in the previous chapter he had gone to some length to insist that human subjectivity was not finite. Crossing out ‘finite’ from this sentence but leaving the rest would entail problems, of course (how can one infinite thing be a smaller echo of another infinite thing?), but removing the line as a whole prizes open the difficult material he had gone over at such length. Still, with or without this half-sentence, these paragraphs articulate a compelling, powerful and (as time has proved) influential idea.

In sum: Chapter 13 sets out to explain ‘the Imagination’; and in these paragraphs it does just that – doing so, moreover, in a way that has spoken powerfully to a great many people, and sparked a large and ongoing creative-critical discussion. Why, then, is the chapter so widely seen as a failure, a truncated fragment?

The short answer is because Coleridge tells us that’s what it is. ‘Thus far had the work been transcribed for the press’, Coleridge says, when a letter (actually Coleridge externalising his inward reservations) persuaded him to break off his metaphysical disquisition. According to this letter, Chapter 13 would have to expand to 100 pages or so to make its point thoroughly:

This Chapter, which cannot, when it is printed, amount to so little as an hundred pages, will of necessity greatly increase the expense of the work; and every reader who, like myself, is neither prepared nor perhaps calculated for the study of so abstruse a subject so abstrusely treated, will, as I have before hinted, be almost entitled to accuse you of a sort of imposition on him. For who, he might truly observe, could from your title-page, to wit, ‘My Literary Life and Opinions,’ published too as introductory to a volume of miscellaneous poems, have anticipated, or even conjectured, a long treatise on Ideal Realism, which holds the same relation in abstruseness to Plotinus, as Plotinus does to Plato . . . I say in the present work. In that greater work to which you have devoted so many years, and study so intense and various, it will be in its proper place.

Critics have generally entered into a strange double-think with respect to this interruption. On the one hand, they doubt – and with good cause – that Coleridge had amongst his papers a 100-page MS treatise

on Ideal Realism, or even notes to that effect, that needed only to be set up in type. After all, the biographical record is of Coleridge desperately casting around for extra copy to fill up the blank pages in his book. The chapter breaks off, critics suggest, not because Coleridge is (as he claims here) sparing the reader further abstruseness, nor because he is worried about the extra cost of printing. The truth is he has run out of steam, and reference to this supposed lucubration is at best playful, and at worse actively disingenuous – after all, he pretends this is a letter from a friend, but it is not even that! So critics refuse to take Coleridge at his word here. But at the same time, critics *do* take Coleridge at his word that these extra 100 pages are needful to complete the larger argumentative design of the *Biographia*. They believe him when he says that the *Biographia* crumbles to pieces, and does so precisely here.

Why? I'm reminded of 'Kubla Khan', a poem widely taken as an incomplete fragment, but which (as Thomas McFarland notes) actually embodies a degree of formal completion and wholeness rare in any poetry. Why do we take it as an incomplete fragment? Because that's what Coleridge, in his preliminary note to the poem, *says* it is. We are free to disagree with him on this, for 'Kubla Khan', and – I think – for the *Biographia* itself.

I am not suggesting that there is some higher, mystic unity to the whole of the *Biographia Literaria*. Much of the volume *is* diffuse and scattered, and a great deal of the larger compositional design was sacrificed to the exigencies of dictation, publishing and Coleridge's state of mind. But the option is open to us to judge this chapter on what it contains rather than on the meta-textual games it plays. The 'letter from a friend' can of course be read (as many have read it) as an attempt to disguise Coleridge's sheepish realisation that he had run out of copy and had neither the time nor the energy to generate more. On the other hand we can, if we choose, read it as a playful embodiment of one of the *Biographia's* key themes: the capacity of subjectivity to objectivise itself. This is because one of the things this letter does is to introduce a new mode of fictionalising the writer's consciousness. Coleridge has already discussed his ability, which he shares with all of us, to imagine himself as an entity in the world, to think about his own modes of thinking. And, secondarily, he has set out in the book we are reading to *write* a version of himself as he used to be, a first person rendering into chronologically prior third-person character (reading Bowles, wandering the West Country with Wordsworth and so on). This secondary objectivisation of one's subjectivity is limited to writers, rather than being a feature of all human consciousness; and for Coleridge the crucial thing about it is its fidelity. But here, with

the ‘letter from a friend’, Coleridge introduces a third mode. One can objectivise oneself by thought, in the present; and by memory, in the past; but one can also generate a *fictionalised* version of oneself. Here Coleridge does just that by undertaking a kind of Gollum-strategy, talking about himself in the third person as if he were a separate individual – in fact by recreating himself *as* a fictional character, ‘a friend, whose practical judgement I have had ample reason to estimate and revere’. It is almost too obvious to need adding: these three modes of objectivised subjectivity – Coleridge himself, Coleridge’s memory of how he used to be, and a sort of puppet-show fictionalised version of Coleridge that he has concocted – correspond directly to the primary imagination, secondary imagination and fancy.⁷² Otherwise what do we have, but a chapter that promises to define Imagination, and does so brilliantly? In what way does it make sense to call this a fragment?

I said earlier that Chapter 13 includes *two* pieces of creative conceptualisation, bringing to a kind of conclusion the preceding line of argumentation, and that only one of these (‘imagination/fancy’) has gone on to have wider influence. What is the other? It is a theory to explain how the individual mind relates to the exterior reality. It strikes me as both ingenious and original. When it is noticed at all, it is taken as yet another element Coleridge lifted from his German sources.⁷³ This, though, it is not.

To recap, Coleridge sets out in the *Biographia Literaria* to do two main things. One (‘literaria’) is to excavate the principles by which great literature can be distinguished from lesser. This he does conceptually by means of his celebrated distinction of imagination from fancy, and practically by the invention of a method – practical criticism – entailing close attention to the text. Even had the former concept not been as influential as it has been, the ubiquity of the latter as a critical strategy would require us to judge the book a huge success. But the second thing that Coleridge hopes to do in this book, and which he sees as intimately related to the first, is to establish how

⁷² I particularly like the way Coleridge begins the letter ‘Dear C’ and ends it ‘Your affectionate &c.’ This strings the letter (written, after all, by Coleridge to Coleridge) between the actual ‘C.’ and the fictionalised ‘& C.’, this ‘and-C.’ emblematising a sort of secondary, supplemental echo of the original.

⁷³ Engell and Bate (*Biographia Literaria*, 1:300) point readers towards Schelling’s *System des transcendentalen Idealismus* (1800) and Fichte’s *Grundriss der Eigenthümlichen der Wissenschaftslehre* (1795); but in neither work is there an argument like Coleridge’s. The Fichte (‘the straightforward meeting together of the force of the Ich and that of the Nicht-Ich [results] in a third, which neither is at all, nor can be, anything but that in which they join together’) is, indeed, a very general statement, that would apply as well to a variety of versions of the Dialectic.

consciousness, and in particular a poet's consciousness, ('biographia') is able to interact with the world in the ways it does, or at all. The philosophical chapters have been working, painstakingly, towards grounding a theory of this latter; we left this question unresolved at the end of Chapter 11. In that lengthy chapter, Coleridge makes the argument in favour of God's existence by means of the necessity of an absolute first cause, and adds the case for a *personal* God via an argument that though His existence can be neither proven nor disproved, the balance of probabilities is strongly on the side of belief. But this isn't the main focus of the book; the bulk of the chapter is about the 'hard problem': how mind-stuff and matter-stuff can interact with one another. He rehearses the possibility that the external world is prior to the mind, consciousness somehow arriving into it at a later stage, but dismisses it. Likewise he rejects the pure Idealist notion that the external world is a sort of phantom, and only mind-stuff exists; Chapter 12 works, fairly tortuously and leaning heavily on Schelling, to the position that the external world and the interior mind are co-existent. Also in play is Kant's notion that many aspects of existence that we assume to be 'out there' in the world (things like time, cause, effect and dimension) are actually aspects of our structuring consciousness.

Where does this leave us? Coleridge thinks he has shown that subjectivity is infinite and eternal, and that there is an objective reality, also infinite and eternal, with which that subjectivity interacts. But the 'hard problem' remains. These are not the same substance, or we would not be able to make the distinction between them, and individuality would dissolve in a Spinozist pantheism, or melt into a Berkeleyan phantom world of mere ideas. But if they are *not* the same substance, how are they able to interact with one another? This is what Chapter 7 described as 'the absurdity of intercommunion between substances that have no one property in common'.

Earlier, Coleridge began to suggest that they were two different substances that are somehow emanations of the same underlying sub-substance. Here he comes up with a different argument. Subjectivity and Objectivity, the inward and the outward, are 'alike infinite, both alike indestructible', and they work in opposite directions. What happens when they collide? Well, to begin with: *must* they collide? Might they not bypass one another? Coleridge thinks not:

The counteraction then of the two assumed forces does not depend on their meeting from opposite directions; the power which acts in them is indestructible; it is therefore inexhaustibly re-ebullient;

So what happens when they come together? ‘Something must be the result of these two forces’ colliding, he insists. Since they are ‘both alike infinite’, and ‘both alike indestructible’, ‘rest or neutralization cannot be this result’. Since they cannot cancel one another out, we find ourselves in a specialised version of the old question: *what happens when an irresistible force meets an immovable object?* Coleridge’s answer, in a nutshell, is: the irresistible force is resisted, the immovable object moves – or, to use the terms he himself presents, the impenetrable is penetrated, the incompatible is compatibilised. The consequence is that a special third thing – the interaction of our sensibilities with the external world – is generated.

The product [of this collision] must be a tertium aliquid, or finite generation . . . Now this tertium aliquid can be no other than an inter-penetration of the counteracting powers, partaking of both.

This relies on the debatable grounds that both subjective and objective reality *are* infinite, but it is otherwise, I think, ingenious and – as far as I can see – original. It comes in the last ‘official’ (as it were) paragraph of volume one of the *Biographia*, before the cod-letter and Coleridge’s declaration that he is breaking off rather than continuing for a hundred pages. Here the philosophical chapters come at last to a particular conceptual fruition that makes sense of many of the (otherwise odd-seeming) emphases of the preceding paragraphs: the earlier stress upon the *forces* rather than the material composition of the universe, the dualism and the particular terms in which ‘the hard problem’ is phrased. This is the point that makes sense of the prior insistence, which earlier seemed so baffling, that the mind retains everything it has ever experienced. Coleridge stresses this because he wants to characterise the mind as larger than capacious – as, in fact, infinite. Retaining every last little detail observed from the pinnacle of St Paul’s, every second of the day, would be a trivial matter for a subjectivity so constituted. This is also part of Coleridge’s post-Kantian separation of the ‘reason’ from the ‘understanding’. As he puts it in one of the *Opus Maximum* fragments, perhaps written around this time: reason is infinite, where understanding is finite. His actual phrasing is ‘the reason is not the faculty of the finite’; and more positively, ‘the reason as the irradiative power of the understanding and the representative of the infinite i.e. the boundless, judges the understanding as the faculty of the finite, and cannot without grievous error be judged by it’.⁷⁴ It must be this way, in order for

⁷⁴ Thomas McFarland (ed.), *Opus Maximum* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2002), 86–7. Coleridge’s footnote explains that he means infinite as ‘sine finebus, not

Coleridge's 'unstoppable force meeting immovable object' conceptual rebus to work.

It is puzzling that Coleridge doesn't make more of his ingenious moment of argument. If we agree with it, it obviates the need to agree with Kant that the *ding-an-sich* is radically unknowable, and bridges the world and the mind without reducing either to the terms of the other. It is, in other words, a clever solution to the 'hard problem'.

(c) Chapters 14–22

That the second volume needs much less by way of explication than Volume 1 is only partly the result of the fact that it is markedly less metaphysical. Although the need to divide the project into two volumes only became apparent when Coleridge was already deep in the writing, there is nonetheless a marked symmetry to the design of the whole – something which remains true, I think, even when we take 'Satyrane's Letters' and the *Bertram* critique into account. Volume 1 sets two main lines running in parallel: the external events of Coleridge's life, and the internal narrative of his intellectual, poetic and spiritual development. The former begins with Coleridge's poetic education at the stern hands of his schoolteacher Bowyer (Chapter 1) and the young poet's own reading of living writers like Bowles (Chapter 1) and Burke (Chapter 20). The narrative moves from reading printed texts to interacting with actual poets – Southey (Chapter 3) and Wordsworth (Chapters 4, 10, 14, 17–22). In the course of this we are able, if we are so minded, to trace Coleridge's own biographical circumstances from school (Chapter 1); then, after a lengthy detour through literary critical matters, to (in Chapter 10) his youthful radicalism and journalism, his time with Wordsworth in the West Country, his annuity from the Wedgwoods and time in Germany, his return to England and his time writing for the *Morning Post* (the period 1796–1800). Towards its end, Chapter 10 includes a reference, though it is a chronologically decontextualized one, of his time in Italy (December 1805 to June 1806). There are also several anecdotes about the uncommerciality of *The Friend* which can be dated to 1809–10, although, again, no dates are supplied, and without an external frame of reference it would not be possible to constellate these scattered biographical data from the information provided in the *Biographia* alone. Chapter 14 provides a few more details of his

having, or essentially incapable of having, outlines; not bounded or boundable from without'. He adds, a little sternly: 'the reader must be on his guard not to substitute for this, the proper and scientific sense of "infinities," the popular meaning of "infinite," viz. what is immeasurably vast'.

time with Wordsworth during the run-up to the publication of the *Lyrical Ballads* (1797). That, pretty much, is it as far as the account of Coleridge's life in the *Biographia* is concerned.

Many aspects of Coleridge's life are downplayed, or omitted altogether. The book tells us nothing of his parents and early childhood, nor of his university career,⁷⁵ nor his ill-fated time in the army under the pseudonym Silas Tomkyn Comberbache. References to his wife and children are scattered here and there, but we do not learn Sara Coleridge's name, or how they met and married, or when or even that they decided to separate; and we only learn his son Hartley's name by-the-by. Of the birth of Berkeley Coleridge and Sara Coleridge junior no mention is made, nor of Coleridge's time in Malta. Some of this is a function of discretion, of course: for although he has no problem mocking his youthful priggishness and lack of worldliness, Coleridge is understandably disinclined to paint himself as somebody who habitually abdicated his responsibilities or absconded from his duties. Something similar informs the reticence about his married life. And of course we would not expect him to make public, in 1817, his opium addiction, or the fact that he had fallen in love with a woman other than his wife.

What we are left with is a structure that moves not according to a linear chronology, but more obliquely. After the account of his childhood in Chapter 1 we range back and forth through the time of Coleridge's life, anchored in Chapter 10 with a sense that it is the years 1796–1800 that are the most important ones. Other events, prior and post, are dropped in at various places. Of course we might counter that the *Biographia* is not primarily concerned with the external facts of Coleridge's life, but rather with his literary and philosophical development. And to some extent, clearly, that is so. But when we try and reconstruct from this text the timeline of Coleridge's *intellectual* evolution, we find a similar evasiveness. The two main events, as it were, of Coleridge's mental development are his repudiation of Hartleyan 'materialism' in favour of a spiritually committed philosophy informed by Kant and Schelling; and the connected evolution of his religious faith from Unitarianism to Trinitarianism. We learn that these things happened, without really being able to say how they map onto the timeline of the author's own life.

One of the themes of Chapter 14 is the relationship between the moral probity of the poet and the excellence of the poetry s/he

⁷⁵ There are two references – not to Cambridge, but to the vacations Coleridge took *from* Cambridge – in Chapters 1 and 3.

(in Coleridge's schema: he) produces. It is here, for the first time, that one of the underpinning rationales of a 'literary biography' is articulated.

What is poetry? is so nearly the same question with, what is a poet? that the answer to the one is involved in the solution of the other. For it is a distinction resulting from the poetic genius itself, which sustains and modifies the images, thoughts, and emotions of the poet's own mind. The poet, described in *ideal* perfection, brings the whole soul of man into activity, with the subordination of its faculties to each other according to their relative worth and dignity.

Moral excellence is repeatedly connected with the communication of 'truth' to the reader – 'truth, either moral or intellectual' is how he puts it in Chapter 14. At the same time, Coleridge notes that the reverse might be true: that well-written poetry might insinuate something morally repugnant into the mind of the reader. His example is homosexual desire:

Blest indeed is that state of society, in which the immediate purpose would be baffled by the perversion of the proper ultimate end; in which no charm of diction or imagery could exempt the Bathyllus even of an Anacreon, or the Alexis of Virgil, from disgust and aversion!

The point here is that since we don't live in this 'blest' society, such 'morally disgusting' writing is possible. Coleridge's knee-jerk homophobia is not in itself out of keeping with his age (in his notebooks he described Vergil's second Eclogue – to Alexis – as a 'fine Poem on a hateful subject').⁷⁶ What makes it more interesting is how anomalous this example seems in the context of the *Biographia*. The larger point the book makes about poetry's capacity to convey morally dubious messages is political, not sexual. Burke is praised because he communicated (what Coleridge took to be) patent political truths; Wordsworth is defended against the idea that his poetry proposed a levelling or vulgar jacobinical ideological message – accordingly, Coleridge downplays the 'language really used by men' argument of the 'Preface to *Lyrical Ballads*' and emphasises instead the dignified, elevated and elevating tenor of the Immortality Ode, the *Prelude* and the *Excursion*. But what this reference to Anacreon and Vergil does is insinuate another way of addressing this question: a sense of the

⁷⁶ *Notebooks*, 3:4198.

buried symbolic connection between poetical radicalism and same-sex desire. After all, one way of reading the history of Coleridge's relationship with Wordsworth is as a love affair, with its period of intense mutual connection, its growing apart and its breach.

This finds a kind of narrative correlative in – to look forward for a moment – the first of Satyrane's letters, with the encounter with the Dane. Coleridge plays this exchange for laughs, presenting his word-portrait as evidence that caricature exists in life and not merely in art. And the Dane *is* funny: his pompousness, his boastfulness, the gap between his grand claims about himself and the ludicrous reality. His Thomas Paine-like deprecations of Christianity, his praise for French 'philosophes' and his repeated assertions that 'I haf made ten tousand pound a year. Is not dhat *ghenius*, my dear friend?—But vat is money?—I dthink dhe poorest man alive my equal . . . we are all Got's children' (juxtaposed, wittily, with the bullying manner in which he bosses the Swedish baron about): all this establishes his ideological credentials as a radical, or perhaps it would be better to say as somebody who proclaims levelling, radical sentiments while actually enjoying his own wealth and status. But it is impossible to miss the homoerotic subject in Coleridge's account of this encounter. The Dane begins with extravagant praise for Coleridge's physical appearance ('vat eyes! vat a milk-vite forehead!—O my heafen! vy, you're a Got!') and is physically demonstrative '*squeezing my hand with great vehemence*'; '*swinging my hand to and fro, and cocking his little bright hazel eyes at me*' ('my dear friend! vat an affection and fidelity ve have for each odher!'). The encounter reaches a kind of climax when, the two men squeezed together in the ship's lifeboat (of all places), the Dane all but propositions Coleridge: 'he told me that he had made a large fortune . . . till, the brandy aiding his vanity, and his vanity and garrulity aiding the brandy, he talked like a madman—entreated me to accompany him to Denmark—there I should see his influence with the government, and he would introduce me to the king, &c., &c.'. Coleridge gets out of this circumstance by informing the Dane of his own religious scruples, 'and sunk at once an hundred fathoms in his good graces'.

This episode goes some way towards establishing republican ideology and (for Coleridge, deplorable) same-sex desire as in some way connected. This notion is reinforced, in the first of 'Satyrane's Letters', with a queasily humorous sense of bodily contact. As soon as the boat enters the marine realm ('This, too, is a Briton's country'), the majority of the passengers turn a 'froggish' colour and are seasick – French-hued in a Briton's land.

There had been a matrimonial squabble of a very ludicrous kind in the cabin, between the little German tailor and his little wife. He had secured two beds, one for himself and one for her. This had struck the little woman as a very cruel action; she insisted upon their having but one, and assured the mate in the most piteous tones, that she was his lawful wife. The mate and the cabin boy decided in her favour, abused the little man for his want of tenderness with much humour, and hoisted him into the same compartment with his sea-sick wife.

Presumably the point here is not that the German tailor doesn't want to have sex with his wife as such; just that he doesn't want to share a bed with a vomiting woman. But the implication bubbles under: is it sex that makes a man sick to his stomach? Or only sex with a woman?

It's tempting to assume that what's behind Coleridge's buried anxiety here is, precisely, the memory of his young self's love for, and intimacy with, the young Wordsworth. I am not suggesting any homosexual activity took place between them. Rather, the point is the way Coleridge's poetic antennae, extraordinarily sensitive as they were to the buried life, the strange guilty currents of desire and repulsion, tuned into the charged homosociality of his time with Wordsworth.

Chapter 15 follows on from this account of half-buried erotics by analysing the language of Shakespeare's two richly sexualised poems. In both the *Venus and Adonis* and the *Lucrece*, sex is represented with a gorgeous intensity that simultaneously manifests its sensual appeal *and* its violent problematic. Coleridge itemises several characteristics of Shakespearian verse. The first (its 'sweetness' and melodiousness) is straightforward enough. The second is a little more counter-intuitive: that Shakespeare's excellence is manifested by his choice of 'subjects very remote from' his own 'private interests and circumstances'. Now, there's nothing incoherent as such in preferring disinterested objectivity to confessional gush in one's literature. But an obvious objection presents itself – how can Coleridge, or anybody, know what Shakespeare's 'private interests and circumstances' were? Perhaps Coleridge's equivalence between poem and poet suggests a kind of back-formation from the text to the writer (as it might be: Coleridge knows Shakespeare's writing so well, and admires it so highly, that he feels he knows the author, and believes that only a person of the highest calibre could have written it – he would hardly be the first, or last, person to believe such a thing). But in fact the line of argument takes a different tack:

We may perhaps remember the tale of the statuary, who had acquired considerable reputation for the legs of his goddesses, though the rest of the statue accorded but indifferently with ideal beauty; till his wife, elated by her husband's praises, modestly acknowledged that she had been his constant model.

This suggests that the 'problem' with a too confessional style of writing is its limitation: the writer can write well only about a small thing s/he knows intimately; where the excellence of Shakespeare is a kind of total capacity proceeding from his own individual removal from the subject matter. But the story of the statue, with its vaguely risqué reference to nuptial legs, sidles up to the question of the erotic content of the poems Coleridge had promised to discuss.

His 'Venus and Adonis' seem at once the characters themselves, and the whole representation of those characters by the most consummate actors. You seem to be *told* nothing, but to see and hear everything. Hence it is, that from the perpetual activity of attention required on the part of the reader; from the rapid flow, the quick change, and the playful nature of the thoughts and images; and above all from the alienation, and, if I may hazard such an expression, the utter *aloofness* of the poet's own feelings, from those of which he is at once the painter and the analyst; that though the very subject cannot but detract from the pleasure of a delicate mind, yet never was poem less dangerous on a moral account.

This 'aloofness' is the inoculation Shakespeare's disinterest provides against the risk of such morally dubious subject matter – goddesses (perhaps goddesses with beautiful, wifely legs) having sex with mortal men; Roman men raping Roman women. Coleridge is adamant that 'instead of doing as Ariosto, and as, still more offensively, Wieland has done' (namely 'degrading and deforming passion into appetite, the trials of love into the struggles of concupiscence'), Shakespeare's poems about sex *are not sexy*. He 'represents the animal impulse', but only 'so as to preclude all sympathy with it.'

As little can a mind thus roused and awakened be brooded on by mean and indistinct emotion, as the low, lazy mist can creep upon the surface of a lake, while a strong gale is driving it onward in waves and billows.

'Mean' is a period-specific denigration of the sexual impulse – although it surely runs counter to most people's experience of sexual arousal to

insist that it proceeds from ‘an *indistinct* emotion’. The question here is whether Coleridge is, as it were, protesting too much: choosing two poems centrally about transgressive sexual connection, only to insist that they are not really about anything so base.

In Chapter 16 Coleridge announces that he will discuss ‘Shakespeare’s contemporaries’, focussing on Italy in order ‘to establish one striking point of difference between the poetry of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, and that of the present age’, a difference that apparently also characterises ‘the sister art of painting’. What difference?

In the present age the poet . . . seems to propose to himself as his main object, and as that which is the most characteristic of his art, new and striking IMAGES; with INCIDENTS that interest the affections or excite the curiosity. Both his characters and his descriptions he renders, as much as possible, specific and individual, even to a degree of portraiture. In his diction and metre, on the other hand, he is comparatively careless.

Coleridge thinks that content (character and incident) trumps form and style in modern writing. Technique is neglected, with poets either careless, mechanical or eccentrically idiosyncratic. From Pope at the beginning of the eighteenth century to Darwin at the beginning of the nineteenth, poets have abandoned ‘meditation and an intelligent purpose’ in their work, writing poems that are ‘poetical for no better reason, than that it would be intolerable in conversation or in prose’. Not that prose is any better: ‘alas! even our prose writings . . . strive to be in the fashion, and trick themselves out in the soiled and over-worn finery of the meretricious muse’.

What, as far as Coleridge is concerned, is the preferable alternative to this artificial, ill-disciplined, meretricious ‘modern’ style? It is a ‘recurrence to plain sense, and genuine mother English’; the ‘purity of their native tongue’, something the guardianship of which is ‘the first duty of a poet’. However, if we are pondering in what this notional ‘purity’ consists, and how it relates to the asserted cultural and social unity of ‘Christendom’, Coleridge’s answer does not appear, at first blush, very illuminating:

For language is the armoury of the human mind; and at once contains the trophies of its past, and the weapons of its future conquests. ‘Animadvertite, quam sit ab improprietate verborum pronum hominibus prolabi in errores circa res!’ HOBBS: *Exam. et Emend. hod. Math.*—“Sat vero, in hâc vitæ brevitate et naturâ

obscuritate, rerum est, quibus cognoscendis tempus impendatur, ut confusis et multivotis sermonibus intelligendis illud consumere opus non est. Eheu! quantas strages paravere verba nubila, quæ tot dicunt, ut nihil dicunt—nubes potius, e quibus et in rebus politicis et in ecclesiâ turbines et tonitrua erumpunt! Et proinde recte dictum putamus a Platone in Gorgia: ος αν τα ονοματα ειδει, ισεται και τα πραγματα: et ab Epicteto, αρχη παιδευσως η των ονοματων επισκεψις: et prudentissime Galenus scribit, η των ονοματων χρησις παραχθειςα και την των πραγματος επιταραττει γνωσιν, Egregie vero J. C. Scaliger, in Lib. I. de Plantis: Est *primum*, inquit, *sapientis officium, bene sentire, ut sibi vivat: proximum, bene loqui, ut patriæ vivat.* SENNERTUS *de Puls: Differentiâ.*

Coleridge's bewildering chunk of quoted prose, macaronically mixing Latin and Greek, modern (Hobbes and Sennertius) and ancient (Plato and Epictetus), compounded of genuine quotations and confected Coleridgean Latin, makes the same point several times: 'How prone men are to slide from improper use of words to actual errors about these things'; 'Alas, cloudy words distract us, seeming to say much but in fact saying nothing'; 'Those who know words properly will know things too'; 'The study of words is the beginning of knowledge'; 'If there is confusion in the way we use words, then there will be confusion in our knowledge of things'. Surely there is something counter-intuitive – we might even say perverse – about framing an appeal to the 'purity of their native tongue' in a rebarbative mash-up of obscure Latin and Greek quotations. For many readers, unless glossed, it must represent sheer opacity. Even *with* explanatory glosses it is hard to parse. Why quote a German Latin treatise on chemistry and medicine, of all things, as an authority for what is, at root, a point about language and semantic rectitude? And why mangle the original text by chopping it about, mixing up Galen and Sennertius, and inserting a line that advertises its anachronism by referring not to bodies and health but to those perennial Coleridge concerns, 'Church and State' (ecclesia et politica)?

Perhaps something more slyly complex is going on here. Coleridge's Latin interpolation brings us back to the opening of the paragraph: 'Christendom, from its first settlement . . . has been so far one great body.' The point is that a superficial variety of tone and language is unified at a deeper level by the same quality that renders every person in 'Christendom' a member of the same body. Quotation from learned authorities is the traditional way of reinforcing a point, of course; but there is something playfully egregious about Coleridge's

citation of authority here. ‘Church and State’ make one body; and so the author of that famous work on the logic of the social collective, *Leviathan*, is quoted (though not *from* the *Leviathan*) alongside Renaissance and classical medical writers whose concern was the individual rather than the social body. This lump of text is leavened with Plato, and brought back to the 1810s with Coleridge. We can accept that Coleridge is making a serious point while also seeing that he is doing so *ironically*. The playfulness takes some of the sting out of what might otherwise sound starkly puritanical. Humour, to repeat myself, is part of Coleridge’s larger textual strategy in this book.

So what *does* Coleridge mean by ‘pure’ in relation to style? If it is (let’s say) *simple, straightforward, uncontaminated*, then the melange of English, Latin and Greek with which Coleridge reinforces the points seems, at the least, contradictory. Does he mean a purity of diction in the sense of adherence to a set of traditional rules? Is it a kind of national or religious purity (*‘bene loqui, ut patriæ viva!’*)? – the belief that the language a nation speaks articulates, or ‘arms’, its past into its future?

With any of these, but especially the latter, the movement into an *ut picture poesis* disquisition seems like a counter-intuitive move. Yet that’s what we get: the following two paragraphs explore the parallel case of the visual arts. Coleridge thinks that, in modern paintings, ‘foregrounds and intermediate distances are comparatively unattractive’ where backgrounds are full of visual interest (‘mountains and torrents and castles forbid the eye to proceed, and nothing tempts it to trace its way back again’). The modern reader casts her puzzled mind back to any eighteenth- or early nineteenth-century paintings to which this description applies. Claiming that the old masters of ‘the great Italian and Flemish’ schools made better art is a pretty uncontentious thing to do; but whether this is because they put more visual interest into the ‘front and middle objects of the landscape’ than the background, is more debatable.

Coleridge opens Chapter 17 with a celebration of Wordsworth’s preface. The praise is effusive (‘most ably contended . . . he has evinced the truth . . . with equal acuteness and clearness . . . a useful task . . . deserves all praise . . . Mr. Wordsworth is fully justified . . . admiration of his genius . . .’); but actually the main focus of the chapter is dispraise of Wordsworth, and especially the wrongness of Wordsworth’s claim that ‘poetry in general consists altogether in a language taken . . . from the mouths of men in real life’ articulating ‘natural feelings’. Coleridge immediately objects that only a very limited kind of poetry can be written in such an idiom (‘in *any* sense this

rule is applicable only to *certain* classes of poetry'). He says that as far as such cases go – for example, the eighteenth-century subgenre of rustic or rural poetry – Wordsworth is adding nothing new. But the most pointed is the third objection to Wordsworth's valorisation of the 'language really used by men' as the proper language of poetry: 'in that degree in which it is *practicable*, yet as a *rule* it is useless, if not injurious and *therefore either need not, or ought not to be practised*'. Injurious to whom? Coleridge is clear that this 'low and rustic' poetry is not aimed at actual low and rustic people, but rather at what we would nowadays call middle-class and upper-class readers. Where's the pleasure in reading poems about peasants written in peasant-ese? Coleridge starts with three possible answers to that question, but only in order to stress that 'these were *not* Mr. Wordsworth's objects'.

The poet informs his reader, that he had generally chosen *low and rustic* life; but not *as* low and rustic, or in order to repeat that pleasure of doubtful moral effect, which persons of elevated rank and of superior refinement oftentimes derive from a happy *imitation* of the rude unpolished manners and discourse of their inferiors. For the pleasure so derived may be traced to three exciting causes. The first is the naturalness, in *fact*, of the things represented. The second is the apparent naturalness of the *representation*, as raised and qualified by an imperceptible infusion of the author's own knowledge and talent, which infusion does, indeed, constitute it an *imitation* as distinguished from a mere *copy*. The third cause may be found in the reader's conscious feeling of his superiority awakened by the contrast presented to him; even as for the same purpose the kings and great barons of yore retained, sometimes *actual* clowns and fools, but more frequently shrewd and witty fellows in that *character*.

The options are: (a) we are simply interested in the low and the rustic, as (although this is not an example Coleridge uses) a scientist is interested in the life in a rock pool – that is, perhaps we have a disinterested curiosity about how the other half (say, rather, *the other nineteenth*s) live. But Coleridge does not believe actual readers read for such motives. Or might it be (b) that we posh people derive pleasure from imitating our inferiors, as Marie Antoinette liked to dress up as a milkmaid with a super-frilly petticoat and bone china milk pails. Coleridge is surely correct that *this* kind of pleasure is of a dubious moral status. Or, finally (c) perhaps we like to look down on our inferiors simply to remind ourselves of our own social superiority – again, a far from morally defensible activity.

So if not these, then what *were* the reasons why Wordsworth adopted a 'low and rustic' style?

He chose low and rustic life, 'because in that condition the essential passions of the heart find a better soil, in which they can attain their maturity, are less under restraint, and speak a plainer and more emphatic language; because in that condition of life our elementary feelings coexist in a state of greater simplicity, and consequently may be more accurately contemplated, and more forcibly communicated; because the manners of rural life germinate from those elementary feelings; and from the necessary character of rural occupations are more easily comprehended, and are more durable; and lastly, because in that condition the passions of men are incorporated with the beautiful and permanent forms of nature'.

That Wordsworth was channelling the popular Rousseauianism of the day is an argument that has, of course, been thoroughly excavated by critics; and the extent to which Coleridge is resisting the (as he saw it) Jacobinism of that Rousseau-inspired philosophy likewise.⁷⁷

At the core of the argument here is an agree-or-disagree assertion on Coleridge's part that there simply is no such thing as a noble savage. 'Primitive' life is brutal and degrading, not noble and simple. At the margins of the argument things gets slipperier. Those Wordsworthian poems that Coleridge admires the most are not allowed to stand in support Wordsworth's own argument: in 'Brothers', 'Michael' and 'Ruth', 'the persons introduced are by no means taken *from low or rustic life* in the common acceptation of those words'. This mode of logic is nowadays called the 'No True Scotsman Argument'. There may be individual peasants who manifest dignity, nobility and so on; but Coleridge does not believe that the majority are like this, and he insists poetry must be concerned with the general, not the exception.

I adopt with full faith, the principle of Aristotle, that poetry, as poetry, is essentially *ideal*, that it avoids and excludes all *accident*; that its apparent individualities of rank, character, or occupation must be *representative* of a class; and that the *persons* of poetry must

⁷⁷ See, for instance, James Chandler, *Wordsworth's Second Nature: A Study of the Poetry and Politics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984); John Willinsky (ed.), *The Educational Legacy of Romanticism* (Calgary: Calgary Institute for the Humanities, 1990); Elizabeth de Mijolla, *Autobiographical Quests: Augustine, Montaigne, Rousseau and Wordsworth* (Charlottesville, VA: University Press of Virginia, 1994); Gregory Dart, *Rousseau, Robespierre and English Romanticism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

be clothed with *generic* attributes, with the *common* attributes of the class; not with such as one gifted individual might *possibly* possess.

The protagonist of ‘Michael’ is an exceptional individual (exceptionally old, exceptionally stoical and so on); the ‘Idiot Boy’ goes too far the other way, articulating mere ‘morbid idiocy’. Next, Coleridge quotes from Wordsworth’s preface, that the language ‘has been adopted (purified indeed from what appears to be its real defects, from all lasting and rational causes of dislike or disgust)’, in order to make the point that:

a rustic’s language, purified from all provincialism and grossness, and so far re-constructed as to be made consistent with the rules of grammar . . . will not differ from the language of any other man of common-sense, however learned or refined he may be, except as far as the notions, which the rustic has to convey, are fewer and more indiscriminate.

This is persuasive, and a palpable hit against Wordsworth – except that it rather cuts against Coleridge’s earlier objection. Surely *either* Wordsworth reproduces the demeaning quasi-Jacobinical idiom of the populace – with the attendant dangers of lowering the tone – *or* Wordsworth so modifies the plain speech of ordinary people so as to emphasise its dignity and nobility, in which case he may be contradicting his project as outlined in the ‘Preface’, but he is surely not dangerously lowering the tone. Which is it to be? Coleridge accuses Wordsworth of an aesthetically debilitating particularity *and* of an inconsistent idealisation of the peasant. He can’t really have it both ways.

I deny that the words and combinations of words derived from the objects, with which the rustic is familiar, whether with distinct or confused knowledge, can be justly said to form the *best* part of language. It is more than probable, that many classes of the brute creation possess discriminating sounds, by which they can convey to each other notices of such objects as concern their food, shelter, or safety. Yet we hesitate to call the aggregate of such sounds a language, otherwise than metaphorically.

This reverts to the idea of ‘purity’ of idiom. Implicit here is a rebuttal against the notion that the language of the ordinary peasant is ‘purer’ than that of civilised people, a case sometimes made on the grounds that the latter is over-refined and artificial to the point of decadence. Coleridge inverts this: peasant discourse is simpler than that

of the aristocracy, yes: but a dog barking when it's angry is simpler still.

The best part of human language, properly so called, is derived from reflection on the acts of the mind itself. It is formed by a voluntary appropriation of fixed symbols to internal acts, to processes and results of imagination, the greater part of which have no place in the consciousness of uneducated man.

Does this mean that advanced thought entails abstractions, or that it entails meta-thought, a self-reflection of cognition? Either way, and using an example that strikes a twenty-first-century reader as unpleasantly racist, Coleridge suggests that:

The extreme difficulty, and often the impossibility, of finding words for the simplest moral and intellectual processes of the languages of uncivilized tribes has proved perhaps the weightiest obstacle to the progress of our most zealous and adroit missionaries. Yet these tribes are surrounded by the same nature, as our peasants are.

Again, it's not clear if Coleridge believes that the indigenous peoples of Papa New Guinea or the Amazon rain forest *actually* lack all 'moral and intellectual' processes, or if he just means that their moral and intellectual processes are unchristian, and incomplete for that reason. The former is deeply racist, the latter merely imperialist and appropriational.

The chapter ends with a dig at Wordsworth for claiming that the proper idiom of poetry is that ordinary language '*in a state of excitement*'. Coleridge's mockery here is well done, except that Wordsworth never said any such thing – his preface specifies the 'languages of men in a state of vivid sensation'. For a writer such as Coleridge, who lays such repeated and emphatic stress on the precise use of one's nomenclature, this seems particularly unfair on Wordsworth. *Passion* and *sensation* are hardly the same thing.

Chapters 18, 19 and 20 explore Wordsworth's poetry in greater detail. Coleridge reiterates his belief that the language of the peasantry is less expressive than that of the higher classes, and therefore less well suited to poetry ('the intercourse of uneducated men, is distinguished from the diction of their superiors in knowledge and power, by the greater *disjunction* and *separation* in the component parts of that, whatever it be, which they wish to communicate'). He goes on to attack another central plank of Wordsworth's 'Preface': that '*there neither is nor can be any essential difference between the language of prose*

and metrical composition'. Coleridge picks on the 'essential' part of the sentence. There are, he says, two main meanings of 'essential'. One is philosophical:

Essence, in its primary signification, means the principle of *individuation*, the inmost principle of the *possibility*, of any thing, *as* that particular thing. It is equivalent to the *idea* of a thing, whenever we use the word idea, with philosophic precision. Existence, on the other hand, is distinguished from essence, by the superinduction of *reality*. Thus we speak of the essence, and essential properties of a circle; but we do not therefore assert, that any thing, which really *exists*, is mathematically circular. Thus too, without any tautology we contend for the *existence* of the Supreme Being; that is, for a reality correspondent to the idea.

It's not clear to me why God creeps into this definition, in the last part there, unless it is to remind us that God creeps into everything Coleridge does – or, to put it a little more precisely, to remind us that this is not merely a way of saying 'essence is another word for the similarities by which we mentally group different objects (eg circular objects) into the same semantic set'. Coleridge is invoking the strong Platonic sense of the word: that we see resemblances between things because these things actually resemble some transcendent form of the thing. That is to say, for Coleridge 'essences' are real, not mere functions of our pattern-liking brains. But anyhow, this is not the sense in which Wordsworth means that *there is no essential difference between the language of prose and metrical composition*. So what is?

There is, next, a *secondary* use of the word essence, in which it signifies the point or ground of contra-distinction between two modifications of the same substance or subject. Thus we should be allowed to say, that the style of architecture of Westminster Abbey is *essentially* different from that of Saint Paul, even though both had been built with blocks cut into the same form, and from the same quarry.

This example loads the argument neatly against Wordsworth. Like Westminster Abbey and St Paul's Cathedral (Coleridge is saying), 'poems' and 'prose' are made out of the same bricks – words. And yet, again like Westminster Abbey and St Paul's Cathedral, 'poems' and 'prose' are essentially different things. The implication is that Wordsworth's claim is as foolish as if a man were to insist, 'Since both structures are made out of stone, there is no essential difference between Westminster Abbey and St Paul's Cathedral'. This really

isn't fair to Wordsworth: he is not claiming there is no essential difference between the language of prose and metrical composition *because both are made out of words*. That would indeed be a fatuous sort of argument. Since Coleridge himself goes on at this point to develop his argument about the place of *metre* in poetry, we might think he believes so too.

That theory of metre is important to Coleridge's larger poetics, and has been widely discussed.⁷⁸ In brief, he argues that metre is an organic element of poetry, not an add-on; and that it manifests a tension between 'passion' and control, or (as he puts it) 'volition'. Holding these two in a creative tension, having them work, as we might say nowadays, 'dialectically', is the way Coleridge believes poetry is able to articulate its important moral as well as its aesthetic truths. In her essay on 'Coleridge's Theory of Language', Catherine M. Wallace asks 'why does Coleridge assert the priority of poems as a medium of poetry? What can the language of a poem achieve that the language of prose cannot? Why is a poem most likely to achieve "truth operative, and by effects continually alive"?' She answers herself (I quote her at length, because her answer is so insightful):

Truth becomes operative or effective only as it is felt, only as it arouses a response from the passions as well as the intellect. Coleridge draws on his theory of polarity to provide a dynamic (rather than associationist) psychological mechanism for the traditional link between metrical, figurative language and the expression of passion. Figure and metre express the poet's passion and arouse the reader . . . The definition of 'poem' in chapter fourteen of *Biographia Literaria* specifies these criteria in their literary forms. Correct method demands unity; the parts of a poem must 'mutually support and explain each other; all in their proportion harmonizing with, and supporting, the purpose and known influence of metrical arrangement.' Yet this unity may not be static: it must be progressive or dynamic. One function of metre is to excite 'perpetual and distinct attention to each part'; although the parts of a poem are closely interrelated, the

⁷⁸ In addition to the excellent Catherine M. Wallace essay quoted below, see Richard Harter Fogle, *The Idea of Coleridge's Criticism* (Oakland, CA: University of California Press, 1972); Vinayak Krishna Gokak, 'Coleridge's Views on Form and Metre in Poetry', in *Coleridge's Aesthetics* (New Delhi: Abhinav Publications, 1975), 54–65; Paul Hamilton, 'The Necessity of Poetry', in *Coleridge's Poetics* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1983), 135–85; and Brennan O'Donnell, 'Wordsworth's meters and Coleridge on meter', in *The Passion of Meter: A Study of Wordsworth's Metrical Art* (Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 1995), 48–70.

reader attends to each part in its own right because of ‘the pleasurable activity of mind excited by the attractions of the [reading] journey itself.’ By virtue of this attention, the reader experiences both the progression from one part to the next, and the unity of the whole. Awareness of the individuality of parts is sustained by the same principle as awareness of their unity: the pleasurable excitement of reading. A poem is distinct from other deliberately pleasant uses of language because only poetic language can offer ‘such delight from the whole, as is compatible with a distinct gratification from each component part.’⁷⁹

The important emphasis here is not only on the formal or linguistic-structural aspects of ‘metrical poetry’, but – perhaps counter-intuitively – its *moral* aspect. In practice, though, this moral component exhibits a complex relationship with the poetic form.

The critical criteria derived from this poetics examine how well a poem is written: exacting word-choice, prosodic grace, figurative power, structural integrity. Coleridge’s theory of language advances the claim that texts which measure up will offer significant moral truth, but his theory of language on this point separates itself from his theory of poetry and criticism. ‘An undevout poet in the strict sense of the term is an impossibility,’ Coleridge states; but it does not therefore follow that devotion qualifies any writer of verse as a poet in this strict sense. Coleridge’s criticism of Wordsworth reflects this crucial distinction. Parts of the *Excursion* may ‘do one’s heart good,’ but they are ineffective poetically. Wordsworth’s urge to be a moral philosopher should work itself out in ‘sermons or moral essays’ rather than in poems. This distinction is a delicate one, I know; that delicacy can best be demonstrated by the evident truth and the consistency of the following statement: *The value of literature is moral; the distinctive qualities of literature are linguistic.*

This relationship between value and quality is elaborated in the *Biographia* in what follows. On the former side, Chapters 18 and 19 continue with a selection of quotations from Shakespeare, Spenser, Daniel, Donne and George Herbert that, increasingly as the chapters go on, are presented simply *as* valuable, without any discussion of their particular qualities. Some critics see diffusion here, especially in Chapter 19, which is little more than an anthology of pieces of English

⁷⁹ Catherine M. Wallace, ‘Coleridge’s Theory of Language’, *Philological Quarterly*, 59 (1980), 342.

poetry of which Coleridge thinks well. It is likely that this was one of the strategies by which the book was ‘padded out’ to bring Volume 2 up to a length commensurate with Volume 1. Of course, it’s also true that Coleridge may have felt he was providing those of his readers who did not have access to much of this material with a garland of beauties. The seeming contradiction between doing this and the expressed animadversion against ‘anthologised selections of the beauties of English poetry’ in Chapter 3 strikes a perhaps unfortunate note of inconsistency – something brought out by the fact that Chapter 21 reverts to the topic developed in Chapter 2 ‘on the supposed irritability of men of genius’. Coleridge takes on ‘critical journals’ in general, and the *Edinburgh* in particular. But the lengthy Chapter 22 on the defects and beauties of Wordsworth’s poetry brings both these textual strategies brilliantly into play. Because it discusses the defects, it has a superficial resemblance to a negative review. On closer reading, however, that resemblance falls away, for two main reasons. First, Coleridge is careful to avoid any expression of *personal* animadversion or praise. Indeed, given that the *Biographia* has already explored how close the two men had once been, the total lack of any biographical context in Chapter 22 is not only striking, but might have been baffling without Chapter 21’s prior insistence on the importance of disinterestedness in criticism. And secondly, he is scrupulous to give more weight to beauties than to defects.⁸⁰ And by pairing defects with beauties, copiously illustrated with quotation, Coleridge is able to show *and* tell what is so worthwhile about his friend’s work.

(d) *Satyrane’s Letters, Critique on Bertram and Conclusion*

There is a temptation to treat these last chapters as extramural to the project of the *Biographia*.⁸¹ We know they were added towards the end of the process of composition. On the other hand, as I have been arguing in this introduction, this is true of a larger proportion of the whole than is generally realised. The likely end-point of the 1815 first draft of the *Biographia* cements the argument developed in Chapter 21 and actualised in Chapter 22, that criticism (including reviews) should be disinterested, by assuring the reader that Coleridge is prepared to be the subject of exactly the kind of criticism he has been dishing out:

⁸⁰ Not that this has always persuaded readers. Seamus Perry notes that though ‘Coleridge is keen to emphasise at several points in his Wordsworthian criticism “How small the proportion of the defects are [*sic*] to the beauties”’, nonetheless ‘the enumeration of defects proves more telling’ (Seamus Perry, *Coleridge and the Uses of Division* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 252).

⁸¹ George Watson’s 1956 Everyman edition omits all but the Conclusion.

Were the collection of poems, published with these biographical sketches, important enough, (which I am not vain enough to believe) to deserve such a distinction: EVEN AS I HAVE DONE, SO WOULD I BE DONE UNTO!

It is a suitably Biblical note on which to end.⁸² But the *Biographia* that was actually published immediately undercuts it with a rationalisation for carrying the text onward:

For more than eighteen months have the volume of Poems, entitled SIBYLLINE LEAVES, and the present volumes up to this page, been printed, and ready for publication. But, ere I speak of myself in the tones, which are alone natural to me under the circumstances of late years, I would fain present myself to the Reader as I was in the first dawn of my literary life . . . For this purpose I have selected from the letters, which I wrote home from Germany, those which appeared likely to be most interesting, and at the same time most pertinent to the title of this work.

By foregrounding the (then) ongoing process of actual publication, Coleridge complicates his argument. The oblique apology to the reader – in effect: I am sorry you have had to wait so long for the publication of this book – is necessarily out of date from the moment it is written. The reader, after all, does not know that the book has not been published until the moment that it *has* been published.

This is followed through in the Bertram chapter, where a new rationale is revealed: Coleridge hopes to impress upon his readers the remarkable *consistency* of his views between the 1790s and the present day – ‘in proof that my principles of *politics* have sustained no change’ and that neither had ‘my principles of *taste*’. It is possible to take the declaration of consistency at face value, not so much with respect to Coleridge’s life (where, to put it as mildly as possible, such a claim is open to challenge) as with respect to his *literary* life.

My argument, in other words, is that the best way to read this final section of the *Biographia* is as integral to the textual architecture of the whole, rather than as some random last-minute supplement. The three Satyrane’s Letters work variations on three key themes of the larger book: the autobiographical, the emphasis on poetry written by living, contemporary poets (here represented by Klopstock), and the moral and ideological imperatives of art – in this case, German drama. It is this latter point that the *Bertram* critique

⁸² Luke 6:31.

picks up, perhaps, as I argue above, because initially Coleridge was thinking of this section as a preliminary to the inclusion of *Zapolya*. Had he completed this book along these lines, the structural parallel between Chapter 22, on the defects and beauties of Wordsworth's modern poetry, and this proposed Chapter 23 on the defects and beauties of modern drama, would have been clearer to the reader, and might perhaps have defused some of the criticisms of shapelessness. Presumably Coleridge's extension of the *Bertram* critique into the beauties of modern drama would have entailed reading a play other than his own,⁸³ or the whole would have looked merely egotistical. On the other hand, including the *Zapolya*, after so detailed a reading of Wordsworth's poetry, would have reinforced the autobiographical focus on the partnership of sympathies and differences the two shared that is so large a part of the whole *Biographia*. While it is true that the main focus of the *Biographia* is poetry, Shakespeare's dramatic poetry is repeatedly invoked as the acme of imaginative creation.

Indeed, this final, fourth component of the *Biographia* recapitulates the first four chapters. Like them, it takes us back chronologically to Coleridge's youth. More, it recapitulates the topographical trajectory of Bowles's sonnets (mentioned in Chapter 1) from Britain to Germany and back again. But where Bowles is mentioned at the beginning as a living poet who inspired Coleridge, Klopstock is shown as a living poet whose reputation is not justified by his work. Where Chapter 1 finished with three pastiche sonnets that critiqued contemporary sonnet writing, the second 'Satyrane' letter concludes with a pastiche dramatic exchange between a 'defendant' and 'plaintiff' in an imaginary courtroom challenge to contemporary drama – carrying through the discussion from earlier in the second volume about the dangers of a 'levelling' or Jacobinical element in Wordsworth's 'language really spoken by men'. Here, without the need to treat his personal friend diplomatically, Coleridge takes the gloves off:

For the whole system of your drama is a moral and intellectual *Jacobinism* of the most dangerous kind, and those common-place rants of loyalty are no better than hypocrisy in your playwrights, and your own sympathy with them a gross self-delusion. For the whole secret of dramatic popularity consists with you in the confusion and subversion of the natural order of things, their

⁸³ Perhaps he intended to analyse Goethe's *Faust*, the translation of which play Coleridge had proposed to Murray as a literary project immediately before he began writing the *Biographia*, calling it 'a work of genius, of genuine and original Genius' (Griggs, *Collected Letters*, 3:528).

causes and their effects; in the excitement of surprise, by representing the qualities of liberality, refined feeling, and a nice sense of honour (those things rather which pass among you for such) in persons and in classes of life where experience teaches us least to expect them; and in rewarding with all the sympathies, that are the dues of virtue, those criminals whom law, reason, and religion have excommunicated from our esteem!

The problem is more than just ideological delinquency, Coleridge finds in ‘modern drama’ a key poetic or aesthetic failing.

DEFENDANT. Hold! are not our modern sentimental plays filled with the best Christian morality?

PLAINTIFF. Yes! just as much of it, and just that part of it, which you can exercise without a single Christian virtue—without a single sacrifice that is really painful to you!—just as much as *flatters* you, sends you away pleased with your own hearts, and quite reconciled to your vices . . .

In David P. Haney’s words, Coleridge argues that ‘the ethical effect’ in drama ‘is not in the play’s reflection of virtue, but in its supplying the occasion for the interpretive exercise of virtue’.⁸⁴ The inclusion of the Klopstock encounter inevitably loses force for the modern reader, on account of the almost complete eclipse of Klopstock’s reputation nowadays. Even thinking ourselves back into a sense of a young poet meeting a literary celebrity, we can see Coleridge slyly weighing the case against his subject. He reports walking around Hamburg’s city ramparts with Wordsworth, a moment not only richly rendered but given added force by being the *Biographia*’s last account of the two men together:

We walked to the ramparts, discoursing together on the poet and his conversation, till our attention was diverted to the beauty and singularity of the sunset and its effects on the objects around us. There were woods in the distance. A rich sandy light (nay, of a much deeper colour than sandy) lay over these woods that

⁸⁴ David P. Haney, *The Challenge of Coleridge: Ethics and Interpretation in Romanticism and Modern Philosophy* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001), 146. Haney finds consonance between Coleridge’s view and the work of Paul Ricoeur, for whom ‘tragedy is of interest to moral philosophy precisely because it does not offer philosophical conclusions, but instead challenges and disorients the spectator, so that the “practical wisdom” of ethical thought is generated as a *response* to “tragic wisdom” . . . Coleridge’s version of this disorientation of the gaze leading to reorientation of action is expressed in terms of a need for spectators of drama to undergo a “sacrifice”.’

blackened in the blaze. Over that part of the woods which lay immediately under the intenser light, a brassy mist floated. The trees on the ramparts, and the people moving to and fro between them, were cut or divided into equal segments of deep shade and brassy light. Had the trees, and the bodies of the men and women, been divided into equal segments by a rule or pair of compasses, the portions could not have been more regular. All else was obscure. It was a fairy scene! and to encrease its romantic character, among the moving objects, thus divided into alternate shade and brightness, was a beautiful child, dressed with the elegant simplicity of an English child, riding on a stately goat, the saddle, bridle, and other accoutrements of which were in a high degree costly and splendid.

After this, Klopstock's dreary chuntering seems dry indeed: 'wished to see the Calvary of Cumberland . . . called Rousseau's Ode to Fortune a moral dissertation in stanzas . . . the works of Kant were to him utterly incomprehensible'. His poetry is characterised as book-learned, pastiched (Coleridge doesn't go so far as to actually say that *Der Messias* plagiarises Milton, although the implication hovers over what he does say), morphosic, fanciful and fundamentally un-imaginative.

He had composed hexameters both Latin and Greek as a school exercise, and there had been also in the German language attempts in that style of versification. These were only of very moderate merit.—One day he was struck with the idea of what could be done in this way—he kept his room a whole day, even went without his dinner, and found that in the evening he had written twenty-three hexameters, versifying a part of what he had before written in prose.

Coleridge's prose account of the sunset draws on nature; Klopstock is portrayed as working only at second hand. 'Of the thefts of Wieland, he said, they were so exquisitely managed, that the greatest writers might be proud to steal as he did. He considered the books and fables of old romance writers in the light of the ancient mythology, as a sort of common property, from which a man was free to take whatever he could make a good use of.' It recalls the furious debates, in which Bowles (from Chapter 1) was so heavily involved: whether art be best based on nature, or other art. Plagiarism, which has been both theme and practice throughout the *Biographia*, returns.

Maturin's *Bertram* is also attacked for being mere unanimated

pastiche (Maturin's play 'is taken, in the substance of it, from the first scene of the third act of [Shadwell's] *The Libertine*'). Indeed, not just Maturin, but the whole 'German Drama' is declared an inferior pastiche upon English, 'a poor relation, or impoverished descendant' of the age of Shakespeare ('The so-called *German Drama*, therefore, is *English* in its *origin*, *English* in its *materials*, and *English* by re-adoption'). But the main thrust of Coleridge's animadversion is Maturin's moral delinquency and 'Jacobinism'. This is a play that makes a hero of a piratical opponent of the established law, and an adulterer to boot:

I want words to describe the mingled horror and disgust with which I witnessed the opening of the fourth act, considering it as a melancholy proof of the depravation of the public mind. The shocking spirit of jacobinism seemed no longer confined to politics. The familiarity with atrocious events and characters appeared to have poisoned the taste, even where it had not directly disorganized the moral principles, and left the feelings callous to all the mild appeals, and craving alone for the grossest and most outrageous stimulants. The very fact then present to our senses, that a British audience could remain passive under such an insult to common decency, nay, receive with a thunder of applause, a human being supposed to have come reeking from the consummation of this complex foulness and baseness, these and the like reflections so pressed as with the weight of lead upon my heart.

The fifth act adds blasphemy to Coleridge's list of horrors:

Of the fifth act, the only thing noticeable (for rant and nonsense, though abundant as ever, have long before the last act become things of course,) is the profane representation of the high altar in a chapel, with all the vessels and other preparations for the holy sacrament. A hymn is actually sung on the stage by the choirister boys!

This is not to suggest that Coleridge gives over his reading of Maturin's play entirely to puritanical outrage. On the contrary, the critique of the *Bertram* is often very funny. As with the earlier portions of the *Biographia*, the humour is there to underline the ironic gap between the ideal and the actualised in contemporary art. The critique reads like a longer passage that breaks off abruptly – 'But we are weary', Coleridge declares, as if he has actually run out of steam.

The turn to the book's final chapter seems to have magnified and petrified this mock-comic weariness into something more emotionally

pathological. Coleridge deserves to suffer, he declares; but not for the reasons that he is *actually* suffering:

It sometimes happens that we are punished for our faults by incidents, in the causation of which these faults had no share: and this I have always felt the severest punishment. The wound indeed is of the same dimensions; but the edges are jagged, and there is a dull underpain that survives the smart which it had aggravated.

In case this sounds merely self-pitying, he goes on to insist on the therapeutic qualities of communicating grief, instead of just sitting on it.

Let us turn to an instance more on a level with the ordinary sympathies of mankind. Here then, and in this same healing influence of *Light* and distinct Beholding, we may detect the final cause of that instinct which, in the great majority of instances, leads, and almost compels the Afflicted to communicate their sorrows. Hence too flows the alleviation that results from ‘*opening out* our griefs:’ which are thus presented in distinguishable forms instead of the mist, through which whatever is shapeless becomes magnified and (literally) enormous.

He quotes Casimir, to the effect that ‘the ears of friends lessen sorrow, which ever grows less as it roams and is divided amongst many breasts’. This tends to position us, the readers, as Coleridge’s friends, and the *Biographia* as a whole as a piece of (to appropriate T. S. Eliot’s phrase) ‘rhythmical grumbling’. ‘I shall not make this an excuse, however’, Coleridge announces, ‘for troubling my Readers with any complaints or explanations, with which, as Readers, they have little or no concern’ – before immediately doing just that:

Strange as the delusion may appear, yet it is most true that three years ago I did not know or believe that I had an enemy in the world: and now even my strongest sensations of gratitude are mingled with fear, and I reproach myself for being too often disposed to ask,—Have I one friend?—

This would be gauche in a teenager; in a man in his forties it is actively embarrassing. ‘From almost all of our most celebrated Poets, and from some with whom I had no personal acquaintance, I either received or heard of expressions of admiration’, he says, speaking of his own poems; but publication destroyed this good feeling. ‘Since then . . . I have heard nothing but abuse, and this too in a spirit

of bitterness at least as disproportionate to the pretensions of the poem, had it been the most pitiably below mediocrity, as the previous eulogies, and far more inexplicable.’

All this raises in the mind of the reader the question: why did he think he was so hated? In Chapter 3 he suggested it was merely by virtue of his association with Wordsworth and Southey. Now he proposes a different theory:

I had the additional misfortune of having been gossiped about, as devoted to metaphysics, and worse than all, to a system incomparably nearer to the visionary flights of Plato, and even to the jargon of the mystics, than to the established tenets of Locke.

There follows a defence of his ‘metaphysics’, via quotations from the (then) unpublished *Zapolya*. Why do so many people hate metaphysics? Because of its obscurity, its pretensions, its foreignness? No, says Coleridge: it is because (‘Γνώθι σέαυτον’) it requires people to attempt to *know themselves*, a labour to which people are constitutionally averse.

Rather than explore why this might be so – indeed, leaving his readers to ponder whether it even *is* true – Coleridge moves the conclusion into not very well-tempered riposte to Hazlitt’s review of *The Statesman’s Manual*: ‘I refer to this Review at present, in consequence of information having been given me, that the innuendo of my “potential infidelity”’, and the remainder of the chapter devolves into a personal religious credo designed to refute the ‘calumny’ of Coleridge’s ‘infidelity’. This takes us back to the starting point of the present summary, with the four-part ‘structure’ of the temple of faith (which, I have suggested, informs the *Biographia*’s structure too) via more glancing references to Coleridge’s youthful Unitarianism, and even a buried echo of the book’s first-draft ending (‘EVEN AS I HAVE DONE, SO WOULD I BE DONE UNTO!’). He expresses his reasons for rejecting Unitarianism, but adds ‘I should feel no offence if a Unitarian applied the same to me.’ Then the chapter moves into the stirring peroration of the divinity, as the great I AM of which the whole universe is a kind of musical, or more likely dramatic, ‘choral echo’.

5. Plagiarism

The question of plagiarism has dogged the *Biographia Literaria* since 1834, when Thomas De Quincey published an article in *Tait’s Edinburgh Magazine* identifying some of the passages in Chapter 12 that had been lifted from Schelling. A more detailed, and markedly less sympathetic, account of the relationship between the book and

its German ‘sources’ appeared in *Blackwood’s* in March 1834, written by J. F. Ferrier.⁸⁵ Other allegations followed, and this new climate of suspicion was one of the motivations behind Henry Nelson and Sara Coleridge’s decision to produce a new edition of the *Biographia* in 1847. The introduction to their volume devotes a good proportion of its not inconsiderable length to defending Coleridge’s practice of citation. In this defence they were to some extent successful, because the small-scale scandal of the matter in the 1830s and 1840s largely dissipated through the remainder of the nineteenth and into the early twentieth centuries.

It has, however, returned, and with withering force. The chapter on Coleridge in René Wellek’s *History of Modern Criticism* (1955) opens with a paragraph of praise before settling down to the meat of his analysis – a detailed and rather disdainful account of Coleridge’s manifold plagiarisms. Looked at ‘from an international perspective’:

we must, I think, come to a considerably lower estimate of his significance [as a critic], however useful his role was in mediating between Germany and England. It is not simply a question of plagiarism or even of direct dependence on German sources, though these cannot be so easily dismissed or shirked as it has become the custom of a good many writers on Coleridge to do.⁸⁶

‘We need not reopen the question of plagiarism as an ethical issue and psychological problem’, Wellek declares, before going on to reopen the question of plagiarism as an ethical issue and psychological problem. It is, he insists, ‘a matter of intellectual honesty’ to expose Coleridge’s thefts; the ‘elaborate exposition’ of his German source material is ‘literally quoted’, ‘little more than a paraphrase’, ‘a patchwork of quotations’. ‘It is impossible to deny the evidence for direct concealment’, says Wellek, and this attempt by Coleridge to cover his traces is made worse by the ‘virulence’ of Coleridge’s public disapproval of many of those same sources. Even the possibilities Wellek raises by way of rationalising Coleridge’s delinquency tend to diminish the man or his achievement. Three of these are mooted: that ‘Coleridge’s memory may have been weakened by ill health and

⁸⁵ The precise extent of this literary theft has been exhaustively catalogued, especially where it relates to Coleridge’s German sources, in W. Jackson Bate and James Engell’s standard two-volume edition of the *Biographia*. According to that volume’s tabulations of chapter-percentages of plagiarised material, the delinquency varies from almost nothing to a more usual 7–10 per cent, rising to 13 per cent in Chapter 12 and 19 per cent in Chapter 8.

⁸⁶ René Wellek, *A History of Modern Criticism*, 2:151.

opium'; that his note-taking was so disorderly that 'he could have mistaken a translation of his own for original reflections'; and that he held to a theory of truth as 'the "divine ventriloquist", speaking from whatever mouth it chose'. The first two of these are charges of simple incompetence, the third amounts to a slippery abdication of moral responsibility. Plagiarism, here, is an index of psychological pathology and moral transgression.

The matter has been extensively discussed, often (as with Wellek) in terms of withering disapproval. One of the most pointed accounts is Norman Fruman's book-length account, *Coleridge the Damaged Archangel* (1971), which, conceding that Coleridge 'stands in the mainstream of English literature like a colossus', nonetheless mounts a crushing assault on the integrity and good faith of his writing on the grounds of his manifold plagiarisms, disingenuity, misunderstandings of source materials and inconsistency.

Intellectual dishonesty in a man of genius seems bizarre, as does petty greed in a man of great wealth. Yet compulsive acquisition of reputation or power derives from overmastering personal needs, the ultimate sources of which are always obscure. The broad outlines of Coleridge's profoundest intellectual aspirations are clear enough: above all he was driven by a desire to achieve a reputation for dazzling creative gifts and universal knowledge . . . in ways . . . destructive of his peace of mind, [Coleridge] presented to the world, both in his private correspondence and in his public utterances, a personal portrait of childlike innocence and severe moral rigor. His letters in later life can be positively embarrassing.⁸⁷

Though it infuriated a number of Coleridgean specialists, Fruman's vigorous book gave new impetus to the 'plagiarism' debate. In 1977, when Jerome Christensen mounted a thoughtful 'defence' of Coleridge's plagiarism, he was well aware of the tide flowing against his author:

⁸⁷ Norman Fruman, *Coleridge the Damaged Archangel* (New York: George Braziller, 1971), 59. The previous quotation ('stands in the mainstream . . .') is from page 214. For a recent reappraisal of the merit of Fruman's charges, see Andrew Keanie, 'Coleridge, the Damaged Archangel', *Essays in Criticism*, 56.1 (2005), 72–93. Keanie concedes that Fruman's book 'reinvigorated the debate about Coleridge and plagiarism', as well as 'widen[ing] the split between those critics who eulogise, or ignore, Coleridge's plagiarisms and those who condemn them'. He also notes that the fact that 'Fruman had not published any related material in an academic journal prior to the publication of *The Damaged Archangel*, nor had he revealed his attitude towards Coleridge at any academic conference' meant that he 'managed to plant the charge of bogusness without having to analyse it in a way that the specialists would have vetted'.

Foremost among the many recent discussions of Coleridge's plagiarism are those of Walter Jackson Bate, Norman Fruman, and Thomas McFarland. Bate and Fruman share a similar psychological approach to the problem, but their conclusions could hardly diverge more. Whereas Bate sees Coleridge's thefts as a minor neurotic consequence of deeper and highly sympathetic existential needs, Fruman considers the extensive plagiarisms to be a thoroughly motivated part of a massive neurotic project everywhere characterized by intellectual confusion and moral impotence. Treating Coleridge's plagiarisms in still another way, McFarland successfully avoids an impasse between Bate's sympathy and Fruman's scorn. In *Coleridge and the Pantheist Tradition* he accepts the existence of considerable plagiarism and agrees that there is a general matrix of neurosis from which that practice proceeds, but he proposes that neither circumstance is as important as the still unanswered questions of what, precisely, a plagiarism is and what it may mean in Coleridge's writings. McFarland decides that both the heedlessness and the needlessness of Coleridge's manifold use of others' materials suggest 'the explanation, bizarre though it may seem, that we are faced not with plagiarism, but with nothing less than a mode of composition by mosaic organization rather than by painting on an empty canvas.'⁸⁸

Christensen notes, however, that 'several aspects of McFarland's theory are problematic. For one thing, he excludes the *Biographia Literaria*, heretofore the touch-stone of all theories regarding Coleridge's plagiarisms, from the canon of those works that exhibit Coleridge's "reticulative power." He argues that the "particularly flagrant borrowings in the *Biographia Literaria* can be regarded as the failure, or perversion, of Coleridge's usual working with mosaic materials".' Christensen goes on to argue 'that the most fruitful term that subsumes the variety of discourses in the *Biographia Literaria*, which includes plagiarism, is marginal discourse' – to make the case for what Christensen later calls 'his persistent and overdetermined need for the support of "another nature."⁸⁹

That this is – unexpectedly – one way in which Coleridge is strikingly up to date has not helped the disinterested assessment of the problem. The advent of the internet has meant that academic teachers

⁸⁸ Jerome Christensen, 'Coleridge's Marginal Method in the *Biographia Literaria*', *PMLA*, 92:5 (1977), 928.

⁸⁹ Christensen, 'Coleridge's Marginal Method', 931.

of English (the largest constituency of Coleridgean scholars today) necessarily must devote a good deal of their time to the matter of plagiarism. We warn our students sternly away from the practice, we set in place elaborate software systems through which undergraduates must pass their submitted essays in order to detect it. Clearly plagiarism is a bad thing, but the ease with which it can nowadays be perpetrated by the unscrupulous undergraduate, added to the difficulty of sniffing it out, tends to throw complicated shadows of darker evil over what is often smaller-minded malfeasance. It also means that a Coleridge scholar is likely to be professionally disposed to think of plagiarism in a certain way. It is accordingly salutary to read a book like Tilar J. Mazzeo's carefully researched monograph, *Plagiarism and Literary Property in the Romantic Period*, which scrupulously re-inscribes a sense of how 'plagiarism' figured in the period out of which Coleridge's poetry was produced. Mazzeo is good both on 'what constituted plagiarism in Britain during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries', but also why the critical tradition 'has focused so intently on the plagiarisms of a single poet, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, as ideologically and culturally aberrant'.⁹⁰

It bears repeating both that plagiarism was then, as it is now, a delinquency; and that Coleridge is undeniably guilty of it. But there are other ways of approaching the matter than simply wagging our collective scholarly finger at Coleridge, as Christensen and Mazzeo demonstrate. Indeed, it is possible to see the matrix of complex, ethically compromised allusion identified with the term 'plagiarism' as key to the argument of the *Biographia*. When M. H. Abrams described Coleridge's aesthetic as 'grounded on Schelling's metaphysics of a psycho-natural parallelism, according to which the essences within nature have a kind of duplicate subsistence as ideas in the mind', the wording, although not exactly wrong, is imprecise.⁹¹ 'Duplicate', with its air of morphosic 'pastiche' or plagiarism, is an especially poorly chosen word. For Coleridge, the whole point of the interaction of the mind and the world is its possibility for fully imaginative and novel *creation*.

To say that plagiarism consists of unattributed quotation is also to imply that quotation is a form of attributed plagiarism. We expect our students, and our creative artists, to separate out their 'original' observations from observations they found in other writers. Coleridge,

⁹⁰ Tilar J. Mazzeo, *Plagiarism and Literary Property in the Romantic Period* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007), ix-x.

⁹¹ M. H. Abrams, *The Mirror and the Lamp: Romantic Theory and the Critical Tradition* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1953), 52.

however, considers this sort of ‘desynonymisation’ to be a radically compromised business. To say so is not to excuse his plagiarism. Indeed, excusing himself is the last thing Coleridge wants to do in this volume. In consonance with his poetic masterpieces, the *Biographia* is, among other things, an oblique iteration of personal guilt – guilt for the unspoken failings of his personal life (his failed marriage, his opium addiction) as well as the failings the book *does* speak of: wasted literary potential, social hostility and others. All of this is flagged in the earliest sections of the work. It bears repeating, that, so far from kicking over his traces on this matter, Coleridge draws attention – precisely – to plagiarism at the beginning of his study, and all the way through. The most egregious plagiarisms in Chapter 12, where Schelling is most heavily appropriated, are preceded by:

It would be but a mere act of justice to myself, were I to warn my future readers, that an identity of thought, or even similarity of phrase, will not be at all times a certain proof that the passage has been borrowed from Schelling, or that the conceptions were originally learnt from him.

A reader hostile to Coleridge will tend to read this as a more or less dishonest denial of plagiarism. A reader more sympathetic may see the crucial qualification, ‘will not be *at all times* a certain proof that the passage has been borrowed from Schelling’, as an admission that at other times direct appropriation *has* indeed taken place. We may or may not believe Coleridge’s declaration that at least some of the Schellingite ideas he elaborates occurred to him before he read Schelling; but we need not doubt that he declared it in good faith.

Plagiarism is closely tangled up with the force of the argument Coleridge wants to develop about morphosis and poesis, fancy and imagination. That they are tangled does not mean they are beyond elucidation, or (indeed) unimportant to the larger thesis of the *Biographia*. On the contrary, indeed. That thesis, in a nutshell, is that imagination and poesis are creative, fancy and morphosis plagiaristic. Of course, for many critics, it is ironic in a way that reflects poorly on Coleridge that he developed this theory of the possibility of radical originality via an argument that is so heavily plagiarised from others. But it is at least possible to look at this the other way about: that the necessary *interaction* of imagination and fancy, even in the greatest artists (Wordsworth is the case study Coleridge elaborates in the greatest detail), makes it impossible to escape the dangers of indebtedness.

I’m going to concentrate for a moment, for the sake of brevity, on only those passages stolen from Schelling in Chapter 12. Coleridge

certainly does steal. He also prefaces his theft with a long paragraph part-acknowledging and part-denying the plagiarism. He presents the ten ‘theses’ stolen from Schelling as texts upon which scholia (by Coleridge himself, and unplagiarised) are added – the text-plus-scholium model being familiar enough from classical antecedent to function as an acknowledgement via form of indebtedness. It is possible, simply, to believe Coleridge when he says:

For readers in general, let whatever shall be found in this or any future work of mine, that resembles, or coincides with, the doctrines of my German predecessor, though contemporary, be wholly attributed to *him*: provided, that the absence of distinct references to his books, which I could not at all times make with truth as designating citations or thoughts actually *derived* from him; and which, I trust, would, after this general acknowledgment be superfluous; be not charged on me as an ungenerous concealment or intentional plagiarism.

What Coleridge doesn’t say, although his familiarity with Fichte would surely have put him in a position to do so, is that Schelling himself drew much on the writing of Fichte, who preceded him.⁹² This is not to claim that Schelling was a plagiarist, for though he lifted much directly from Fichte, Schelling also largely disagreed with him and developed his metaphysics of the self in a new way. To move from Germany to England, the most cursory glance at Coleridge’s marginalia on Schelling shows how often and how forcefully he marked his disagreements.⁹³ ‘If I do not deceive myself’, he wrote in the margins

⁹² ‘Both Fichte and Schelling are confident and unapologetic about their use of the self as the highest principle of philosophy. Since Schelling gives no satisfactory account of how he arrived at the conviction that the self is central in this way to philosophy, and because Fichte was the first to publish works using the term as the first principle, it will be of interest to retrace the steps which led him to this innovative and fateful change.’ (Dale E. Snow, *Schelling and the End of Idealism* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1996), 37.)

⁹³ H. J. Jackson and George Whalley (eds), *Collected Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, 12: *Marginalia 4* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1998), 344–464. Some examples of Coleridge’s comments: ‘Is not this captious?’ (347); ‘I must confess that the §, alluded to here, always struck me as the maddest Bellow of Bull-frog Hyperstocicism, I ever met with under the name of Philosophy’ (352, on Schelling on Fichte); ‘In addition to the harsh quarrelsome and vindictive Spirit that displays itself in this Denkmal, there is an almost Jesuitical dishonesty in various parts that makes me dread almost to think of Schelling. I remember no man of any thing like his Genius & intellectual Vigor so serpentine & unamiable’ (360, on the ‘small pamphlet against Fichte’ mentioned in the *Biographia*); ‘what a *moody* state of Passion’ (361); ‘a romance founded on contradictions’ (362); ‘artifice’ (363); ‘mere Sophism’ (364); ‘What can be more childish Logomachy than this?’ (369); ‘in truth, this is too frequent with Schelling to

of Schelling's *Philosophie und Religion* (1804), 'the truth, which Sch. here *toils* in and after, like the Moon in the Scud and Cloudage of a breezy November Night, is far more intelligibly and adequately presented in my scheme or 'Tetraxy'.⁹⁴ This looks a little like boasting, except that it is clearly not the sort of comment he would ever make about Kant:

In the perusal of Kant I breathe the free air of Good Sense and logical Understanding with the Light of Reason shining in it and thro' it—With the Physics of Schelling I am amused with happy conjectures but in his theology bewildered by Positions which in their best sense are transcendent ('überfliegend') but in the literal sense scandalous.⁹⁵

Coleridge knew that 'überfliegend' is not the German for 'trascendent'; it means 'over-flying', or 'over-passing', with the implication of *skimming over* something. That Coleridge believed in truth as a divine ventriloquist does not mean that he was convinced truth was speaking straightforwardly through the mouthpiece of Schelling.

In a little-understood passage towards the end of Chapter 12, Coleridge says:

Thus I shall venture to use potence, in order to express a specific degree of a power, in imitation of the Algebraists. I have even hazarded the new verb potenziate, with its derivatives in order to express the combination or transfer of powers.

In one sense this is characteristically Coleridgean, for he never again (in the *Biographia* or, I think, anywhere else) uses the word 'potence'.⁹⁶ In another sense it is crucial to what is going on in the *Biographia*; for this mathematical sense of a quantity being raised by a process akin to mathematical exponentiation unlocks Schelling's importance for Coleridge, and goes some way to explaining why Schelling is so heavily plagiarised in the *Biographia*. By 'potence', Coleridge means a mode of metaconsciousness; thought reflecting upon thought in a way that raises it from, as it were, a line to a square – from x^1 to x^2 . The process is one of a quasi-plagiaristic or fanciful recursion of the self

support rash assertions by contemptuous language . . . His Position is false' (379); 'The question here is—Did Sch. understand himself? And if he did, is it more than a truism masked by paradox?' (380); 'monstrous scheme, or rather Knot of arbitrary suppositions' (386); 'Sophistical' (392); 'Here, as in too many places, Schelling equivocates' (393); 'Schelling's Phil. Schrift. I cannot see the force of any of these arguments' (409).

⁹⁴ *Marginalia* 4:400.

⁹⁵ *Marginalia* 4:372.

⁹⁶ The exception is the *Opus Maximum*, where the word *is* is used, but this was not published in Coleridge's lifetime.

upon the self *in order* to step out into a higher, imaginative dimension – consciousness itself.⁹⁷

Coleridge's emphasis on this interpretation of Schelling, oddly enough, brings him closer to a modern critic like Slavoj Žižek than to the more traditional readers of Schelling. Like Žižek, Coleridge finds creative paradox in the very involution of Schelling's thought process. It is the 'knottedness' of the subject's self-iteration as object that grounds Coleridge's reading of Schelling. The big exception is that, unlike Žižek, Coleridge has no time for 'the unconscious'.⁹⁸ In one of his marginalia on Schelling, Coleridge rejects precisely this idea that individual self-reflexivity happens via the 'unconscious' mind: 'an unconscious activity that acts intelligently without intelligence, an intelligence that is the product of a Sans-intelligence, are positions calculated rather to startle or confuse the mind by their own difficulty, than to prepare it for the reception of other Truths') before going on to propose his own dynamic – the same argument advanced in the *Biographia* – whereby consciousness is the product of interaction between 'primary Consciousness' and 'secondary, i.e. the consciousness of having been conscious, the secondary reflective, or recollective Consciousness'.⁹⁹ The primary and secondary imaginations here stand up as apprehensions of a Schelling dynamic in which *quite different content is substituted* for that posited by Schelling. Even in this reaction against Schelling, Coleridge is again following Schelling:

As Lenin would have put it, 'one step backwards, two steps forward'. In this precise sense the Beginning is the opposite of the Process itself: the preparatory-contractive 'step back', the setting

⁹⁷ 'Schelling now insists that the productivity does not begin as an I, but only *becomes* an I. He can only argue this by an abstraction, which takes away from consciousness in order to reach what precedes it: "by this abstraction I reach the concept of the pure subject-object (= nature), from which I raise myself up to the subject-object of consciousness (= I)" . . . which together form the structure of the Absolute . . . without the contradiction between itself as subject and as object, the emergence and development of self-consciousness would be inexplicable. The important consequence of this is that we realise our dependency upon nature in a way which cannot, as Fichte had maintained, be overcome by the imposition of practical reason. For Schelling reason itself is only the higher aspect of nature, which should not be there to enslave what it emerges from.' (Andrew Bowie, *Schelling and Modern European Philosophy* (London: Routledge, 1993), 57–8.)

⁹⁸ Žižek reads Schelling via Lacan, for whom 'the subject is correlative to the object, but in a negative way – subject and object can never "meet"; they are in the same place, but on opposite sides of the Moebius strip' (Slavoj Žižek, *The Fragile Absolute: Or, Why is the Christian Legacy Worth Fighting For?* (London: Verso, 2000), 28).

⁹⁹ *Marginalia*, 4:374. It is surely unnecessary to note here that Coleridge does not mean the same thing by 'unconscious' that a post-Freudian like Žižek does.

up of a foundation which then serves as the springboard for taking off and rushing forward—in short the denial [*Verneinung*] of what follows, of what is the beginning: ‘only in the denial is there a beginning’.¹⁰⁰

This speaks not to the moral delinquency (or otherwise) of Coleridge’s plagiarism, but to its *form*. The *Biographia* does not entail a slavish copying of Schelling, still less an attempt silently to reappropriate another’s thoughts so that people believe them Coleridge’s own. On the contrary, in the crucial ways that Coleridge disagreed with Schelling, he was taking a ‘logic of disagreement’ as something sanctioned by Schelling himself. To be clear: it is not only that Schelling believes ‘denial’ a healthy hermeneutic for a philosopher. It is that the theory of ‘consciousness’ that Coleridge develops in parallel with Schelling believes that subjectivity itself comes about through the imagination, as it were, *reappropriating* (in a manner of speaking: *plagiarising*) itself in order to generate something that is more than merely reappropriated.

Now, whether this line of argument seems convincing or not to the reader, it is at least an attempt to take the matter seriously: by which I mean, to take not only the moral import of the matter seriously, but its structural role in the larger argumentation of the *Biographia*. As I note above, I do not believe the plagiarism can be explained simply by pressure of time. Where some critics argue that Chapters 12 and 13 were written in four days, I consider Coleridge to have been working on them, off and on, from June 1815 all the way up to June 1817. This, I think, does shift the emphasis of interpretation away from inadvertence (Coleridge overwhelmed by the pressures of a deadline; Coleridge drug-addicted and confused – and so on). Christensen is surely right that Coleridge’s entire approach to the construction of his book is ‘marginal’, adducing his own myriad scholia upon primary texts (including some of his own) in order to assemble a larger structure. And that larger structure is implicated more radically in the notion that out of unoriginality comes originality, that the ‘potence’ of subjectivity feeds on itself in order to enable originality.

6. Reception

Although the immediate reception of the *Biographia* was broadly negative, it is probably true that Coleridgeans have tended to overstate

¹⁰⁰ Slavoj Žižek, *The Indivisible Remainder: Essays on Schelling and Related Matters* (London: Verso, 1996), 25; ‘only in the denial is there a beginning’ is quoted from Schelling’s *Sämtliche Werke*, 8:600.

the ferocity of this reaction.¹⁰¹ Many reviews were harsh; but not all of them were. It is, however, the more swingeing ones to which Coleridge critics tend to gravitate. *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*, for instance, descanted upon the 'obscurity' of the work:

Considered merely in a literary point of view, the work is most execrable. He rambles from one subject to another in the most wayward and capricious manner; either from indolence, or ignorance, or weakness, he has never in one single instance finished a discussion; and while he darkens what was dark before into tenfold obscurity, he so treats the most ordinary common-places as to give them the air of mysteries, till we no longer know the faces of our old acquaintances beneath their cowl and hood, but witness plain flesh and blood matters of fact miraculously converted into a troop of phantoms.¹⁰²

The review goes on, building in mockery and vehemence: 'his silly Poems, and his incomprehensible metaphysics'; 'the greatest piece of Quackery in the Book, is his pretended account of the Metaphysical System of Kant, of which he knows less than nothing'; 'we now tell Mr Coleridge, that . . . he has heaped upon his own head the ashes of disgrace – and with his own blundering hands, so stained his character as a man of honour and high principles, that the mark can never be effaced'.

But by no means all reviews were so negative. The *Portico* noted that it had seen 'nothing from the pen of Mr. Coleridge but his *Christabel*, his *Kubla Khan*, and his *Pains of Sleep*, from which it was hardly possible to form any other than the most unfavourable opinion of his poetick taste or talents'. But it added:

His present production, however, certainly proves him to be a scholar, of no contemptible acquirements; and whatever we may think of his poetick taste, it must be admitted, that he has taken uncommon pains to explain the principles upon which it was formed.¹⁰³

¹⁰¹ 'Not one perceptively appreciative review appeared. Coleridge's fear of a despotic, unintellectual readership, and his anxiety over the reception of this, his own first published book in prose, seemed justified' (Engell, 'Biographia Literaria', 73).

¹⁰² *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*, 2:7 (October 1817), 3–18. A few months later, *Blackwood's Edinburgh* also picked up the allegation in Chapter 5 that Hume had plagiarised Aquinas ('David Hume Charged by Mr Coleridge with Plagiarism from St Thomas Aquinas', *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*, 3 (1818), 653–7).

¹⁰³ *The Portico*, 4:6 (December 1817), 53.

Considering how trenchantly the *Biographia* attacks journal reviewers in general, and the *Edinburgh Review* in particular, William Hazlitt's review in the *Edinburgh*¹⁰⁴ – though far from positive – can strike the modern reader as much by its restraint as its hostility:

Mr. C. enters next into a copious discussion of the merits of his friend Mr. Wordsworth's poetry, – which we do not think very remarkable either for clearness or candour; but as a very great part of it is occupied with specific inculpations of our former remarks on that ingenious author, it would savour too much of mere controversy and recrimination, if we were to indulge ourselves with any observations on the subject. Where we are parties to any dispute, and consequently to be regarded as incapable of giving an impartial account of our adversary's argument, we shall not pretend to give any account of it at all; and therefore, though we shall endeavour to give all due weight to Mr. C.'s reasonings, when we have occasion to consider any new publication from the Lake school, we must for the present decline any notice of the particular objections he has here urged to our former judgments on their productions; and shall pass over all this part of the work before us¹⁰⁵

This review remains amongst the most notorious in Coleridge criticism, and Hazlitt is certainly far from kind: the book is 'a long-winded metaphysical march'; frequently 'unintelligible'; 'not very remarkable either for clearness or candour'. But, despite his knockabout disrespectfulness, Hazlitt at least understood some of Coleridge's merits. He mentions Coleridge in his *Lectures on Living Poets* (1818) in order to praise his poetry, and though he damns the prose writing with laconic force (folding the entire *Biographia* into a doubly-dismissive amper-sand): 'his *Conciones ad Populum*, *Watchman*, &c. are dreary trash. Of his Friend I have spoken with truth elsewhere. But . . .' – and with the 'But' the whole tenor of this distillation of Hazlittian criticism swings around – 'But I may say of him here, that he is the only person I ever knew who answered to the idea of a man of genius. He is the only person from whom I ever learnt any thing.'¹⁰⁶ John Lockhart (who with John Wilson – 'Christopher North' of *Blackwood's Magazine* – had savagely reviewed Keats's *Endymion*) added a postscript to his collection *Peter's Letters to his Kinsfolk* (1819) 'addressed to Samuel Taylor

¹⁰⁴ *Edinburgh Review*, 28 (August 1817), 488–515.

¹⁰⁵ *Edinburgh Review*, 28 (August 1817), 507–8.

¹⁰⁶ William Hazlitt, *Lectures on the Living Poets* (1818; 2nd edition 1819), 329.

Coleridge', in which he courteously ('with the highest admiration and respect [from] your faithful friend') concurred with those portions of the *Biographia* that attacked negative reviews, and critics motivated by 'the pride of the prejudices . . . the pampered and bloated luxury of the self-love' (525). This is not entirely free of irony, given Lockhart's own ferocious reputation; but the force of the whole long postscript is to align the severity of Coleridge's critique in the *Biographia* with Lockhart's own writing, as equally justified by the knavery through which they both move.

Charles Hughes Terrot's poetic survey of the contemporary literary scene, *Common Sense* (1819), adverts to the widely known 'secret' of Coleridge's opium addiction. But, again, the mockery is gentle:

Poor Coleridge! his is no affected rant,
He lives on opium, and he studies Kant;
Not over clear at first, what mortal brain
Opium and Kant together could sustain?¹⁰⁷

Indeed the lack of 'affectation' is, Terrot suggests, indicative of an amelioration represented by Coleridge's personal development. 'And last', he adds, 'opium's frantic transport fails,/And Kant thy gentler influence prevails.'

The *European Magazine and London Review* for July 1819 opens with a frontispiece of Coleridge, and includes a long article that respectfully summarised the 'memoir':

In the words of an elegant modern writer [Isaac D'Israeli], 'Every life of a man of genius composed by himself, presents us with the experimental philosophy of the mind.' This is proved in an eminent degree by the biographical sketches which Mr. Coleridge has published of himself; and which, whilst they but slightly mention the *actions* of his life, relate his opinions and feelings with an ability almost sufficient to atone for the egotism of many of the details. (5)

Even with that last little sting in the tail, this is a largely positive report of the *Biographia*. Noting that he was listed as a contributor to the *Encyclopedia Metropolitana*, the reviewer gushed that this was 'a task to which he is fully equal and one which will doubtless add further laurels to those he has already acquired' (6).

Both Keats and Shelley read the *Biographia* and incorporated

¹⁰⁷ Charles Hughes Terrot, *Common Sense: A Poem* (1819), 8–9.

some of its key ideas into their own critical writing.¹⁰⁸ And Byron perceptively noted – as few reviewers did – the *comic* component of the book:

I was very much amused with Coleridge's 'Memoirs.' There is a great deal of bonhommie in that book, and he does not spare himself. Nothing, to me at least, is so entertaining as a work of this kind—as private biography . . . Coleridge, too, seems sensible enough of his own errors. His sonnet to the Moon is an admirable burlesque on the Lakists, and his own style. Some of his stories are told with a vast deal of humour, and display a fund of good temper that all his disappointments could not sour. Many parts of his 'Memoirs' are quite unintelligible, and were, I apprehend, meant for Kant; on the proper pronounciation of whose name I heard a long argument the other evening.¹⁰⁹

Thomas Love Peacock's satirical roman-à-clef *Nightmare Abbey* (1818) satirises Coleridge as 'Mr Flosky', 'a very lachrymose and morbid gentleman, of some note in the literary world, but in his own estimation of much more merit than name':

He had been in his youth an enthusiast for liberty, and had hailed the dawn of the French Revolution as the promise of a day that was to banish war and slavery, and every form of vice and misery, from the face of the earth. Because all this was not done, he deduced that nothing was done; and from this deduction, according to his system of logic, he drew a conclusion that worse than nothing was done; that the overthrow of the feudal fortresses of tyranny and superstition was the greatest calamity that had ever befallen mankind; and that their only hope now was to rake the rubbish together, and rebuild it without any of those loopholes by which the light had originally crept in. To qualify himself for a coadjutor in this laudable task, he plunged into the central opacity of Kantian metaphysics, and lay perdu several years in transcendental darkness, till the common daylight of common sense became intolerable to his eyes. (Ch. 1)

¹⁰⁸ In Engell's words, both Shelley's *Defence of Poetry* and Keats's *Letters* 'would prove to be crucially significant texts in Romantic criticism; and both probably owe something to *Biographia Literaria*. For instance, Keats's "negative capability" in all likelihood echoes the "negative faith" of the imagination claimed by Coleridge; while Shelley's opposition between a materialistic "reason" and a spiritual, sympathetic imagination sounds distinctly Coleridgean' (Engell, 'Biographia Literaria', 67).

¹⁰⁹ Thomas Medwin, *Conversations of Lord Byron: Noted During a Residence with His Lordship at Pisa in the years 1821 and 1822* (1824), 265.

But there is a considerable leaven of affection in Peacock's portrait. And as the 1810s gave way to the 1820s, Coleridge began to gain a reputation as an important writer and thinker. In point of fact, through most of the century it was not the *Biographia* but the *Aids to Reflection* (1825) that was the Coleridgean prose work most widely read and most influential. In the latter work, Coleridge's theological thought – though sometimes obscure, especially to modern readers – spoke more directly to nineteenth-century sensibilities. It helped his adoption by 'respectable' Victorian opinion that suspicions of Coleridge's radical political affiliation had been, mostly, allayed by the time the *Biographia* emerged.¹¹⁰

'I should so like to read Coleridge,' said John, earnestly, having dipped into the volume; 'though I must say that he looks a little too philosophical for me;' (I smiled;) 'but, as he's a true Blue, I should like to say I had read him.'¹¹¹

Not everybody was content to gloss over the philosophical works. 'I can assert', Thomas De Quincey insisted in 1834, 'upon my long and intimate knowledge of Coleridge's mind, that logic, the most severe, was as inalienable from his modes of thinking, as grammar from his language'.¹¹² James Macintosh, though disagreeing with Coleridge in his *Dissertation on the Progress of Ethical Philosophy* (1830), at least paid him the compliment of taking him seriously: 'I venture to suggest, with that sense of his genius which no circumstance has hindered me from seizing every fit occasion to manifest, that more of my early years were employed in contemplations of an abstract nature, than of those of the majority of his readers, – that there are not, even now, many of them less likely to be repelled from doctrines by singularity or uncouthness [than I]; or many more willing to allow that every system has caught an advantageous glimpse of some side or corner of the truth'.

Such matters, though, became overshadowed by the accusation of plagiarism made in *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* in March 1840: 'ungenerous concealment or intentional plagiarism' is detected, and evidence supplied that makes it hard to gainsay. The 1847 edition

¹¹⁰ 'I congratulate Mr. Coleridge', said the anonymous author of *Sortes Horitanae: A Poetical Review of Poetical Talent* (1814), 'on his return, in part, to the plain-beaten road of Common Sense' (104).

¹¹¹ Cornelius Webbe, *Glances at Life in City and Suburbs: Second Series* (1845), 41–2.

¹¹² De Quincey's essay on Coleridge first appeared in four instalments in *Tait's Edinburgh Magazine*, September 1834–January 1835; it was reprinted in his *Recollections of the Lakes and the Lake Poets* (1862).

of the *Biographia*, edited by the poet's daughter Sara and her husband Henry Nelson Coleridge, opens with a lengthy introduction that seeks, with varying arguments (and varying degrees of success), to defend the book against these charges, even as the edition's lengthy notes detail just how far the 'borrowings' went. The preface to the 1847 *Biographia* begins with the subheading: 'Mr. Coleridge's obligations to Schelling, and the unfair view of the subject presented in *Blackwood's Magazine*':

Some years ago, when the late Editor of my Father's works was distantly contemplating a new edition of the *Biographia Literaria*, but had not yet begun to examine the text carefully with a view to this object, his attention was drawn to an article in *Blackwood's Magazine* of March 1840, in which 'the very large and unacknowledged appropriations it contains from the great German Philosopher Schelling' are pointed out; and by this paper I have been directed to those passages in the works of Schelling and of Maasz, to which references are given in the following pages,—to most of them immediately, and to a few more through the strict investigation which it occasioned. Whether or no my Father's obligations to the great German Philosopher are virtually unacknowledged to the extent and with the unfairness which the writer of that article labours to prove, the reader of the present edition will be able to judge for himself; the facts of the case will be all before him, and from these, when the whole of them are fully and fairly considered, I feel assured that by readers in general,—and I have had some experience on this point already,—no such injurious inferences as are contained in that paper will ever be drawn.

'In the *Blackwood's*', writes Sara, palpably bristling, 'Mr. Coleridge is treated as an artful purloiner and selfish plunderer, who knowingly robs others to enrich himself, both the tone and the language of the article expressing this and no other meaning. Such aspersions will not rest, I think they never have rested, upon Coleridge's name'. As mentioned above, most of the remainder of the nineteenth century rather bore out this hopeful prognosis.

Indeed, to quote Pamela Edwards, for much of the nineteenth century Coleridge provoked a 'discipular tradition, relatively uncritical in its admiration for the "Sage of Highgate"'. Edwards notes as evidence that 'the amount and variety of Coleridgiana and the number and variety of both single and collected editions of Coleridge attest to his popularity among the Victorians', adding that he was taken

as providing ‘justifications of “Tory” principles’. But she also points out that the truth was rather more complicated. In fact he influenced many thinkers:

even those who did not think of themselves as within the ‘Idealist’ or ‘Tory’ traditions. His writings received respect and attention from John Stuart Mill and T H Green not merely as artefacts in the history of ideas but as a vital rethinking of persistent problems.¹¹³

By the end of the nineteenth century, Coleridge’s reputation was higher than it had ever been. Uttara Natarajan goes so far as to describe this as a ‘canonization’, though a canonisation on the basis of only a small percentage of Coleridge’s output.¹¹⁴ As English Literature and Criticism began to be established as a subject of university study, the *Biographia* came into its own as a foundational document of the new discipline. Arthur Symons, in an introduction to a new, 1906 edition of the book, asserted: ‘The *Biographia Literaria* is the greatest book of criticism in English, and one of the most annoying books in any language.’¹¹⁵ George Saintsbury matched Symons’s superlatives without his saving wit: ‘So, then, there abide these three’, he declared, a touch pompously: ‘Aristotle, Longinus, and Coleridge’. If all professors of literature were to be made redundant, Saintsbury declared, and the savings used to provide ‘every one who goes up to the University with a copy of the *Biographia Literaria*, I should decline to . . . be heard against this revolution, though I should plead for the addition of the *Poetics* and of Longinus’.¹¹⁶

More detailed scholarly analysis of Coleridge followed, especially of his use of sources. John Livingstone Lowes’s *Road to Xanadu* (Houghton Mifflin, 1927) reached a wide audience with its analysis of the sources behind ‘Kubla Khan’, although it had relatively little to say about the *Biographia*. It was as a poet that Coleridge’s early twentieth-century reputation flourished.

¹¹³ Pamela Edwards, *The Statesman’s Science: History, Nature and Law in the Political Thought of Samuel Taylor Coleridge* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), 4.

¹¹⁴ ‘The canonization of Coleridge in the early decades of the twentieth century [was] primarily on the basis of the *annus mirabilis* poetry, 1797–98; of his prose, only the *Biographia Literaria* gains a comparable canonical status’ (Uttara Natarajan (ed.), *The Romantic Poets: A Guide to Criticism* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2008), 124).

¹¹⁵ Arthur Symons, ‘Introduction’, in Ernest Rhys (ed.), *Biographia Literaria* (London: Everyman, 1906), x–xi.

¹¹⁶ George Saintsbury, *A History of Criticism and Literary Taste in Europe from the Earliest Texts to the Present Day* (3 vols, London: Macmillan, 1900–4), 3:230–1.

Two factors in particular affected Coleridge's status in the period between the World Wars. First, despite distinguished contributions made by specialists in areas other than literature – philosophy in particular – the burden of his reputation was in the care of literary professionals. And while (say) Yeats's use of Coleridge's prose in *A Vision* remained independent, and he maintained his early attachment to a broad span of Coleridge's verse, thinking about Coleridge came to be tied to a newly fashionable understanding about the way poetry should be read and studied: in particular, a revolution in critical thinking that looked for a demonstrable 'scientific' basis for judgment.¹¹⁷

The *Biographia* re-enters the mainstream of English literary studies in a major way with I. A. Richards. In a series of books, Richards laid out the rubric for what he called 'practical criticism': close attention to the texts of poems, novels and plays. *The Principles of Literary Criticism* (Kegan Paul, 1924), *Science and Poetry* (Kegan Paul, 1926), and especially *Practical Criticism* (Kegan Paul, 1929) set in play critical strategies that directly informed the rise of 'New Criticism', and which continue to be influential to this day. In all this, Richards drew directly on the example of 'practical criticism' – Coleridge's own phrase, of course – from the *Biographia*. His *Coleridge on Imagination* (Kegan Paul, 1934) explored the tenets of Coleridge's own literary theoretical approach in detail, with a series of insightful, if sometimes idiosyncratic, readings of the *Biographia Literaria*. Richards takes the Coleridgean imagination in ways that are, if anything, even more capacious than Coleridge does himself, describing its realm as

every aspect of the routine world in which it is invested with other values than those necessary for our bare continuance as living beings: all objects for which we can feel love, awe, admiration; every quality beyond the account of physics, chemistry, and the physiology of sense perception, nutrition, reproduction and locomotion.¹¹⁸

The list of twentieth-century critics either directly mentored or otherwise inspired by Richards is a long one: William Empson (who wrote a brilliant essay on 'The Ancient Mariner'); F. R. Leavis, Cleanth Brooks, Allen Tate, John Crowe Ransom, W. K. Wimsatt, R. P. Blackmur and R. S. Crane among many others.

¹¹⁷ J. C. C. Mays, 'A Century of Litting (1910–2010)', in *Coleridge's Experimental Poetics* (Palgrave, 2013), 32.

¹¹⁸ I. A. Richards, *Coleridge on Imagination* (London: Kegan Paul, 1934), 58.

Practical criticism (inflected to one degree or another by Freud) dominated Anglo-American criticism in the 1940s and 1950s, and Coleridge's reputation as a critic rose with it. M. H. Abrams's two very influential surveys – *The Mirror and the Lamp* (Oxford University Press, 1953) and *Natural Supernaturalism* (Oxford University Press, 1971) – placed Coleridge at the intellectual as well as poetic centre of English Romanticism. John Beer's influential *Coleridge the Visionary* (Chatto and Windus, 1959) is primarily about the poetry, but uses his reading of the *Biographia* to ground its understanding of the verse. Specialist studies of the *Biographia* also began to emerge. Indeed, so many monographs have appeared between the 1960s and today that only a small percentage of them can be noted here, and almost all of those only in brief. Thomas McFarland's wide and illuminating study, *Coleridge and the Pantheist Tradition* (Oxford University Press, 1969), takes seriously Coleridge's intellectual engagement with German philosophy. The case in favour of the 'unity' of the *Biographia* is argued by Lynn M. Grow's *The Consistency of the Biographia Literaria* (Wichita State University, 1973). Laurence S. Lockridge's *Coleridge the Moralist* (Cornell University Press, 1977) explores the coherent moral framework of some of the themes that most fascinated Coleridge – freedom and duty; alienation and solitude; conscience and love. Anthony John Harding's *Coleridge and the Inspired Word* (McGill-Queen's University Press, 1985) examines the conceptual interrelationship of religious and poetic inspiration in Coleridge's thought and praxis. (Harding is particularly good on the larger context of notions of 'inspiration', both before Coleridge's time and in terms of the way his work – *Aids to Reflection* especially – influenced later nineteenth-century thinking about this subject.)

A major event in 1970s Coleridge studies has already been mentioned in the 'plagiarism' section: the publication of Norman Fruman's *Coleridge the Damaged Archangel* (George Braziller, 1971). This created a considerable stir – which is a polite way of saying that it infuriated some and delighted others. Its portrait of Coleridge's working practices as flawed to the point of active moral delinquency is, to say the least, unforgiving, although Fruman portrays this as the consequence of a complexly damaged psyche rather than simply of wickedness. There were a number of replies and ripostes to Fruman's work, at least one of which – Jerome Christensen's article, 'Coleridge's Marginal Method in the *Biographia Literaria*'¹¹⁹ – remains essential reading.

¹¹⁹ *PMLA*, 92:5 (1977), 928–40.

Another study that merits a little more discussion is Marilyn Butler's deft *Romantics, Rebels and Reactionaries: English Literature and its Background 1760–1830* (Oxford University Press, 1981) – a small book that has helped to shape (if its persistence on the reading lists of myriad university courses in Romanticism is anything to go by) several generations of students' perceptions of its subject. Butler repudiates the charges of the *Biographia*'s 'shapelessness', insisting that 'the book's ideology is [its] unifying factor':

Coleridge's *Biographia Literaria* was a book deliberately written for an hour of peril. Never since 1798, when the original *Ballads* had appeared, had revolution seemed as real a danger in England as it did in 1817. The danger would come from below, from rioters, machine-breakers, the unemployed or underpaid and hungry work-people. But it was fomented, or so the propertied classes felt, by some educated men. The journalist William Cobbett, who addressed himself in cheap newspapers direct to the populace, was the focus of special anger and fear, as a traitor to his order. Coleridge's *Biographia* is addressed to that order, the intellectual élite, for the purpose of urging it to fulfil its social responsibility. (62–3)

She argues that this explains the link between the abstruse Germanic philosophising of the 'metaphysical chapters' ('meaningful', Butler thinks, 'only to a small educated élite') and his critique in Volume 2 of both Wordsworth's 'levelling' poetics and the 'jacobinical' potential of plays like Maturin's *Bertram*.

Butler is surely right about this – we recall that, literally in the middle of writing the *Biographia*, Coleridge composed the politically conservative *Zapolya* as well as *The Statesman's Manual*, with its thesis that the Bible and tradition are the best guides to modern politics. She is on less certain ground with her account of an ideological division in 1810s/1820s writing, between a 'right-wing' reactionary Germanism and a 'left-wing' liberal classical emphasis on the Mediterranean. She discusses De Staël's *De l'Allemagne* (1810) – which praises German culture 'as a rallying-point for opposition to Napoleon': 'Europe had two dominant cultural traditions: the classical, Mediterranean inheritance, perfectly expressed in comedy, and culminating in a predominantly French modern classicism; and the Northern or Germanic alternative.'

The German races did not organise themselves into large states. Man was isolated in very small communities, effectively

on his own and dwarfed among the vast, oppressive, unmastered phenomena of Nature. He was obliged to look inward for inspiration, or upward to the mountains or to God. The literature of the North accordingly became introspective, pessimistic and essentially religious. Its religion was not social but individual, an intense unfulfilled aspiration which was perfectly expressed in Gothic architecture, or in the passionate irregularity of Shakespearian tragedy. The Northern or Romantic tradition (which as Madame de Staël makes plain is the unified culture of the Germans and the English, Napoleon's leading enemies) has become the most vital and imaginative intellectual force of the present day. (120)

Butler aligns Coleridge with this perspective, and notes the lack in England of any other ideological perspective ('no disinterested exegesis of contemporary German literature or philosophy – nothing that separated [it] out . . . from the now triumphant cause of the extreme Right') by way of explaining why the younger, liberal or radical writers (Byron, Shelley and Keats) gravitated so enthusiastically towards classical Greek and Roman literature. But Coleridge sits very uneasily in this division. Though certainly conservative and a Germanist, he was also a passionate classicist. Religion for him was much more a social than a personal matter – as *On the Constitution of Church and State* (1830) makes clear. And though capable of gloomy Gothic pessimism in his writing, he was strongly drawn to comedy. The *Biographia*, whatever else it is, remains a consistently, and sometimes hilariously, funny book.

Paul Hamilton's monograph, *Coleridge's Poetics* (Blackwell, 1983), provides an account of the *Biographia* that is both dense and yet intellectually nimble. Hamilton's key insight is the way the *Biographia* pulls apart at the division between its first and second volume – a division which was 'an accident of typography' that, 'cruelly exposing the already existing gap in the argument which Coleridge's last efforts, as the printer's deadline approached, failed to bridge' (9). Hamilton argues that there is a central failure to bridge the *Biographia's* transcendental project with its literary-critical one, and that this in turn led to an English critical tradition that ignored philosophy:

The main effect of this failure of the transcendental deduction in *Biographia* was to lead later English critics to think they could dismiss his theorizing, while appropriating his practical criticism. We are still suffering from this false separation. The lasting importance of Coleridge, historically understood, is to show that the theory and the practice of criticism are not alternatives. (6)

Hamilton works fascinatingly through the various threads that link Coleridge's metaphysics ('imagination', 'desynonymy', identity and religion) with his poetry; and the book remains necessary reading for anybody seriously interested in the *Biographia*. Hamilton's later *Coleridge and German Philosophy* (Continuum, 2007), though as intellectually deft, has not had the level of impact of his earlier study. Timothy Corrigan's *Coleridge, Language and Criticism* (University of Georgia Press, 1982) remains an extremely useful analysis of Coleridge's approach to rhetoric, with a good chapter on 'the *Biographia Literaria* and the Language of Science'.

Coleridge attracted an increasing number of serious literary scholars throughout the 1970s and 1980s. Kathleen M. Wheeler's monograph, *Sources, Processes and Methods in Coleridge's 'Biographia Literaria'* (Cambridge University Press, 1980), invokes 'sources' not in a dry, footnoter's sense of the word, but rather as a means of tracing the larger currents of Coleridge's developing thought as it fed into the aesthetics and metaphysics of the *Biographia*. Wheeler does not minimize the importance of German Idealist philosophy to the work, but makes a strong case for the centrality of Plato and other older traditions: 'while it would be inappropriate to minimize Coleridge's debts to his German sources, it seems appropriate to keep in mind the longer tradition upon which both Coleridge and the Germans drew', is how Wheeler modestly puts it; 'and which provides an indispensable perspective upon the nature of Coleridge's relation to Kant, Schelling and others'.¹²⁰

But things were changing in the literary academy. To step back for a moment: Jesuit priest J. Robert Barth's *Coleridge and Christian Doctrine* (Harvard University Press, 1969) is a sympathetic attempt to synthesise Coleridge's various writings on religion in a coherent scheme, concentrating especially on the period 1815–30. For the publication of the second edition of this book, nearly two decades later, Barth added a new preface in which he claimed that 'During the eighteen years since this book was first published Coleridge scholarship has passed through what may arguably be called a golden age'. He had something specific in mind, beyond the sheer number of new articles and book-length studies that appeared in the 1970s and 1980s (though that number *is* a large one):

we are in the third major period of Coleridge scholarship this century: early in the twentieth century was the age of Coleridge

¹²⁰ Kathleen M. Wheeler, *Sources, Processes and Methods in Coleridge's 'Biographia Literaria'* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), viii.

the poet, and little serious attention was given to other dimensions of his work; then came ‘the age of Coleridge the critic and literary theorist,’ led by I. A. Richards and others; we are now moving into the age of ‘Coleridge the thinker’ – and in recent years we have come to see what the nineteenth century never forgot, that, as Paul Magnuson has suggested, when Coleridge thought most deeply he thought about religion.

Barth could be forgiven for thinking so – and certainly there *has* been a renewed emphasis on the seriousness and scope of Coleridge as a religious thinker.¹²¹ But the 1980s, when this was written, was a much more radically contested time in literary criticism and the history of ideas than this implies. Older models of literary scholarship, biographical elucidation, quasi-mythic schemata or close-reading were challenged by energetically and often inventively centripetal textual strategies, of which ‘post-structuralism’ (also called ‘deconstruction’) was only the most prominent. New Historicism sought to chase down the death of the author by recontextualising literature in the cultural, social and political contexts out of which it was originally produced; ideological readings of literature, especially from Marxist and feminist perspectives, refused to treat art as a ‘pure’ disinterested realm of aesthetics, instead tracing the way lived experience and political problematics striate literature through and through. As the 1980s passed into the 1990s, postcolonial critics (often inspired by one, or two, or all three of these approaches) began the large task of examining previously marginalised imperial and post-empire subjectivities. Romanticism became a major focus of these new modes of criticism, which shouldn’t surprise us – all those modernity-determining and to some extent defining literatures emerged, after all, from a climate of revolution and social upheaval. Still, it is probably true to say that Coleridge was less centrally the object of critical enquiry than some other Romantics. Paul de Man’s *The Rhetoric of Romanticism* (Columbia University Press, 1984) is a collection of essays originally published between 1956 and 1983, that somehow managed to catch precisely the mid-1980s literary-theoretical zeitgeist; yet it hardly mentions Coleridge at all. Where post-structuralists were interested in Coleridge was mostly to do with the fragmentariness of much of his achievement, with more of an emphasis on his poetry (especially

¹²¹ Barth was a figure both respected and liked in the community of religious scholars. His last book, *Romanticism Transcendence: Wordsworth, Coleridge, and the Religious Imagination* (University of Missouri Press, 2003) is an extended meditation on what he describes in the preface as the two ‘strongest influences on my own life’, St Ignatius and Coleridge.

the Gothic poetry) than the prose. For reasons that may have been less cogent than we believed them to be at the time, deconstruction assumed a kind of elective affinity with the fragmentary.

I say 'we', since deconstruction was the critical 'school' (the use of scare quotes being part of its rhetorical armoury) in which I was myself educated. I retain much sympathy for it, although must concede that rehearsing the intricate, often fiery intellectual debates that characterised the literary-critical world of the 1980s would be out of place here. Many of the issues we were most vehement about have now only antiquarian interest, and much of the vehemence with which matters were debated is hard to comprehend today. Nonetheless, something must be said about 'deconstruction', for its advent marks a significant divergence in the way the *Biographia* was read.

By way of illustration, I'll quote from Forest Pyle's *The Ideology of Imagination: Subject and Society in the Discourse of Romanticism* (Stanford University Press, 1995), a theoretically-engaged reading of Coleridge, Wordsworth, Shelley, Keats and T. S. Eliot. Pyle's work builds on Jerome J. McGann's groundbreaking study, *The Romantic Ideology* (University of Chicago Press, 1983),¹²² via Marxist theorist Louis Althusser and the sinuous post-structuralist work of Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak. Most relevant for our purposes here is the way Pyle thumbnails the debate about one of the most famous passages in the whole of the *Biographia*:

The IMAGINATION then I consider either as primary, or secondary. The primary IMAGINATION I hold to be the living Power and prime Agent of all human Perception, and as a repetition in the finite mind of the eternal act of creation in the infinite I AM. The secondary I consider as an echo of the former, co-existing with the conscious will, yet still as identical with the primary in the *kind* of its agency, and differing only in *degree*, and in the *mode* of its operation. It dissolves, diffuses, dissipates, in order to re-create; or where this process is rendered impossible, yet still at all events it struggles to idealize and to unify. It is essentially *vital*, even as all objects (*as* objects) are essentially fixed and dead.

¹²² McGann's still vital study sets out to challenge the extent to which critics and readers of Romantic literature uncritically absorb 'a Romantic ideology', that is, 'Romanticism's own self-representations' – in particular, the way Romantic poetry is 'marked by extreme forms of displacement and poetic conceptualization whereby the actual human issues with which the poetry is concerned are resituated in a variety of idealized localities' (1). McGann reads history, and (via Marx) ideology, back into these literatures. He has a number of fascinating things to say about Coleridge as a poet, although he does not discuss the *Biographia* itself in any detail.

Pyle sees in this ‘an investigation of the structure of ideology itself’, and, in deconstructivist mode, teases out the ways ‘the suddenly doubled imagination both fails to fulfil its narrative expectations and simultaneously succeeds in proposing a model of subjectivity to be instituted on the basis of a “fundamental” division’.¹²³ He also situates his own reading in the ‘two divergent critical traditions’ that were coalescing with regard to Coleridge’s thought:

We could trace a long tradition of interpretation—one diverse enough to include I. A. Richards, M. H. Abrams, and Jerome McGann—that has regarded the passage as the presentation of Coleridge’s ideas about the faculty of the imagination. These critics belong to this tradition because, whether in veneration or denunciation, they have taken the passage as an institution. Another tradition—one associated with post-structuralist theories of reading but extending to those who have by a variety of methods attended to the performance of the passage—has engaged the implication of the divisive elements in the imagination’s presentation: it has, in other words, treated the passage as a narrative act of instituting.

What interests Pyle is less which of these two approaches is ‘right’, and more the way ‘both traditions are provoked, or instituted, by the passage itself’.¹²⁴

As fairly indicative of its time, I might mention David Simpson’s *Romanticism, Nationalism and the Revolt Against Theory* (University of Chicago Press, 1993), a monograph that persuasively contextualises the debates between ‘tradition’ and ‘theory’ in the reading of Romanticism via the twin currents of Romantic conservatism on the one hand, and a ‘tradition of radical cosmopolitanism’ associated with the Enlightenment on the other (180). The book is thoughtful, and scrupulously researched (its grasp of the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century background to Romantic thought is especially strong), and it has many interesting things to say about Coleridge, among others. But it also opens with a vivid snapshot of the heat generated by the literary critical scene of the mid-1990s:

¹²³ This and the following quotation are from Forest Pyle, *The Ideology of Imagination: Subject and Society in the Discourse of Romanticism* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1995), 35–6.

¹²⁴ ‘To read the passage is to encounter a division in the very faculty that is being called on to unify, a division moreover for which there is no preparation or explanation in Coleridge’s work. At the same time, the passage that calls for this reading has itself acquired the status of an institution of the imagination . . . in that double gesture and in the doubling of the imagination resides the condition of ideology.’ (Pyle, *The Ideology of Imagination*, 36.)

Theory has not yet been blamed for the Gulf War or for the destruction of the ozone layer, but it may be only a matter of time. In the United States . . . social, intellectual and educational calamities are being attributed by conservative commentators to an outbreak of ‘ideology’ appearing in the classrooms as a new consciousness of gender and ethnicity and organized by the deeply bunkered command post known as ‘theory’. (1)

Simpson sees the discussion as politicised in similar ways to the debate about ‘jacobinism’ in the aftermath of the French Revolution (something of immediate relevance to any understanding of the political narrative of the *Biographia*, of course). He is also persuasive on the ways ‘obscurity’ – a key way that ‘theory’ is deprecated today – was also a live issue in the Romantic period, both for ‘radical’ writers like Blake and ‘conservative’ ones like Coleridge.

While some readings of the *Biographia* via ‘theory’ can be hard going, many are very powerful. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak’s Lacanian reading of the ‘Letter from a Friend’ in Chapter 13 is an example of what I mean.¹²⁵ Arguing that the *Biographia* as a whole ‘inhabits the narrative structure of *pre*-monition and *post*-ponement (today we might say difference)’, Spivak concentrates in particular on ‘the greatest instrument of narrative refraction, the *obturateur*, if you like’ in Chapters 12 and 13, which ‘is, of course, the letter that stops publication of the original Thirteen. The gesture is about as far as possible from “the eternal act of creation in the infinite I Am”. It is a written message to oneself represented as being an external interruption.’ (5–6).

For one of the most influential readings of the *Biographia* within this broader tradition we could look back to Jerome Christensen, *Coleridge’s Blessed Machine of Language* (Cornell University Press, 1981). This study is a powerful analysis of the way Coleridge actualises, conceptually as well as in his creative work, the dynamic between the ‘dead’ mechanical system of passive and associationist metaphysics on the one hand, and the ‘living’ imaginative possibilities of writing on the other, always alive to the aporias and complexities of the book’s actualisation. It remains the best study of the role played by Hartley in Coleridge’s intellectual development (indeed, Christensen identifies

¹²⁵ Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, ‘The Letter as Cutting Edge’, in *In Other Worlds: Essays in Cultural Politics* (New York: Methuen, 1987; reprinted Routledge Classics, 2006), 3–20. For Spivak ‘it is [the] gap between knowing and being that the episode of the imaginary letter occludes . . . a reader of Lacan can interpret this textual gesture [as] the eruption of the Other onto the text of the subject’ (12).

three ‘Hartleys’: his original writing, the more politically radical version produced by Priestly after Hartley’s death, and the version edited by Pistorius). As autobiography, Christensen thinks the *Biographia* ‘crucially deficient’, or more precisely as ‘propaedeutic towards’ a version of Coleridge’s life rather than an actualised version (119); and the decentred ‘marginal method’ out of which the book was produced aligns it in textual practice, though not authorial intention, with deconstruction. Brilliant though Christensen’s book was, it was not especially enthusiastically received by some Coleridgeans. Bradford Mudge summarises:

In the *Biographia Literaria*, arguably the most traumatized of Coleridge’s works, cohesive patterns of meaning never seem to emerge from the chaotic and fragmentary offerings. Instead, the frantic twists and turns away from a unifying development suspend coherence above an intellectual hodgepodge of inquiry, formulation, reformulation, and rebuttal. Jerome Christensen has recently termed this confusion Coleridge’s ‘marginal method,’ arguing cogently that the *Biographia* is a compendium of fragmented commentaries on precedent texts – Hartley, Wordsworth, God, the will, the Bible, etc. But Christensen, while reaffirming an opinion common to most readers of the *Biographia* (that the book is disorganized and hard to read), in no way represents mainstream Coleridge scholarship. To the contrary, his work radically threatens much of what is sacred. This is the case in part because Coleridge, more than any other Romantic poet, has fostered a tradition of critical apologetics.¹²⁶

Mudge identifies Kathleen M. Wheeler and Catherine Wallace as modern proponents of this latter tendency in contemporary Coleridge scholarship:

both exemplify what revisionist Jerome McGann has called the academy’s ‘uncritical’ perspective on Romanticism. Adopting Romantic values as interpretive givens, [both] make Coleridge into the master of the imagination and the *Biographia* into his masterful attempt to educate an ignorant public. In doing so, both critics ignore the precarious dynamics of Coleridge’s philosophy and use the distance of irony to downplay the traumas of his autobiographical effort; they speak safely from within a scholarly tradition which automatically assumes the sanctity

¹²⁶ Bradford K. Mudge, ‘The Politics of Autobiography in the *Biographia Literaria*’, *South Central Review*, 3:2 (Summer 1986), 27–45.

of 'great works' and yet clings fiercely to the notion of its own disinterestedness.

Gavin Budge has praised the 'recent deconstructivist and New Historicist challenges to the Coleridgean distinction between Imagination and Fancy on which much Romantic criticism has been based'.¹²⁷ And Andrea K. Henderson's *Romantic Identities* (2006) compellingly deconstructs both the 'depth' model of traditional criticism of autobiography, and its ideological antithesis.¹²⁸

Whilst this energetic intellectual debate raged, one massive contribution to the textual scholarship of Coleridge studies was ongoing: the truly monumental *Collected Coleridge*, published by Princeton University Press in the US and by Routledge in the UK. Set going under the general editorship of Kathleen Coburn in 1969, nearly three and a half decades passed before it was completed, with the publication in 2002 of a partially reconstructed edition of Coleridge's unfinished *Logosophia*, today more generally known as the *Opus Maximum* (edited by Thomas McFarland with the assistance of Nicholas Halmi). The *Collected Coleridge* (1969–2002) now constitutes sixteen volumes, although many of those 'volumes' are themselves multi-volume editions of specific Coleridge titles – the owner of the complete set will have thirty-four individual books on her shelves. The scope as well as the detail and rigour of this enterprise is well-nigh unparalleled in literary scholarship; and it remains something for which every serious critic of Coleridge must be grateful. The two-volume edition of the *Biographia* (edited by James Engell and Walter Jackson Bate in 1983) has proved, as you might expect, invaluable in the preparation of this current edition. This period also saw the writing of the standard biography of Coleridge, Richard Holmes's two-part *Coleridge: Early Visions* (Hodder, 1989) and *Coleridge: Darker Reflections* (HarperCollins, 1998).

In their day, the Theory wars were divisive and energising in roughly equal measure, and although much of the heat has long since departed from the debates, they did alter the culture of literary criticism generally, and of Romanticism in particular. Lucy Newlyn summarises the state of affairs today:

¹²⁷ Gavin Budge (ed.), *Romantic Empiricism: Poetics and the Philosophy of Common Sense, 1780–1830* (Lewisburg, PA: Bucknell University Press, 2007), 13.

¹²⁸ 'Romanticism and post-structuralism have together organised our thinking on the issue of subjectivity along a certain axis: subjectivity is either about self-determination or entrapment in ideology, depth or its absence.' Andrea K. Henderson, *Romantic Identities: Varieties of Subjectivity, 1774–1830* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 4. Given the fascinating development of her thesis, it may be regretted that Henderson has so little to say about the *Biographia* itself.

Since the early 1980s, major developments have occurred in the way British Romanticism is approached and understood. We now read the literature of that period (1789–1832) with a greater consciousness of its political, economic and social contexts. The impact on British writers of the French Revolution and ensuing political movements has been more thoroughly investigated than ever before. New historicist criticism has taught us to understand how market-forces influenced the production and enjoyment of literature. Women’s writing (as well as the work of various male authors previously judged to be ‘minor’) has come very rapidly to the fore, involving significant shifts in how we think about the canon.¹²⁹

That there has been relatively little work on the *Biographia* from a feminist perspective is surely not to that (unavoidably masculinist) work’s credit. Postcolonial theory has engaged Coleridge’s poetry to a greater degree than his prose.¹³⁰ What twenty-first-century scholarship *has* done is deepen our grasp of the various intellectual and cultural contexts of Coleridge’s writing. Felicity James’s *Charles Lamb, Coleridge and Wordsworth: Reading Friendship in the 1790s* (Palgrave, 2008) fleshes out the importance of Lamb to Coleridge’s partnership with Wordsworth. Ve-Yin Tee’s *Coleridge, Revision and Romanticism: After the Revolution, 1793–1818* (Continuum, 2012) looks at the afterlife of the French Revolution in Coleridge’s thought, with a particular emphasis on the poetry and the play, *Remorse*. One of the best recent books on Coleridge is Seamus Perry’s *Coleridge and the Uses of Division* (Oxford University Press, 1999), which traces with rare sensitivity and scope the way ‘division’ figures in Coleridge’s thought and work, including detailed readings of the *Biographia* – ‘very clearly a book about Wordsworth, and even when he slips from view, it is still a book around him . . . but this doesn’t mean it is a statement of joint policy: it is born from division’ (246–7).

There has also been a good deal of recent work that takes Coleridge seriously as a philosophical thinker. MaryAnne Perkins, *Coleridge’s Philosophy* (Oxford University Press, 1994) is especially good on the way the Johannine ‘logos’ draws the various threads of his theology and philosophy together. A detailed discussion of Coleridge’s

¹²⁹ Lucy Newlyn, ‘Introduction’, in *The Cambridge Companion to Coleridge* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 1.

¹³⁰ See, for instance, David Vallins, Kaz Oishi and Seamus Perry (eds), *Coleridge, Romanticism and the Orient: Cultural Negotiations* (London and New York: Bloomsbury, 2013), which devotes nearly a third of its essays to ‘Kubla Khan’.

resisting engagement with Utilitarianism can be found in John Whale, *Imagination under Pressure 1789–1832: Aesthetics, Politics and Utility* (Cambridge University Press, 2000). The importance of Schiller is covered by M. J. Kooy's *Coleridge, Schiller and Aesthetic Education* (Palgrave, 2002), and the *Biographia*'s relationship to Kant has been well analysed in David M. Baulch's 'The "Perpetual Exercise of an Interminable Quest": The *Biographia Literaria* and the Kantian Revolution', *Studies in Romanticism*, 43:4 (2004), 557–81, and in Monika Class's 'Kant's Giant Hand: Repression and Genial Self-Construction in *Biographia Literaria*', in *Coleridge and Kantian Ideas in England, 1796–1817: Coleridge's Responses to German Philosophy* (Bloomsbury, 2012), 141–68. Nicholas Reid, *Coleridge, Form and Symbol, Or The Ascertaining Vision* (Ashgate, 2008) finds persuasive consonance between Coleridge's metaphysics and modern psychological science – as he puts it, he thinks that with respect to many of the key positions he argues, Coleridge 'was right' after all.

7. Editorial Practice and Acknowledgements

I have quoted Engell and Bate's 1983 edition of the *Biographia* several times in this introduction, and go on to quote it again often in the annotations to the main text, below. It is worth reiterating here how great my debt to it is. Working through the *Biographia* wearing an annotator's hat has only deepened my admiration and respect for the scholarship that edition embodies. Engell and Bate themselves trace four significant prior editions:

After 1817 there was no further English edition of the *Biographia* until thirty years later, when Sara Coleridge published the 1847 edition with which she and her late husband had hoped to rescue and justify the book . . . the book continued to be available through frequent reprints of this edition, in both England and America, and also through various reprintings of the Bohn Standard Library edition (1865); and it was naturally included in the *Complete Works* edited by W. G. T. Shedd (1853; reprinted 1884). At the end of this period Everyman's Library brought out an edition (1906) with an Introduction by Arthur Symons, and, far more important, the Clarendon Press issued the still memorable edition by John Shawcross (1907). The latter was the second annotated edition (the first being 1847). The third annotated edition (though it omits large sections of the book and is essentially a selection) was prepared by George Sampson (Cambridge

University Press 1920). The fourth is the revised Everyman's Library edition by George Watson (1956; further revised 1965, 1975).¹³¹

Engell and Bate's was the fifth annotated edition. A new Everyman edition, compactly edited by Nigel Leask (although relying heavily on Engell and Bate for its annotation), appeared in 1997. The present is, accordingly, the seventh annotated edition of the book.

I briefly note here some of the ways I hope to have advanced beyond Engell and Bate, although while doing so I readily concede the respects in which their edition remains better than mine. Their account of Coleridge's German sources, and his plagiarism therefrom, is much fuller than mine, for instance. They include the original 'Courier' text of the 'Letters on *Bertram*', and they also include an appendix containing eighteen letters by John Morgan, Gutch, Gale and Fenner and others relating to the publication of the first edition.

In other respects I have tried to improve upon their work, with what success only the reader of both can be in a position to judge. I'll mention two things in particular. The first is that I have traced almost all the sources, references and allusions that escaped Engell and Bate, and have, I think, tied up pretty much every loose end, annotation-wise. Many of these untraced allusions proved trivial, although a few add substantively to our understanding of the whole. The second (following on from this) is that I have been able to identify a second fixed point, chronologically speaking, with respect to the composition of the text, which in turn underpins a new account of the writing and publication of the book – discussed above.

The text is that of the first, 1817 edition. I have not altered this in any way, not even to correct occasional typos (though typos are flagged in the footnotes). The practice of Greek citation in the first edition is slapdash, with breathing and accents often omitted or mis-assigned – I have retained these errors in this edition. The textual appendix lists all changes, including the 'corrected' versions of the text offered in the 1847 edition. It was with that edition that the process of smoothing away the perceived 'rough edges' of Coleridge's original writing began. Such a revisionary logic needs, of course, to be noted; but I have elected not to collaborate with it, believing that it is, in part, in its very gnarliness that Coleridge's 1817 edition generates its peculiar effectiveness.

As far as the annotation goes, I have worked with a particular set of

¹³¹ Engell and Bate, *Biographia Literaria*, 1:lxvii.

imaginary readers looking over my shoulder – not just the Coleridge expert, but also the intelligent though not necessarily knowledgeable student or general reader, whose desire is simply to understand the *Biographia* better. In every case I have tried to annotate, explain and elucidate with reference to contemporary sources rather than modern scholarship. Translations from Greek, Latin, German and other languages are mine, unless otherwise specified (when other translations are cited, I have tried to use ones published before 1817). The lack of a list of abbreviations reflects my dislike of this particular editorial convention, which I always find opaque and distracting; I have used short titles, although always, I hope, in ways that are immediately comprehensible. Critical understanding of the meaning and contemporary reception of the *Biographia* is extensive and detailed, but I have tried to add to it with new sources where I could.

I have, of course, incurred many debts, both intellectual and personal, during the making of this edition, and I cannot hope to name everybody who aided me. This edition has its origins in a *Biographia Literaria* reading group I ran at my institution (Royal Holloway University of London) in 2012, where we worked through the text one chapter a week. I would like to thank all the students who attended, and especially Benedict Cardozo, Gursimran Obera and Matt Prout, whose attendance was the most assiduous, and from whom I learned the most. I would also like to mention friends and colleagues at Royal Holloway, particularly my excellent nineteenth-centuryist colleagues: Vicky Greenaway, Finn Fordham, Sophie Gilmartin, Robert Hampson, Judith Hawley, Juliet John, Ruth Livesey and Anne Varty. I should like to thank, in addition: my friend and colleague Robert Eaglestone; Simon Barraclough at Lancaster University, who very kindly read the whole manuscript; and Duncan Wu. I'd also like to thank Anthony Mercer for his exceptional copy editing. I am very grateful for the support and professionalism of the staff at Edinburgh University Press.

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So wenig er auch bestimmt seyn mag andere zu belehren, so wuenscht er doch sich denen mitzuthelen, die er sich gleichgesinnt weis, (oder hofft,) deren Anzahl aber in der Breite der Welt zerstreut ist; er wünschet sein Verhältniss zu den ältesten Freunden wieder anzuknüpfen, mit neuen es fortzusetzen, und in der letzen generation sich wieder andere für seine übrige Lebenszeit zu gewinnen. Er wuenscht der Jugend die Umwege zu ersparen, auf denen er sich selbst verirrte.
(GOETHE)

TRANSLATION. Little call as he may have to instruct others, he wishes nevertheless to open out his heart to such as he either knows or hopes to be of like mind with himself, but who are widely scattered in the world: he wishes to knit anew his connections with his oldest friends, to continue those recently formed, and to win other friends among the rising generation for the remaining course of his life. He wishes to spare the young those circuitous paths, on which he himself had lost his way.¹³²

¹³² Coleridge quotes from the introduction to *Die Propyläen* (1798), a periodical founded in July 1798 by Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749–1832) and Johann Heinrich Meyer (1760–1832). Its title is from the Greek, *προπύλαιον*, the entrance or forecourt to a building, especially a temple; by analogy, the journal sets out to function as an ‘entryway’ to the values of classical art. (‘Goethe is one of the most zealous correctors of the depraved taste, in the arts, which has prevailed in Germany, and which, speaking in general, is only beginning to disappear . . . He is the Editor of a Journal, entitled *Propylaen*: which is wholly dedicated to this purpose’, Thomas Holcroft, *Herman and Dorothea, a Poem from the German of Goethe* (1801), 188.) The English translation of the passage is Coleridge’s own.

BIOGRAPHIA LITERARIA

VOLUME 1

CHAPTER 1

The motives to the present work—Reception of the Author's first publication—The discipline of his taste at school—The effect of contemporary writers on youthful minds—Bowles's sonnets—Comparison between the Poets before and since Mr. Pope.

It has been my lot to have had my name introduced both in conversation, and in print, more frequently than I find it easy to explain, whether I consider the fewness, unimportance, and limited circulation of my writings, or the retirement and distance, in which I have lived, both from the literary and political world. Most often it has been connected with some charge, which I could not acknowledge, or some principle which I had never entertained. Nevertheless, had I had no other motive, or incitement, the reader would not have been troubled with this exculpation. What my additional purposes were, will be seen in the following pages. It will be found, that the least of what I have written concerns myself personally. I have used the narration chiefly for the purpose of giving a continuity to the work, in part for the sake of the miscellaneous reflections suggested to me by particular events, but still more as introductory to a statement of my principles in Politics, Religion, and Philosophy, and the application of the rules, deduced from philosophical principles, to poetry and criticism. But of the objects, which I proposed to myself, it was not the least important to effect, as far as possible, a settlement of the long continued controversy concerning the true nature of poetic diction: and at the same time to define with the utmost impartiality the real *poetic* character of the poet,¹³³ by whose writings this controversy was first kindled, and has been since fuelled and fanned.

In 1794, when I had barely passed the verge of manhood, I

¹³³ William Wordsworth.

published a small volume of juvenile poems.¹³⁴ They were received with a degree of favor, which, young as I was, I well know was bestowed on them not so much for any positive merit, as because they were considered buds of hope, and promises of better works to come. The critics of that day,¹³⁵ the most flattering, equally with the severest, concurred in objecting to them, obscurity, a general turgidness of diction, and a profusion of new coined double epithets.* The first is the fault which a writer is the least able to detect in his own compositions: and my mind was not then sufficiently disciplined to receive the authority of others, as a substitute for my own conviction. Satisfied that the thoughts, such as they were, could not have been expressed otherwise, or at least more perspicuously, I forgot to enquire, whether the thoughts themselves did not demand a degree of attention unsuitable to the nature and objects of poetry. This remark however applies

* The authority of Milton and Shakspeare may be usefully pointed out to young authors. In the *Comus* and other early poems of Milton there is a superfluity of double epithets; while in the *Paradise Lost* we find very few, in the *Paradise Regained* scarce any. The same remark holds almost equally true of the *Love's Labour Lost*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *Venus and Adonis*, and *Lucrece*, compared with the *Lear*, *Macbeth*, *Othello*, and *Hamlet* of our great Dramatist. The rule for the admission of double epithets seems to be this: either that they should be already denizens of our Language, such as blood-stained, terror-stricken, self-applauding; or when a new epithet, or one found in books only, is hazarded, that it, at least, be one word, not two words made one by mere virtue of the printer's hyphen. A language which, like the English, is almost without cases, is indeed in its very genius unfitted for compounds. If a writer, every time a compounded word suggests itself to him, would seek for some other mode of expressing the same sense, the chances are always greatly in favor of his finding a better word. "Tanquam scopulum sic vites insolens verbum," is the wise advice of Cæsar to the Roman Orators,¹³⁶ and the precept applies with double force to the writers in our own language. But it must not be forgotten, that the same Cæsar wrote a Treatise for the purpose of reforming the ordinary language by bringing it to a greater accordance with the principles of logic or universal grammar.

¹³⁴ In fact Coleridge's first volume, *Poems on Various Subjects*, was published in April 1796.

¹³⁵ Coleridge here is thinking particularly of two reviews of his early poems, one in the *Analytical Review*, 23 (1796), 610–12, which said 'the numbers are not always harmonious; and the language, through a redundancy of metaphor, and the frequent use of compound epithets, sometimes become turgid'; and one in the *English Review*, 28 (1796), 172–5, which was harsher: 'he is fond of coining new words, and much too profuse of compound epithets . . . The chief faults of Mr. Coleridge are, frequent obscurity (especially when he wishes to reach the higher regions of poetry), and a *Della Crusca* affectation, where passion and sentiment are drowned in description . . . Compound epithets, when judiciously, and not too profusely employed, are one of the most powerful engines of poetry; but our author cloys us with *sweets* of this kind. We have just turned up to p. 115, where, in the space of nine lines, we have: storm-vex'd flame—black foul-jaundic'd fit—sad gloom-pamper'd man—uncouth monster-leap—and tempest-shatter'd bark.'

¹³⁶ The Latin is Julius Caesar's, quoted in Aulus Gellius (*Noctes Atticæ*, 1:10): 'avoid a novel or unusual word when speaking as you would avoid a rocky reef when navigating'.

chiefly, though not exclusively, to the *Religious Musings*. The remainder of the charge I admitted to its full extent, and not without sincere acknowledgments both to my private and public censors for their friendly admonitions. In the after editions, I pruned the double epithets with no sparing hand, and used my best efforts to tame the swell and glitter both of thought and diction; though in truth, these parasite plants of youthful poetry had insinuated themselves into my longer poems with such intricacy of union, that I was often obliged to omit disentangling the weed, from the fear of snapping the flower. From that period to the date of the present work I have published nothing, with my name, which could by any possibility have come before the board of anonymous criticism.¹³⁷ Even the three or four poems, printed with the works of a friend, as far as they were censured at all, were charged with the same or similar defects, though I am persuaded not with equal justice: with an EXCESS OF ORNAMENT, in addition to STRAINED AND ELABORATE DICTION. (*Vide the criticisms on the "Ancient Mariner," in the Monthly and Critical Reviews of the first volume of the Lyrical Ballads.*) May I be permitted to add, that, even at the early period of my juvenile poems, I saw and admitted the superiority of an austerer, and more natural style, with an insight not less clear, than I at present possess. My judgment was stronger than were my powers of realizing its dictates; and the faults of my language, though indeed partly owing to a wrong choice of subjects, and the desire of giving a poetic colouring to abstract and metaphysical truths, in which a new world then seemed to open upon me, did yet, in part likewise, originate in unfeigned diffidence of my own comparative talent.—During several years of my youth and early manhood, I revered those, who had re-introduced the manly simplicity of the Grecian, and of our own elder poets, with such enthusiasm, as made the hope seem presumptuous of writing successfully in the same style. Perhaps a similar process has happened to others; but my earliest poems were marked by an ease and simplicity, which I have studied, perhaps with inferior success, to impress on my later compositions.

At school, I enjoyed the inestimable advantage of a very sensible, though at the same time, a very severe master. He* early moulded

* The Rev. James Bowyer, many years Head Master of the Grammar-School, Christ Hospital.¹³⁸

¹³⁷ Coleridge's contributions to *Lyrical Ballads* (1798) – the 'three or four poems, printed with the works of a friend' that he mentions in the following sentence – were issued anonymously in the first instance.

¹³⁸ James Boyer, whose surname was sometimes spelled Bowyer (1736–1814).

my taste to the preference of Demosthenes to Cicero, of Homer and Theocritus to Virgil, and again of Virgil to Ovid. He habituated me to compare Lucretius (in such extracts as I then read) Terence, and above all the chaster poems of Catullus, not only with the Roman poets of the, so called, silver and brazen ages; but with even those of the Augustan era: and on grounds of plain sense and universal logic to see and assert the superiority of the former in the truth and nativeness, both of their thoughts and diction. At the same time that we were studying the Greek Tragic Poets, he made us read Shakspeare and Milton as lessons: and they were the lessons too, which required most time and trouble to *bring up*, so as to escape his censure. I learned from him, that Poetry, even that of the loftiest and, seemingly, that of the wildest odes, had a logic of its own, as severe as that of science; and more difficult, because more subtle, more complex, and dependent on more, and more fugitive causes. In the truly great poets, he would say, there is a reason assignable, not only for every word, but for the position of every word; and I well remember, that availing himself of the synonyms to the Homer of Didymus,¹³⁹ he made us attempt to show, with regard to each, *why* it would not have answered the same purpose; and *wherein* consisted the peculiar fitness of the word in the original text.

In our own English compositions (at least for the last three years of our school education) he showed no mercy to phrase, metaphor, or image, unsupported by a sound sense, or where the same sense might have been conveyed with equal force and dignity in plainer words.¹⁴⁰ Lute, harp, and lyre, muse, muses, and inspirations, Pegasus, Parnassus, and Hipocrene were all an abomination to him. In fancy I can almost hear him now, exclaiming "*Harp? Harp? Lyre? Pen and ink, boy, you mean! Muse, boy, Muse? your Nurse's daughter, you mean! Pierian spring? Oh 'aye! the cloister-pump, I suppose!*" Nay certain introductions, similes, and examples, were placed by name on a list of interdiction. Among the similes, there was, I remember, that of the Manchineel fruit, as suiting equally well with too many subjects; in which however it yielded the palm at once to the example of Alexander and Clytus,¹⁴¹

¹³⁹ Didymus Chalcenterus was a Greek Alexandrian writer who lived in the first century before Christ. He wrote a commentary on Homer's *Iliad*, part of which retold the Homeric text in other words (that is, via 'synonyms').

¹⁴⁰ The 1847 edition includes a footnote that was probably written by Coleridge in his printed copy of the 1817 edition (from which the 1847 editors worked): 'This is worthy of ranking as a maxim (*regula maxima*) of criticism. Whatever is translatable in other and simpler words of the same language, without loss of sense or dignity, is bad. N.B. by dignity I mean the absence of ludicrous and debasing associations.'

¹⁴¹ The tropical manchineel tree supposedly produces fruit that looks and tastes delicious, but which is bitterly poisonous when eaten. Cleitus was Alexander the Great's closest

which was equally good and apt, whatever might be the theme. Was it ambition? Alexander and Clytus!—Flattery? Alexander and Clytus!—Anger? Drunkenness? Pride? Friendship? Ingratitude? Late repentance? Still, still Alexander and Clytus! At length, the praises of agriculture having been exemplified in the sagacious observation, that had Alexander been holding the plough, he would not have run his friend Clytus through with a spear, this tried, and serviceable old friend was banished by public edict in *secula seculorum*.¹⁴² I have sometimes ventured to think, that a list of this kind, or an index expurgatorius¹⁴³ of certain well-known and ever-returning phrases, both introductory, and transitional, including a large assortment of modest egoisms, and flattering illeisms,¹⁴⁴ &c. &c. might be hung up in our law-courts, and both houses of parliament, with great advantage to the public, as an important saving of national time, an incalculable relief to his Majesty's ministers, but above all, as insuring the thanks of country attornies, and their clients, who have private bills to carry through the house.

Be this as it may, there was one custom of our master's, which I cannot pass over in silence, because I think it imitable and worthy of imitation. He would often permit our theme exercises, under some pretext of want of time, to accumulate, till each lad had four or five to be looked over. Then placing the whole number *abreast* on his desk, he would ask the writer, why this or that sentence might not have found as appropriate a place under this or that other thesis: and if no satisfying answer could be returned, and two faults of the same kind were found in one exercise, the irrevocable verdict followed, the exercise was torn up, and another on the same subject to be produced, in addition to the tasks of the day. The reader will, I trust, excuse this tribute of recollection to a man, whose severities, even now, not seldom furnish the dreams, by which the blind fancy would fain interpret to the mind the painful sensations of distempered sleep; but neither lessen nor dim the deep sense of my moral and intellectual obligations. He sent us to the University excellent Latin and Greek scholars, and tolerable Hebraists. Yet our classical knowledge was the least of the good gifts, which we derived from his zealous and conscientious tutorage. He is now gone to his final reward, full of years,

friend, but the two quarrelled when drunk and Alexander killed him, afterwards feeling great remorse for his impetuous and destructive action.

¹⁴² 'For ever and ever' (from the Vulgate Lord's Prayer).

¹⁴³ Also called *Index Librorum Prohibitorum*: the list of books banned by the Catholic Church.

¹⁴⁴ Coleridge's coinage: 'ille' is Latin for 'himself' or 'itself'. An 'illeism' is a way of referring to oneself in the third person.

and full of honors, even of those honors, which were dearest to his heart, as gratefully bestowed by that school, and still binding him to the interests of that school, in which he had been himself educated, and to which during his whole life he was a dedicated thing.

From causes, which this is not the place to investigate, no models of past times, however perfect, can have the same vivid effect on the youthful mind, as the productions of contemporary genius. The Discipline, my mind had undergone, “Ne falleretur rotundo sono et versuum cursu, cincinnis et floribus; sed ut inspiceret quidnam subesset, quae, sedes, quod firmamentum, quis fundus verbis; an figurae essent mera ornatura et orationis fucus; vel sanguinis e materiae ipsius corde effluentis rubor quidam natus et incalescentia genuina;”¹⁴⁵ removed all obstacles to the appreciation of excellence in style without diminishing my delight. That I was thus prepared for the perusal of Mr. Bowles’s sonnets¹⁴⁶ and earlier poems, at once increased *their* influence, and *my* enthusiasm. The great works of past ages seem to a young man things of another race, in respect to which his faculties must remain passive and submissive, even as to the stars and mountains. But the writings of a contemporary, perhaps not many years elder than himself, surrounded by the same circumstances, and disciplined by the same manners, possess a *reality* for him, and inspire an actual friendship as of a man for a man. His very admiration is the wind which fans and feeds his hope. The poems themselves assume the properties of flesh and blood. To recite, to extol, to contend for them is but the payment of a debt due to one, who exists to receive it.

There are indeed modes of teaching which have produced, and are producing, youths of a very different stamp; modes of teaching, in comparison with which we have been called on to despise our great public schools, and universities

¹⁴⁵ The Latin means: ‘that it [my youthful mind] was not distracted by the verse’s smooth sound and flow, nor its ornamentation, nor floweriness of expression; instead it examined the fundamentals and essences of words, to see if the figures be mere ornamentation, to check the falsity of the rhetoric; if indeed the actual meaning flows blood-red from the heart with true passion’. The passage is Coleridge’s own confection, drawing in its later half from medical writing: Thomas Willis’s treatise *De Sanguinis Incalescentia* (1672) popularised ‘incalescentia’ (not a word found in Classical Latin) as the standard Latin term for the heat of the blood; and Johann Jakob, Bernhardin and Georg Michael Wepfer characterised a body as healthy ‘quia rubor et natus color manet per se illaeso corde’ – ‘in which the redness and the native colour of the heart remains essentially unaltered’ (Wepfer brothers, *Observationes medico-practicae, de affectibus capitis internis & externis* (1727), 583).

¹⁴⁶ William Lisle Bowles (1762–1850), Anglican vicar and poet, whose *Sonnets, Written Chiefly in Picturesque Spots, During a Tour* was first published in 1789.

In whose halls are hung
Armoury of the invincible knights of old—¹⁴⁷

modes, by which children are to be metamorphosed into prodigies. And prodigies with a vengeance have I known thus produced! Prodigies of self-conceit, shallowness, arrogance, and infidelity! Instead of storing the memory, during the period when the memory is the predominant faculty, with facts for the after exercise of the judgement; and instead of awakening by the noblest models the fond and unmixed LOVE and ADMIRATION, which is the natural and graceful temper of early youth; *these* nurselings of improved pedagogy are taught to dispute and decide; to suspect all, but their own and their lecturer's wisdom; and to hold nothing sacred from their contempt, but their own contemptible arrogance: boy-graduates in all the technicals, and in all the dirty passions and impudence of anonymous criticism. To such dispositions alone can the admonition of Pliny be requisite, "Neque enim debet operibus ejus obesse, quod vivit. An si inter eos, quos nunquam vidimus, florisset, non solum libros ejus, verum etiam imagines conquereremus, ejusdem nunc honor praesentis, et gratia quasi satietate languescet? At hoc pravum, malignumque est, non admirari hominem admiratione dignissimum, quia videre, complecti, nec laudare tantum, verum etiam amare contingit." *Plin. Epist. Lib. I.*¹⁴⁸

I had just entered on my seventeenth year, when the sonnets of Mr. Bowles, twenty in number, and just then published in a quarto pamphlet, were first made known and presented to me, by a school-fellow who had quitted us for the University, and who, during the whole time that he was in our first form (or in our school language a GRECIAN) had been my patron and protector. I refer to Dr. Middleton, the truly learned, and every way excellent Bishop of Calcutta:

Qui laudibus amplis
Ingenium celebrare meum, calamumque solebat,
Calcar agens animo validum. Non omnia terrae
Obruta! Vivit amor, vivit dolor! Ora negatur

¹⁴⁷ Wordsworth's 'Sonnet XVI', *Poems Dedicated to National Independence*, lines 9–10.

¹⁴⁸ Pliny's *Letters* (1:16): 'The fact that a writer happens to be still alive ought not to be counted against him; for if he had flourished in the distant past, not only his writings but also any portraits or statues of him would be the subject of passionate curiosity; should we therefore, just because he's still alive and amongst us, allow his genius to languish and fade away without honour or attention, out of a kind of satiety on our part? That would be very perverse and malignant of us, regarding with indifference a man who is actually worth the highest praise – only because we are able to see him, to talk to him, to applaud him and befriend him.'

Dulcia conspicerem; at flere et meminisse* relictum est.¹⁴⁹
Petr. Ep. Lib. 1. Ep 1.

It was a double pleasure to me, and still remains a tender recollection, that I should have received from a friend so revered the first knowledge of a poet, by whose works, year after year, I was so enthusiastically delighted and inspired. My earliest acquaintances will not have forgotten the undisciplined eagerness and impetuous zeal, with which I laboured to make proselytes, not only of my companions, but of all with whom I conversed, of whatever rank, and in whatever place. As my school finances did not permit me to purchase copies, I made, within less than a year and a half, more than forty transcriptions, as the best presents I could offer to those, who had in any way won my regard. And with almost equal delight did I receive the three or four following publications of the same author.¹⁵⁰

Though I have seen and known enough of mankind to be well aware, that I shall perhaps stand alone in my creed, and that it will be well, if I subject myself to no worse charge than that of singularity; I am not therefore deterred from avowing, that I regard, and ever have regarded the obligations of intellect among the most sacred of the claims of gratitude. A valuable thought, or a particular train

* I am most happy to have the necessity of informing the reader, that since this passage was written, the report of Dr. Middleton's death on his voyage to India has been proved erroneous. He lives and long may he live; for I dare prophecy, that with his life only will his exertions for the temporal and spiritual welfare of his fellow men be limited.¹⁵¹

¹⁴⁹ Petrarch's *Epistola Barbato Sulmonensi* (1359), lines 12–16:

Who with ample praises
 Celebrated my genius, and the power of my pen,
 Pricking my spirit with his sharp spur. The earth has not buried
 Everything; love is still alive, and so sorrow is alive; though deprived
 Of the sight of those sweet features, we are left to weep and remember them.

¹⁵⁰ Bowles's sonnets saw two impressions in 1789 (a fourteen-sonnet version and an expanded twenty-one-sonnet second edition). His next publications were: *The Grave of Howard* (1790), *Verses on the Benevolent Institution of the Philanthropic Society* (1790); *Hope: An Allegorical Sketch* (1796) and *Elegiac Stanzas* (1796).

¹⁵¹ Thomas Fanshawe Middleton (1769–1822), Coleridge's schoolfriend, was appointed (the first) Bishop of Calcutta in 1814. He sailed for India on 8 June 1814, encountering severe storms off the Cape of Good Hope. The elegiac Latin verse quoted above records Coleridge's belief that his ship had capsized during this voyage, although in fact Middleton arrived safely in Calcutta on 28 November 1814. Middleton preached a sermon on 'National Providence' in St John's Cathedral, Calcutta on 13 April 1815 (subtitled, 'For a General Thanksgiving Throughout the Honourable [East India] Company's Territories in India, for the Great and Public Blessings of Peace in Europe') which was printed and distributed in Britain. Conceivably it was news, or even a copy, of this sermon that alerted Coleridge to Middleton's being alive, which would date this footnote to late 1815.

of thoughts, gives me additional pleasure, when I can safely refer and attribute it to the conversation or correspondence of another. My obligations to Mr. Bowles were indeed important and for radical good. At a very premature age, even before my fifteenth year, I had bewildered myself in metaphysics, and in theological controversy. Nothing else pleased me. History, and particular facts, lost all interest in my mind. Poetry (though for a school-boy of that age, I was above par in English versification, and had already produced two or three compositions which, I may venture to say, without reference to my age, were somewhat above mediocrity, and which had gained me more credit than the sound, good sense of my old master was at all pleased with) poetry itself, yea novels and romances, became insipid to me. In my friendless wanderings on our *leave*days*, (for I was an orphan,¹⁵² and had scarcely any connections in London) highly was I delighted, if any passenger, especially if he were drest in black,¹⁵³ would enter into conversation with me. For I soon found the means of directing it to my favorite subjects

Of providence, fore-knowledge, will, and fate,
Fix'd fate, free will, fore-knowledge absolute,
And found no end in wandering mazes lost.¹⁵⁴

This preposterous pursuit was, beyond doubt, injurious, both to my natural powers, and to the progress of my education. It would perhaps have been destructive, had it been continued; but from this I was auspiciously withdrawn, partly indeed by an accidental introduction to an amiable family,¹⁵⁵ chiefly however, by the genial influence of a style of poetry, so tender and yet so manly, so natural and real, and yet so dignified and harmonious, as the sonnets, &c. of Mr. Bowles! Well were it for me, perhaps, had I never relapsed into the same mental disease; if I had continued to pluck the flower and reap the harvest from the cultivated surface, instead of delving in

* The Christ Hospital phrase, not for holidays altogether, but for those on which the boys are permitted to go beyond the precincts of the school.

¹⁵² No he wasn't. Though Coleridge's father had died in 1781, his mother lived until 1809, and various other relatives were still alive even when the *Biographia* was being written – his uncle, for example, who lived in London, and treated him with great friendliness on his journeys to the capital.

¹⁵³ Coleridge means 'if he happened to be a clergyman' (and therefore knowledgeable in abstruse theological matters).

¹⁵⁴ Milton, *Paradise Lost*, 2:559–61.

¹⁵⁵ The Evans family: William Evans, a schoolfriend, brought Coleridge back to meet his widowed mother and sisters in 1788.

the unwholesome quicksilver mines of metaphysic depths. But if in after time I have sought a refuge from bodily pain and mismanaged sensibility in abstruse researches, which exercised the strength and subtlety of the understanding without awakening the feelings of the heart; still there was a long and blessed interval, during which my natural faculties were allowed to expand, and my original tendencies to develop themselves: my fancy, and the love of nature, and the sense of beauty in forms and sounds.

The second advantage, which I owe to my early perusal, and admiration of these poems (to which let me add, though known to me at a somewhat later period, the Lewsdon Hill of Mr. CROW)¹⁵⁶ bears more immediately on my present subject. Among those with whom I conversed, there were, of course, very many who had formed their taste, and their notions of poetry, from the writings of Mr. Pope and his followers: or to speak more generally, in that school of French poetry, condensed and invigorated by English understanding, which had predominated from the last century. I was not blind to the merits of this school, yet as from inexperience of the world, and consequent want of sympathy with the general subjects of these poems, they gave me little pleasure, I doubtless undervalued the *kind*, and with the presumption of youth withheld from its masters the legitimate name of poets. I saw, that the excellence of this kind consisted in just and acute observations on men and manners in an artificial state of society, as its matter and substance; and in the logic of wit, conveyed in smooth and strong epigrammatic couplets, as its *form*. Even when the subject was addressed to the fancy, or the intellect, as in the Rape of the Lock, or the Essay on Man; nay, when it was a consecutive narration, as in that astonishing product of matchless talent and ingenuity, Pope's Translation of the Iliad; still a *point* was looked for at the end of each second line, and the whole was, as it were, a sorites,¹⁵⁷ or, if I may exchange a logical for a grammatical metaphor, a *conjunction disjunctive*,¹⁵⁸ of epigrams.

¹⁵⁶ William Crowe, *Lewesdon Hill: A Poem* (1788): a medium-length (twenty pages) blank verse poem describing the titular Dorsetshire hill through the seasons.

¹⁵⁷ 'When you have a string of Syllogisms . . . in which the Conclusion of each is made the Premiss of the next, till you arrive at the main or ultimate Conclusion of all, you may sometimes state these briefly, in the form called Sorites; in which the Predicate sorite of the first proposition is made the Subject of the next; and so on, to any length, till finally the Predicate of the last of the Premises is predicated (in the Conclusion) of the Subject of the first: e. g. A is B, B is C, C is D, D is E; therefore A is E. "The English are a brave people; a brave people are free; a free people are happy; therefore the English are happy.'" (Richard Whately, *Elements of Logic* (1826), 125–6).

¹⁵⁸ 'Conjunctions are principally divided into two sorts, the COPULATIVE and the

Meantime the matter and diction seemed to me characterized not so much by poetic thoughts, as by thoughts *translated* into the language of poetry. On this last point, I had occasion to render my own thoughts gradually more and more plain to myself, by frequent amicable disputes concerning Darwin's *BOTANIC GARDEN*,¹⁵⁹ which, for some years, was greatly extolled, not only by the *reading* public in general, but even by those, whose genius and natural robustness of understanding enabled them afterwards to act foremost in dissipating these "painted mists"¹⁶⁰ that occasionally rise from the marshes at the foot of Parnassus. During my first Cambridge vacation, I assisted a friend in a contribution for a literary society in Devonshire: and in this I remember to have compared Darwin's work to the Russian palace of ice, glittering, cold and transitory.¹⁶¹ In the same essay too, I assigned sundry reasons, chiefly drawn from a comparison of passages in the Latin poets with the original Greek, from which they were borrowed, for the preference of Collins's odes to those of Gray; and of the simile in Shakspeare

DISJUNCTIVE. The *Conjunction Copulative* serves to connect or to continue a sentence, by expressing an addition, a supposition, a cause, etc.: as, "He and his brother reside in London." "I will go if he will accompany me." "You are happy, because you are good." The *Conjunction Disjunctive* serves, not only to connect and continue the sentence, but also to express opposition of meaning in different degrees: as, "Though he was frequently reprov'd, yet he did not reform;" "They came with her, but went away without her." (Lindley Murray, *An English Grammar: Comprehending the Principles and Rules of the Language* (1808), 1:173).

¹⁵⁹ Erasmus Darwin's *The Botanic Garden* (1791) is a set of two poems elaborating the state of scientific understanding of botany that then obtained: *The Economy of Vegetation* and *The Loves of the Plants*. Darwin (1731–1802) was a physician and naturalist as well as a poet; he was the great-uncle of Charles Darwin.

¹⁶⁰ Darwin's poem begins with an invocation to the goddess of Botany, asking her to dissipate the mists of ignorance: 'Disperse, ye Lightnings! and, ye Mists, dissolve! /— Hither, emerging from yon orient skies, / BOTANIC GODDESS! bend thy radiant eyes; (Erasmus Darwin, *The Botanic Garden: The Economy of Vegetation* (1791), 1: 42–4). The more general point is Coleridge's animadversion against the conventionalised style of picturesque poetry that dominated the later eighteenth century, of which he takes Erasmus Darwin as a major example. Coleridge reacted particularly strongly against *The Botanic Garden*. In 1796 he wrote to a friend: 'I absolutely nauseate Darwin's poem' (Griggs, *Collected Letters*, 1:216).

¹⁶¹ Coleridge's 'first Cambridge vacation' was in 1792. The best efforts of scholars have been unable to locate this essay. The 'Ice Palace' was built by Russian Empress Anna Ioannovna (1693–1740). Displeased with a member of her nobility, she not only (humiliatingly) forced him to marry one of her maids, but compelled the couple to spend their wedding night in a specially constructed ice palace: 80 feet long, 25 wide and 30 high, in which not only the structure but all fixtures and fittings (including bed, clock and statues of animals and plants) were made of ice. Coleridge's point concerns the transience of such a structure, but in fact during the exceptionally harsh winter of 1739–40 the palace stood for many months.

How like a younker or a prodigal,
 The skarfed bark puts from her native bay,
 Hugg'd and embraced by the strumpet wind!
 How like the prodigal doth she return,
 With over-weather'd ribs and ragged sails,
 Lean, rent, and beggar'd by the strumpet wind!¹⁶²

to the imitation in the bard;

Fair laughs the morn, and soft the zephyr blows
 While proudly riding o'er the azure realm
 In gallant trim the gilded vessel goes,
 YOUTH at the prow and PLEASURE at the helm;
 Regardless of the sweeping whirlwind's sway,
 That hush'd in grim repose, expects it's evening prey.¹⁶³

(In which, by the bye, the words “realm” and “sway” are rhymes dearly purchased.) I preferred the original on the ground, that in the imitation it depended wholly on the compositor's putting, or not putting, a *small Capital*, both in this, and in many other passages of the same poet, whether the words should be personifications, or mere abstracts. I mention this, because, in referring various lines in Gray to their original in Shakspeare and Milton; and in the clear perception how completely all the propriety was lost in the transfer; I was, at that early period, led to a conjecture, which, many years afterwards was recalled to me from the same thought having been started in conversation, but far more ably, and developed more fully, by Mr. WORDSWORTH; namely, that this style of poetry, which I have characterized above, as translations of prose thoughts into poetic language, had been kept up by, if it did not wholly arise from, the custom of writing Latin verses, and the great importance attached to these exercises, in our public schools. Whatever might have been the case in the fifteenth century, when the use of the Latin tongue was so general among learned men, that Erasmus is said to have forgotten his native language;¹⁶⁴ yet in the present day it is not to be supposed, that a youth can think in Latin, or that he can have any other reliance on the force or fitness of his

¹⁶² Shakespeare, *Merchant of Venice*, 2:6:14–19.

¹⁶³ Thomas Gray, *The Bard* (1757), 71–6.

¹⁶⁴ Erasmus ‘spent all his days in readying, writing, and talking Latin; for he seems to have had no turn for modern languages, and perhaps he had almost forgotten his mother-tongue [Dutch]. His style therefore is always unaffected, easy, copious, fluent, and clear’ (John Jortin, *Life of Erasmus* (3 vols, 1758), 1:601).

phrases, but the authority of the writer from whom he has adopted them. Consequently he must first prepare his thoughts, and then pick out, from Virgil, Horace, Ovid, or perhaps more compendiously from his* *Gradus*, halves and quarters of lines, in which to embody them.

I never object to a certain degree of disputatiousness in a young man from the age of seventeen to that of four or five and twenty, provided I find him always arguing on one side of the question. The controversies, occasioned by my unfeigned zeal for the honor of a favorite contemporary,¹⁶⁵ then known to me only by his works, were of great advantage in the formation and establishment of my taste and critical opinions. In my defence of the lines running into each other, instead of closing at each couplet; and of natural language, neither bookish, nor vulgar, neither redolent of the lamp, nor of the kennel, such as *I will remember thee*; instead of the same thought tricked up in the rag-fair finery of,

* In the *Nutricia* of Politian, there occurs this line:

Pura coloratos interstrepit unda lapillos.

Casting my eye on a University prize poem, I met this line:

Lactea purpureos interstrepit unda lapillos.

Now look out in the *Gradus* for *Purus*, and you find, as the first synonyme, *lacteus*; for *coloratus*, and the first synonyme is *purpureus*. I mention this by way of elucidating one of the most ordinary processes in the *ferrumination* of these centos.¹⁶⁶

¹⁶⁵ Presumably Bowles.

¹⁶⁶ The line from Italian poet Poliziano's *Nutricia* ('That Which Nurtured Me', 1486) means: 'the pure stream goes murmuring over little coloured pebbles'. The synonymical line means: 'the milky stream goes murmuring over the little purple pebbles'. The *Gradus Ad Parnassum* (the title means 'easy steps up Parnassus', the mountain that symbolised poetic inspiration) was a textbook of Latin phrases widely used by schoolchildren tasked with the business of composing in Latin. It was originally compiled by Paul Aler in 1687. Actually the quoted Latin is from Poliziano's *Rustica*, not his *Nutricia*; and the *Gradus* does not include the synonyms Coleridge claims. The 'University poem' from which the second line is quoted is the Oxford Prize Poem of 1789, *Iter Ad Meccam* ['The Pilgrimage to Mecca'] by George Canning (1770–1827) – the same Canning who went on to become Prime Minister. Coleridge had been ridiculed in Canning's reactionary newspaper *The Anti-Jacobin*, and the young STC had attacked the whole of Pitt's Napoleonic War cabinet (which had included Canning). But he had later been introduced to Canning by Frere, and seems to have mellowed towards him. The actual force of the note, in other words, is an obscure, if gentle, mockery of a prominent political figure. 'Ferrumination' seals the joke: it is an Anglicisation of the Latin *ferrumino*, which means 'to cement, solder, glue, unite, bind, join' (Charlton T. Lewis and Charles Short, *A Latin Dictionary* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1879). 'Soldering' is, of course, the principle strategy involved in canning. Peter Durand's patent on his new method for preserving food using tin cans had been granted in 1810.

—Thy image on her wing
 Before my FANCY'S eye shall MEMORY bring,—¹⁶⁷

I had continually to adduce the metre and diction of the Greek poets, from Homer to Theocritus inclusive; and still more of our elder English poets, from Chaucer to Milton. Nor was this all. But as it was my constant reply to authorities brought against me from later poets of great name, that no authority could avail in opposition to TRUTH, NATURE, LOGIC, and the LAWS OF UNIVERSAL GRAMMAR; actuated too by my former passion for metaphysical investigations; I labored at a solid foundation, on which permanently to ground my opinions, in the component faculties of the human mind itself, and their comparative dignity and importance. According to the faculty or source, from which the pleasure given by any poem or passage was derived, I estimated the merit of such poem or passage. As the result of all my reading and meditation, I abstracted two critical aphorisms, deeming them to comprize the conditions and criteria of poetic style; first, that not the poem which we have *read*, but that to which we *return*, with the greatest pleasure, possesses the genuine power, and claims the name of *essential poetry*. Second, that whatever lines can be translated into other words of the same language, without diminution of their significance, either in sense, or association, or in any worthy feeling, are so far vicious in their diction. Be it however observed, that I excluded from the list of worthy feelings, the pleasure derived from mere novelty, in the reader, and the desire of exciting wonderment at his powers in the author. Oftentimes since then, in perusing French tragedies, I have fancied two marks of admiration at the end of each line, as hieroglyphics of the author's own admiration at his own cleverness. Our genuine admiration of a great poet is a continuous *under-current* of feeling; it is every where present, but seldom any where as a separate excitement. I was wont boldly to affirm, that it would be scarcely more difficult to push a stone out from the pyramids with the bare hand, than to alter a word, or the position of a word, in Milton or Shakspeare, (in their most important works at least) without making the poet say something else, or something worse, than he does say. One great distinction, I appeared to myself to see plainly between even the characteristic faults of our elder poets, and the false beauty of the moderns. In the former,

¹⁶⁷ Coleridge's own parodic, over-poeticised version of the sentiment 'I shall remember thee' here, mocks his own juvenilia: the trope of 'memory's wing' appeared in a poem he wrote in 1791, 'On Quitting School for Jesus College Cambridge': 'Ah fair Delights! That o'er my soul / On Memory's wing, like shadows fly!'

from DONNE to COWLEY, we find the most fantastic out-of-the-way thoughts, but in the most pure and genuine mother English; in the latter, the most obvious thoughts, in language the most fantastic and arbitrary. Our faulty elder poets sacrificed the passion and passionate flow of poetry, to the subtleties of intellect, and to the starts of wit; the moderns to the glare and glitter of a perpetual, yet broken and heterogeneous imagery, or rather to an amphibious something, made up, half of image, and half of abstract* meaning. The one sacrificed the heart to the head; the other both heart and head to point and drapery.

The reader must make himself acquainted with the general style of composition that was at that time deemed poetry, in order to understand and account for the effect produced on me by the SONNETS, the MONODY at MATLOCK, and the HOPE, of Mr. Bowles;¹⁶⁸ for it is peculiar to original genius to become less and less *striking*, in proportion to its success in improving the taste and judgement of its contemporaries. The poems of WEST indeed had the merit of chaste and manly diction, but they were cold, and, if I may so express it, only *dead-coloured*;¹⁶⁹ while in the best of Warton's there is a stiffness, which too often gives them the appearance of imitations from the Greek.¹⁷⁰ Whatever relation, therefore, of cause or impulse Percy's collection of Ballads¹⁷¹ may bear to the most *popular* poems of the present day; yet in a more sustained and elevated style, of the then living poets,

* I remember a ludicrous instance in the poem of a young tradesman:

No more will I endure love's pleasing pain,
Or round my *heart's leg* tie his galling chain.¹⁷²

¹⁶⁸ *Monody, Written at Matlock, October 1791* (1791) and *Hope, an Allegorical Sketch* (1796).

¹⁶⁹ Gilbert West (1703–56), author of *Stowe, the Gardens of the Right Honourable Richard, Lord Viscount Cobham* (1732); *The Odes of Pindar, with several other pieces translated* (1749) and *Education: a poem in two cantos* (1751). His translation of Pindar was the standard English version of the poet for a century or more. 'Dead-colour' is the ground an artist paints onto his or her canvas (usually white or pale, sometimes dark) prior to making the rest of the painting; Coleridge means that West's poems are foundations for poems rather than poems themselves.

¹⁷⁰ Thomas Warton (1728–90), Poet Laureate. His *The Triumph of Isis* (1749) may be the poem Coleridge has in mind as too stiffly 'Greek'.

¹⁷¹ Percy's *Reliques of Ancient English Poetry* (1765), a very popular anthology of traditional English folk ballads.

¹⁷² This 'young tradesman' poet is Oliver Goldsmith, who worked for a time as an apothecary. Coleridge's exaggerated pastiche ridicules some lines from the beginning of Goldsmith's *The Traveller* (1764), where the poet's heart is troped as imprisoned:

My heart untravell'd fondly turns to thee;
Still to my brother turns with ceaseless pain,
And drags at each remove a lengthening chain. (8–10)

Bowles and Cowper* were, to the best of my knowledge, the first who combined natural thoughts with natural diction; the first who reconciled the heart with the head. It is true, as I have before mentioned, that from diffidence in my own powers, I for a short time adopted a laborious and florid diction, which I myself deemed, if not absolutely vicious, yet of very inferior worth. Gradually, however, my practice conformed to my better judgement; and the compositions of my twenty-fourth and twenty-fifth year (*ex. gr.* the shorter blank verse poems, the lines which are now adopted in the introductory part of the VISION in the present collection in Mr Southey's *Joan of Arc*, 2nd book, 1st edition, and the tragedy of REMORSE)¹⁷³ are not more below my present ideal in respect of the general tissue of the style than those of the latest date. Their faults were at least a remnant of the former leaven, and among the many who have done me the honor of putting my poems in the same class with those of my betters, the one or two, who have pretended to bring examples of affected simplicity from my volume, have been able to adduce but one instance, and that out of a copy of verses half ludicrous, half splenetic, which I intended, and had myself characterized, as *sermoni propria*.¹⁷⁴

Every reform, however necessary, will by weak minds be carried to an excess, which will itself need reforming. The reader will excuse me for noticing, that I myself was the first to expose *risu honesto*¹⁷⁵ the three sins of poetry, one or the other of which is the most likely to

* Cowper's task was published some time before the sonnets of Mr. Bowles; but I was not familiar with it till many years afterwards. The vein of Satire which runs through that excellent poem, together with the sombre hue of its religious opinions, would probably, *at that time*, have prevented its laying any strong hold on my affections. The love of nature seems to have led Thompson to a cheerful religion; and a gloomy religion to have led Cowper to a love of nature. The one would carry his fellow-men along with him into nature; the other flies to nature from his fellow-men. In chastity of diction however, and the harmony of blank verse, Cowper leaves Thompson immeasurably below him; yet still I feel the latter to have been the *born poet*.¹⁷⁶

¹⁷³ Coleridge makes reference to a variety of his own writings: several blank verse 'conversation poems' (including 'This Lime-Tree Bower My Prison'), a 250-line section of *The Destiny of Nations: A Vision* (1817) which had originally been published as part of his friend Robert Southey's *Joan of Arc: An Epic Poem* (1796), and a blank verse tragedy originally called *Osorio* (1797), later rewritten as *Remorse*.

¹⁷⁴ A Horatian tag (*Satires*, 1.4.42–3) meaning 'better suited to prose or to conversation'. The poem to which Coleridge refers here is *Address to a Young Jackass and its Tethered Mother* (1794).

¹⁷⁵ 'Honest laughter'.

¹⁷⁶ The poets referred to here, and in the main body of the text, are: William Cowper (1731–1800), author of *The Task* (1781) and many other things; William Lisle Bowles, whose *Sonnets* (1789) have already been mentioned; and James Thomson (1700–48) author of *The Seasons* (1730).

beset a young writer. So long ago as the publication of the second number of the monthly magazine, under the name of NEHEMIAH HIGGENBOTTOM I contributed three sonnets, the first of which had for its object to excite a good-natured laugh at the spirit of *doleful egotism*, and at the recurrence of favorite phrases, with the double defect of being at once trite, and licentious. The second, on low, creeping language and thoughts, under the pretence of *simplicity*. And the third, the phrases of which were borrowed entirely from my own poems, on the indiscriminate use of elaborate and swelling language and imagery. The reader will find them in the note* below, and will I trust regard

* SONNET I

PENSIVE at eve, on the *hard* world I mused,
 And *my poor* heart was sad; so at the MOON
 I gazed, and sighed, and sighed; for ah how soon
 Eve saddens into night! mine eyes perused
 With tearful vacancy the *dampy* grass
 That wept and glitter'd in the *paly* ray:
 And I *did pause me* on my lonely way
 And *mused me* on the *wretched ones* that pass
 O'er the bleak heath of sorrow. But alas!
 Most of *myself* I thought! when it befel,
 That the *soothe* spirit of the *breezy* wood
 Breath'd in mine ear: "All this is very well,
 But much of ONE thing, is for NO thing good."
 Oh *my poor heart's* INEXPLICABLE SWELL!

SONNET II

OH I do love thee, meek SIMPLICITY!
 For of thy lays the lulling simpleness
 Goes to my heart, and soothes each small distress,
 Distress tho' small, yet haply great to me,
 'Tis true on Lady Fortune's gentlest pad
 I amble on; and yet I know not why
 So sad I am! but should a friend and I
 Frown, pout and part, then I am *very* sad.
 And then with sonnets and with sympathy
 My dreamy bosom's mystic woes I pall;
 Now of my false friend plaining plaintively,
 Now raving at mankind in general;
 But whether sad or fierce, 'tis simple all,
 All very simple, meek SIMPLICITY!

SONNET III

AND this reft house is that, the which he built,
 Lamented Jack! and here his malt he pil'd,
 Cautious in vain! these rats, that squeak so wild,
 Squeak not unconscious of their father's guilt.
 Did he not see her gleaming thro' the glade!
 Belike 'twas she, the maiden all forlorn.
 What tho' she milk no cow with crumpled horn,
 Yet, *aye* she haunts the dale where *erst* she stray'd:

them as reprinted for biographical purposes, and not for their poetic merits. So general at that time, and so decided was the opinion concerning the characteristic vices of my style, that a celebrated physician (now, alas! no more) speaking of me in other respects with his usual kindness to a gentleman, who was about to meet me at a dinner party, could not however resist giving him a hint not to mention the “*House that Jack built*” in my presence, for “that I was *as sore as a boil* about that sonnet;” he not knowing, that I was myself the author of it.

And *aye*, beside her stalks her amarous knight!
 Still on his thighs their wonted brogues are worn,
 And thro’ those brogues, still tatter’d and betorn,
 His hindward charms gleam an unearthly white.
 Ah! thus thro’ broken clouds at night’s high Noon
 Peeps to fair fragments forth the full-orb’d harvest-moon!¹⁷⁷

The following anecdote will not be wholly out of place here, and may perhaps amuse the reader. An amateur performer in verse expressed to a common friend, a strong desire to be introduced to me, but hesitated in accepting my friend’s immediate offer, on the score that “he was, he must acknowledge, the author of a confounded severe epigram on my *ancient mariner*, which had given me great pain.” I assured my friend that, if the epigram was a good one, it would only increase my desire to become acquainted with the author, and begg’d to hear it recited: when, to my no less surprise than amusement, it proved to be one which I had myself some time before written and inserted in the *Morning Post*.

TO THE AUTHOR OF THE ANCIENT MARINER

Your poem must eternal be,
 Dear sir! it cannot fail,
 For ’tis incomprehensible,
 And without head or tail.¹⁷⁸

¹⁷⁷ These three pastiche sonnets first appeared in the *Monthly Magazine*, November 1797 as ‘by Nehemiah Higginbottom’. The broader context for their appearance is summarised by David Erdman: ‘Having with some misgivings recently pushed through the publication of *Poems, By S. T. Coleridge, Second Edition. To which are now added Poems by Charles Lamb, And Charles Lloyd*, the main author, counting the “effusions” of Lamb and Lloyd as a part of his own folly, laughs cathartically at the whole performance – and then sells his laughter to the *Monthly Magazine* before sharing it with his collaborators’ (David Erdman, ‘Coleridge as Nehemiah Higginbottom’, *Modern Language Notes*, 73:8 (1958), 569). ‘I sent three mock Sonnets’, was how Coleridge explained matters in a letter to Cottle, ‘in ridicule of my own, & Charles Lloyd’s, & Lamb’s, &c &c—in ridicule of that affectation of unaffectedness, of jumping & misplaced accent on common-place epithets, flat lines forced into poetry by Italics (signifying how well & *mouthis[h]ly* the Author would read them) puny pathos &c &c—the instances are almost all taken from mine & Lloyd’s poems . . . think they may do good to our young Bards’ (Griggs, *Collected Letters*, 1:357–8). However benign Coleridge’s intentions may have been, Lloyd, Lamb and Southey (who believed his own sonnets ridiculed here) were all upset by the publication. Coleridge wrote a letter to Southey (*Collected Letters*, 1:358–9) denying that he had been his target.

¹⁷⁸ The quatrain with which this footnote concludes was originally published in the *Morning Post* (24 January 1800) under the title ‘*To Mr. Pye On his Carmen Seculare* (a title which has by various persons who have heard it been thus translated “A Poem *an age long*”)’ . Henry James Pye (1745–1813) was Poet Laureate from 1790 until his death.

CHAPTER 2

Supposed irritability of men of Genius—Brought to the test of Facts—Causes and Occasions of the charge—Its Injustice.

I have often thought, that it would be neither uninteresting nor unamusing to analyze, and bring forward into distinct consciousness, that complex feeling, with which readers in general take part against the author, in favor of the critic; and the readiness with which they apply to *all* poets the old sarcasm of Horace upon the scribblers of his time: “Genus irritabile vatum.”¹⁷⁹ A debility and dimness of the imaginative power, and a consequent necessity of reliance on the immediate impressions of the senses, do, we well know, render the mind liable to superstition and fanaticism. Having a deficient portion of internal and proper warmth, minds of this class seek in the crowd *circum fana*¹⁸⁰ for a warmth in common, which they do not possess singly. Cold and phlegmatic in their own nature, like damp hay, they heat and inflame by co-acervation; or like bees they become restless and irritable through the increased temperature of collected multitudes. Hence the German word for fanaticism (such at least was its original import) is derived from the swarming of bees, namely, Schwärmen, Schwärmerey. The passion being in an inverse proportion to the insight, *that* the more vivid, as *this* the less distinct; anger is the inevitable consequence. The absence of all foundation within their own minds for that, which they yet believe both true and indispensable to their safety and happiness, cannot but produce an uneasy state of feeling, an involuntary sense of fear from which nature has no means of rescuing herself but by anger. Experience informs us that the first defence of weak minds is to recriminate.

There’s no Philosopher but sees,
That rage and fear are one disease,
Tho’ that may burn, and this may freeze,
They’re both alike the ague.

MAD OX.¹⁸¹

¹⁷⁹ ‘That irritable race of poets’ (Horace, *Epistles*, 2.2.102).

¹⁸⁰ ‘Around the temple’.

¹⁸¹ Coleridge’s ‘Recantation: Illustrated in the Story of the Mad Ox’ (1798), lines 63–6.

But where the ideas are vivid, and there exists an endless power of combining and modifying them, the feelings and affections blend more easily and intimately with these ideal creations, than with the objects of the senses; the mind is affected by thoughts, rather than by things; and only then feels the requisite interest even for the most important events and accidents, when by means of meditation they have passed into *thoughts*. The sanity of the mind is between superstition with fanaticism on the one hand; and enthusiasm with indifference and a diseased slowness to action on the other. For the conceptions of the mind may be so vivid and adequate, as to preclude that impulse to the realizing of them, which is strongest and most restless in those, who possess more than mere *talent*, (or the faculty of appropriating and applying the knowledge of others) yet still want something of the creative, and self-sufficing power of absolute *Genius*. For this reason therefore, they are men of *commanding* genius. While the former rest content between thought and reality, as it were in an intermundium¹⁸² of which their own living spirit supplies the *substance*, and their imagination the ever-varying *form*; the latter must impress their preconceptions on the world without, in order to present them back to their own view with the satisfying degree of clearness, distinctness, and individuality. These in tranquil times are formed to exhibit a perfect poem in palace, or temple, or landscape-garden; or a tale of romance in canals that join sea with sea, or in walls of rock, which shouldering back the billows imitate the power, and supply the benevolence of nature to sheltered navies; or in aqueducts that arching the wide vale from mountain to mountain give a Palmyra to the desert. But alas! in times of tumult they are the men destined to come forth as the shaping spirit of Ruin, to destroy the wisdom of ages in order to substitute the fancies of a day, and to change kings and kingdoms, as the wind shifts and shapes the clouds.* The records of biography

* Of old things all are over old,
Of good things none are good enough:—
We'll show that we can help to frame
A world of other stuff.

I too will have my kings, that take
From me the sign of life and death:
Kingdoms shall shift about, like clouds,
Obedient to my breath.

WORDSWORTH'S ROB ROY¹⁸³

¹⁸² 'Intermundium, *The place and distance between divers worlds*, as Epicurus thought. *Epicuri intermundia*, Cicero' (Robert Ainsworth, *Ainsworth's Dictionary of the Latin Tongue* (1736)).

¹⁸³ Wordsworth, 'Rob Roy's Grave' (1807), 85–92.

seem to confirm this theory. The men of the greatest genius, as far as we can judge from their own works or from the accounts of their contemporaries, appear to have been of calm and tranquil temper, in all that related to themselves. In the inward assurance of permanent fame, they seem to have been either indifferent or resigned, with regard to immediate reputation. Through all the works of Chaucer there reigns a cheerfulness, a manly hilarity, which makes it almost impossible to doubt a correspondent habit of feeling in the author himself. Shakspeare's evenness and sweetness of temper were almost proverbial in his own age. That this did not arise from ignorance of his own comparative greatness, we have abundant proof in his sonnets, which could scarcely have been known to Mr. Pope,* when he asserted, that our great bard 'grew immortal in his own despite.'¹⁸⁴ Speaking of one whom he had celebrated, and contrasting the duration of his works with that of his personal existence, Shakspeare adds:

Your name from hence immortal life shall have,
 Tho' I once gone to all the world must die;
 The earth can yield me but a common grave,
 When you entomb'd in men's eyes shall lie.
 Your monument shall be my gentle verse,
 Which eyes not yet created shall o'er-read;

* Mr. Pope was under the common error of his age, an error far from being sufficiently exploded even at the present day. It consists (as I explained at large, and proved in detail in my public lectures) in mistaking for the *essentials* of the Greek stage certain rules, which the wise poets imposed upon themselves, in order to render all the remaining parts of the drama consistent with those, that had been forced upon them by circumstances independent of their will; out of which circumstances the drama itself arose. The circumstances in the time of Shakspeare, which it was equally out of his power to alter, were different, and such as, in my opinion, allowed a far wider sphere, and a deeper and more human interest. Critics are too apt to forget, that *rules* are but means to an end; consequently, where the ends are different, the rules must be likewise so. We must have ascertained what the end is, before we can determine what the rules *ought* to be. Judging under this impression, I did not hesitate to declare my full conviction, that the consummate judgement of Shakspeare, not only in the general construction, but in all the *detail*, of his dramas, impressed me with greater wonder, than even the might of his genius, or the depth of his philosophy. The substance of these lectures I hope soon to publish; and it is but a debt of justice to myself and my friends to notice, that the first course of lectures, which differed from the following courses only, by occasionally varying the illustrations of the same thoughts, was addressed to very numerous, and I need not add, respectable audiences at the royal institution, before Mr. Schlegel gave his lectures on the same subjects at Vienna.¹⁸⁵

¹⁸⁴ Pope, *Imitations of Horace*, Book 2 (1738), 1.72.

¹⁸⁵ Coleridge's first course of lectures on Shakespeare had taken place at the Royal Institution in 1808; in the same year, A. W. Schlegel lectured on Shakespeare and other dramatists in Vienna. Coleridge later read and was influenced by Schlegel's ideas.

And *tongues to be* your being shall rehearse,
 When all the breathers of this world are dead:
 You still shall live, such virtue hath my pen,
 Where breath most breathes, e'en in the mouth of men.

SONNET 81st.

I have taken the first that occurred; but Shakspeare's readiness to praise his rivals, ore pleno,¹⁸⁶ and the confidence of his own equality with those whom he deemed most worthy of his praise, are alike manifested in the 86th sonnet.

Was it the proud full sail of his great verse
 Bound for the praise of all-too-precious you,
 That did my ripe thoughts in my brain inhearse,
 Making their tomb, the womb wherein they grew?
 Was it his spirit, by spirits taught to write
 Above a mortal pitch that struck me dead?
 No, neither he, nor his compeers by night
 Giving him aid, my verse astonished.
 He, nor that affable familiar ghost,
 Which nightly gulls him with intelligence,
 As victors of my silence cannot boast;
 I was not sick of any fear from thence!
 But when your countenance fill'd up his line,
 Then lack'd I matter, that enfeebled mine.

In Spenser indeed, we trace a mind constitutionally tender, delicate, and, in comparison with his three great compeers, I had almost said, *effeminate*; and this additionally saddened by the unjust persecution of Burleigh, and the severe calamities, which overwhelmed his latter days. These causes have diffused over all his compositions "a melancholy grace," and have drawn forth occasional strains, the more pathetic from their gentleness. But no where do we find the least trace of irritability, and still less of quarrelsome or affected contempt of his censurers.¹⁸⁷

The same calmness, and even greater self-possession, may be affirmed of Milton, as far as his poems, and poetic character are concerned. He reserved his anger for the enemies of religion, freedom,

¹⁸⁶ 'In full voice'.

¹⁸⁷ It used to be thought that Edmund Spenser (1552-99) had been persecuted and harassed by William Cecil, First Baron Burghley (sometimes spelled Burleigh; 1520-98) during his life, although more recent scholarship has apparently disproved the story. 'Melancholy grace' is quoted from Thomas Gray's 'Ode on the Pleasure Arising from Vicissitude' (1775), line 28.

and his country. My mind is not capable of forming a more august conception, than arises from the contemplation of this great man in his latter days: poor, sick, old, blind, slandered, persecuted,

Darkness before, and danger's voice behind,¹⁸⁸

in an age in which he was as little understood by the party, *for* whom, as by that *against* whom, he had contended; and among men before whom he strode so far as to *dwarf* himself by the distance; yet still listening to the music of his own thoughts, or if additionally cheered, yet cheered only by the prophetic faith of two or three solitary individuals, he did nevertheless

—Argue not

Against Heaven's hand or will, nor bate a jot
Of heart or hope; but still bore up and steer'd
Right onward.¹⁸⁹

From others only do we derive our knowledge that Milton, in his latter day, had his scorners and detractors; and even in his day of youth and hope, that he had enemies would have been unknown to us, had they not been likewise the enemies of his country.

I am well aware, that in advanced stages of literature, when there exist many and excellent models, a high degree of talent, combined with taste and judgement, and employed in works of imagination, will acquire for a man the *name* of a great genius; though even that *analogon* of genius, which, in certain states of society, may even render his writings more popular than the absolute reality could have done, would be sought for in vain in the mind and temper of the author himself. Yet even in instances of this kind, a close examination will often detect, that the irritability, which has been attributed to the author's *genius* as its cause, did really originate in an ill conformation of body, obtuse pain, or constitutional defect of pleasurable sensation. What is charged to the *author*, belongs to the *man*, who would probably have been still more impatient, but for the humanizing influences of the very pursuit, which yet bears the blame of his irritability.

How then are we to explain the easy credence generally given to this charge, if the charge itself be not, as I have endeavoured to show, supported by experience? This seems to me of no very difficult solution. In whatever country literature is widely diffused, there will be many who mistake an intense desire to possess the reputation of

¹⁸⁸ Wordsworth, *Prelude*, 3:288.

¹⁸⁹ Milton, *Sonnet 22* ('To Cyriack Skinner', published 1694), 6–9.

poetic genius, for the actual powers, and original tendencies which constitute it. But men, whose dearest wishes are fixed on objects wholly out of their own power, become in all cases more or less impatient and prone to anger. Besides, though it may be paradoxical to assert, that a man can know one thing, and believe the opposite, yet assuredly a vain person may have so habitually indulged the wish, and persevered in the attempt to appear what he is not, as to become himself one of his own proselytes. Still, as this counterfeit and artificial persuasion must differ, even in the person's own feelings, from a real sense of inward power, what can be more natural, than that this difference should betray itself in suspicious and jealous irritability? Even as the flowery sod, which covers a hollow, may be often detected by its shaking and trembling.

But, alas! the multitude of books and the general diffusion of literature, have produced other, and more lamentable effects in the world of letters, and such as are abundant to explain, tho' by no means to justify, the contempt with which the best grounded complaints of injured genius are rejected as frivolous, or entertained as matter of merriment. In the days of Chaucer and Gower, our language might (with due allowance for the imperfections of a simile) be compared to a wilderness of vocal reeds, from which the favorites only of Pan or Apollo could construct even the rude Syrinx; and from this the *constructors* alone could elicit strains of music. But now, partly by the labours of successive poets, and in part by the more artificial state of society and social intercourse, language, mechanized as it were into a barrel-organ, supplies at once both instrument and tune. Thus even the deaf may play, so as to delight the many. Sometimes (for it is with similes, as it is with jests at a wine table, one is sure to suggest another) I have attempted to illustrate the present state of our language, in its relation to literature, by a press-room of larger and smaller stereotype pieces, which, in the present anglo-gallican fashion of unconnected, epigrammatic periods, it requires but an ordinary portion of ingenuity to vary indefinitely, and yet still produce something, which, if *not* sense, will be so like it as to do as well. Perhaps better: for it spares the reader the trouble of thinking; prevents vacancy, while it indulges indolence; and secures the memory from all danger of an intellectual plethora. Hence of all trades, literature at present demands the least talent or information; and, of all modes of literature, the manufacturing of poems. The difference indeed between these and the works of genius is not less than between an egg and an egg-shell; yet at a distance they both look alike. Now it is no less remarkable than true, with how little examination works of polite literature are commonly

perused, not only by the mass of readers, but by men of first rate ability, till some accident or chance* discussion have roused their

* In the course of one of my lectures, I had occasion to point out the almost faultless position and choice of words, in Mr. Pope's *original* compositions, particularly in his satires and moral essays, for the purpose of comparing them with his translation of Homer, which, I do not stand alone in regarding as the main source of our pseudo-poetic diction. And this, by the bye, is an additional confirmation of a remark made, I believe, by Sir Joshua Reynolds, that next to the man who formed and elevated the taste of the public, he that corrupted it, is commonly the greatest genius.¹⁹⁰ Among other passages, I analyzed sentence by sentence, and almost word by word, the popular lines,

As when the moon, resplendent lamp of night, &c.¹⁹¹

much in the same way as has been since done, in an excellent article on Chalmers's British Poets in the *Quarterly Review*.¹⁹² The impression on the audience in general was sudden and evident: and a number of enlightened and highly educated individuals, who at different times afterwards addressed me on the subject, expressed their wonder, that truth so obvious should not have struck them *before*; but at the same time acknowledged (so much had they been accustomed, in reading poetry, to receive pleasure from the separate images and phrases successively, without asking themselves whether the collective meaning was sense or nonsense) that they might in all probability have read the same passage again twenty times with undiminished admiration, and without once reflecting, that ἄστρα φαεινὴν ἀμφὶ σελήνην φαείνεται ἄριπρεπέα¹⁹³—(i.e. the stars around, or near the full moon, shine pre-eminently bright) conveys a just and happy image of a moonlight sky: while it is difficult to determine whether in the lines,

Around *her throne* the vivid planets *roll*,
And stars *unnumber'd* gild the *glowing pole*,¹⁹⁴

the sense, or the diction be the more absurd. My answer was; that, though I had derived peculiar advantages from my school discipline, and tho' my *general* theory of poetry was the same then as now, I had yet experienced the same sensations myself, and felt almost as if I had been newly couched, when, by Mr. Wordsworth's conversation, I had been induced to re-examine with impartial strictness Grey's celebrated elegy. I had long before detected the defects in 'the Bard'; but 'the Elegy' I had considered as proof against all fair attacks; and to this day I cannot read either without delight, and a portion of enthusiasm. At all events, whatever pleasure I may have lost by the clearer perception of the faults in certain passages, has been more than repaid to me by the additional delight with which I read the remainder.

¹⁹⁰ Coleridge is thinking of the closing passage of Reynolds's *Fifth Discourse* (delivered to the Royal Academy, December 1772): 'There is another caution which I wish to give you. Be as select in those whom you endeavour to please, as in those whom you endeavour to imitate. Without the love of fame you can never do any thing excellent; but by an excessive and undistinguishing thirst after it, you will come to have vulgar views; you will degrade your style; and your taste will be entirely corrupted. It is certain that the lowest style will be the most popular, as it falls within the compass of ignorance itself; and the Vulgar will always be pleased with what is natural, in the confined and misunderstood sense of the word.'

¹⁹¹ Pope's *Iliad*, 8:687f.

¹⁹² Robert Southey, 'Chalmers's British Poets', *Quarterly Review*, 14 (1814), 480–504. In fact, this review does not discuss the things Coleridge says it does. Conceivably he confused it with a different review of the same volume (*Critical Review*, 21 (Dec 1810), 348f) that does do so.

¹⁹³ *Iliad*, 8:555–6.

¹⁹⁴ Pope's translation of the same passage from the *Iliad*.

attention, and put them on their guard. And hence individuals below mediocrity not less in natural power than in acquired knowledge; nay, bunglers that had failed in the lowest mechanic crafts, and whose presumption is in due proportion to their want of sense and sensibility; men, who being first scribblers from idleness and ignorance, next become libellers from envy and malevolence; have been able to drive a successful trade in the employment of the booksellers, nay, have raised themselves into temporary name and reputation with the public at large, by that most powerful of all adulation, the appeal to the bad and malignant passions of mankind.* But as it is the nature of scorn, envy, and all malignant propensities to require a quick change of objects, such writers are sure, sooner or later, to awake from their

* Especially “in this AGE OF PERSONALITY, this age of literary and political GOSSIPING, when the meanest insects are worshipped with a sort of Egyptian superstition, if only the brainless head be atoned for by the sting of personal malignity in the tail! When the most vapid satires have become the objects of a keen public interest purely from the number of contemporary characters named in the patch-work notes (which possess, however, the comparative merit of being more poetical than the text), and because, to increase the stimulus, the author has sagaciously left his own name for whispers and conjectures!¹⁹⁵—In an age, when even sermons are published with a double appendix stuffed with *names*—in a generation so transformed from the characteristic reserve of Britons, that from the ephemeral sheet of a London newspaper to the everlasting Scotch Professorial Quarto, almost every publication exhibits or flatters the epidemic distemper; that the very “last year’s rebuses” in the Lady’s Diary, are answered in a serious elegy “*on my father’s death*” with the name and habitat of the elegiac Œdipus subscribed;—and “*other ingenious solutions were likewise given*” to the said *rebuses*—not, as heretofore, by Crito, Philander, A B, Y, &c. but by fifty or sixty plain English surnames at full length, with their several places of abode!¹⁹⁶ In an age, when a bashful *Philalethes* or *Phileleutheros*¹⁹⁷ is as rare on the title-pages and among the signatures of our magazines, as a real name used to be in the days of our shy and notice-shunning grandfathers! When (more exquisite than all) I see an EPIC POEM (Spirits of Maro and Maconides,¹⁹⁸ make ready to welcome your new compeer!)

¹⁹⁵ A reference to the anonymous *The Pursuits of Literature: A Satirical Poem in Four Dialogues*; first published in four volumes between 1794 and 1797, and afterwards reissued several times in one volume with explanatory notes identifying all the contemporary figures mentioned.

¹⁹⁶ *The Ladies’ Diary* for 1796 asked readers to write poetic riddles for which one of ten ‘answers’ was appropriate (the ten were: Cradle; Eve; Thimble; Bridge; Nail; Pulpit; Lips; Air; Coals; Knot). They printed eleven winning entries, identified by the names of the authors, and then printed a list that began ‘other separate answers to the Prize Enigmas, beside those inserted in the supplement, were given by the following ladies and gentleman’, with fifty-two names listed. Finally, after this, the *Diary* included a ‘General Answer to the Enigmas’, which poem contained all eleven enigma answers. This was called ‘An Elegy, by Mr. Job Aryes of Riccall, on the death of his father, our ingenious correspondent, Mr. James Ayres, who was many years Master of the Free-school at Kirby-Misperton, near Malton’.

¹⁹⁷ ‘Philalethes’ and ‘Phileleuthros’ are notional author pseudonyms (derived from the Greek words ‘lover of truth’ and ‘lover of freedom’ respectively).

¹⁹⁸ Alternate names for Vergil and Homer.

dream of vanity to disappointment and neglect with embittered and envenomed feelings. Even during their short-lived success, sensible in spite of themselves on what a shifting foundation it rests, they resent the mere refusal of praise as a robbery, and at the justest censures kindle at once into violent and undisciplined abuse; till the acute disease changing into chronic, the more deadly as the less violent, they become the fit instruments of literary detraction and moral slander. They are then no longer to be questioned without exposing the complainant to ridicule, because, forsooth, they are *anonymous* critics, and authorised as “synodical individuals”^{*} to speak of themselves plurali majestatico!¹⁹⁹ As if literature formed a cast, like that of the PARAS²⁰⁰ in Hindostan, who, however maltreated, must not dare to deem themselves wronged!²⁰¹ As if that, which in all other cases adds a deeper dye to slander, the circumstance of its being anonymous, here acted only to make the slanderer inviolable! Thus, in *part*, from the accidental tempers of individuals (men of undoubted talent, but not

advertised with the special recommendation, that the said EPIC POEM²⁰² contains more than a hundred names of *living* persons.”

FRIEND NO. 10²⁰³

* A phrase of Andrew Marvel's.²⁰⁴

¹⁹⁹ That is, ‘using the royal we’.

²⁰⁰ The modern spelling of this word is ‘pariahs’.

²⁰¹ The 1847 edition inserts as a footnote here a passage that occurs, in the 1817 edition, as an addition to the third footnote of Chapter 3, below: ‘But if it were worth while to mix together, as ingredients, half the anecdotes which I either myself know to be true, or which I have received from men incapable of intentional falsehood, concerning the characters, qualifications, and motives of our anonymous critics, whose decisions are oracles for our reading public; I might safely borrow the words of the apocryphal Daniel; “Give me leave, O SOVEREIGN PUBLIC, and I shall slay this dragon without sword or staff.” For the compound would be as the “Pitch, and fat, and hair, which Daniel took, and did seethe them together, and made lumps thereof, and put into the dragon’s mouth, and so the dragon burst in sunder; and Daniel said LO; THESE ARE THE GODS YE WORSHIP’. See below for annotation on these references.

²⁰² Probably Anne Hamilton’s *The Epics of the Ton, or the Glories of the Great World* (1807), in which, as its title implies, a hundred members of fashionable London life are described in mock-heroic couplets. Or perhaps Coleridge has in mind Hannah Cowley’s serious epic, *The Siege of Acre* (1801), dramatising a recent event in the Napoleonic wars including a great many actual people, identified by extracts from contemporary newspapers appended to the edition. ‘How exquisite a task to Bards is given’, Cowley writes at the beginning of her third book, ‘when actual deeds are subjects for the song / When living Beings to the theme belong’.

²⁰³ This footnote is quoted from an essay in *The Friend* (19 October 1809) entitled ‘On the Errors of Party Spirit’.

²⁰⁴ Coleridge is thinking of Marvell’s attack on Samuel Parker, the Bishop of Oxford, in *The Rehearsal Transpos’d* (1673): ‘He usurps to himself the Authority of the Church of England . . . as if he were a Synodical Individuum; nay if he had a fifth Council in his belly he could not dictate more dogmatically.’

men of genius) tempers rendered yet more irritable by their desire to *appear* men of genius; but still more effectively by the excesses of the mere *counterfeits* both of talent and genius; the number too being so incomparably greater of those who are *thought* to be, than of those who really *are* men of real genius; and in part from the natural, but not therefore the less partial and unjust distinction, made by the public itself between *literary* and all other property; I believe the prejudice to have arisen, which considers an unusual irascibility concerning the reception of its products as characteristic of genius. It might correct the moral feelings of a numerous class of readers, to suppose a Review set on foot, the object of which should be to criticise all the chief works presented to the public by our ribbon-weavers, calico-printers, cabinet-makers, and china-manufacturers; a Review conducted in the same spirit, and which should take the same freedom with personal character, as our literary journals. They would scarcely, I think, deny their belief, not only that the “genus irritabile” would be found to include many other *species* besides that of bards; but that the irritability of *trade* would soon reduce the resentments of *poets* into mere shadow-fights (σκιομαχίας)²⁰⁵ in the comparison. Or is wealth the only rational object of human interest? Or even if this were admitted, has the poet no property in his works? Or is it a rare, or culpable case, that he who serves at the altar of the muses, should be compelled to derive his maintenance from the altar, when too he has perhaps deliberately abandoned the fairest prospects of rank and opulence in order to devote himself, an entire and undistracted man, to the instruction or refinement of his fellow-citizens? Or, should we pass by all higher objects and motives, all disinterested benevolence, and even that ambition of lasting praise which is at once the crutch and ornament, which at once supports and betrays, the infirmity of human virtue; is the character and property of the individual, who labours for our intellectual pleasures, less entitled to a share of our fellow feeling, than that of the wine-merchant or milliner? Sensibility indeed, both quick and deep, is not only a characteristic feature, but may be deemed a component part, of genius. But it is not less an essential mark of true genius, that its sensibility is excited by any other cause more powerfully, than by its own personal interests; for

²⁰⁵ Liddell and Scott define σκιομαχέω as ‘fighting with a shadow, a mock fight’, citing Plutarch; they also note that ‘σκιομαχέω is a later form’ (Henry George Liddell, Robert Scott, Henry Stuart Jones and Roderick McKenzie, *A Greek-English Lexicon*, 9th edn (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996). This form is in fact very rare: the only classical example I can find for σκιομαχίας occurs in second-century Roman physician Galen (*De Galeni qui fertur de parvae pilae exercitio libello*).

this plain reason, that the man of genius lives most in the ideal world, in which the present is still constituted by the future or the past; and because his feelings have been habitually associated with thoughts and images, to the number, clearness, and vivacity of which the sensation of *self* is always in an inverse proportion. And yet, should he perchance have occasion to repel some false charge, or to rectify some erroneous censure, nothing is more common, than for the many to mistake the general liveliness of his manner and language, *whatever* is the subject, for the effects of peculiar irritation from its accidental relation to himself.*

For myself, if from my own feelings, or from the less suspicious test of the observations of others, I had been made aware of any literary testiness or jealousy; I trust, that I should have been, however, neither silly nor arrogant enough to have burthened the imperfection on GENIUS. But an experience (and I should not need documents in abundance to prove my words, if I added) a tried experience of twenty years, has taught me, that the original sin of my character consists in a careless indifference to public opinion, and to the attacks of those who influence it; that praise and admiration have become yearly, less and less desirable, except as marks of sympathy; nay that it is difficult and distressing to me, to think with any interest even about the sale and profit of my works, important as, in my present circumstances, such considerations must needs be. Yet it never occurred to me to believe or fancy, that the quantum of intellectual power bestowed on me by nature or education was in any way connected with this habit of my feelings; or that it needed any other parents or fosterers than constitutional indolence, aggravated into languor by ill-health; the accumulating embarrassments of procrastination; the mental cowardice, which is the inseparable companion of procrastination, and which

* This is one instance among many of deception, by the telling the half of a fact, and omitting the other half, when it is from their mutual counteraction and neutralization, that the *whole* truth arises, as a tertium aliquid²⁰⁶ different from either. Thus in Dryden's famous line "Great wit" (which here means genius) "to madness sure is near allied."²⁰⁷ Now if the profound sensibility, which is doubtless *one* of the components of genius, were alone considered, single and unbalanced, it might be fairly described as exposing the individual to a greater chance of mental derangement; but then a more than usual rapidity of association, a more than usual power of passing from thought to thought, and image to image, is a component equally essential; and in the due modification of each by the other the genius itself consists; so that it would be just as fair to describe the earth, as in imminent danger of exorbitating, or of falling into the sun, according as the assertor of the absurdity *confined* his attention either to the projectile or to the attractive force exclusively.

²⁰⁶ 'Third thing'.

²⁰⁷ Dryden, *Absalom and Achitophel* (1681), 1:163.

makes us anxious to think and converse on any thing rather than on what concerns ourselves; in fine, all those close vexations, whether chargeable on my faults or my fortunes, which leave me but little grief to spare for evils comparatively distant and alien.

Indignation at literary wrongs I leave to men born under happier stars. I cannot *afford it*. But so far from condemning those who can, I deem it a writer's duty, and think it creditable to his heart, to feel and express a resentment proportioned to the grossness of the provocation, and the importance of the object. There is no profession on earth, which requires an attention so early, so long, or so unintermitting as that of poetry; and indeed as that of literary composition in general, if it be such, as at all satisfies the demands both of taste and of sound logic. How difficult and delicate a task even the mere mechanism of verse is, may be conjectured from the failure of those, who have attempted poetry late in life. Where then a man has, from his earliest youth, devoted his whole being to an object, which by the admission of all civilized nations in all ages is honorable as a pursuit, and glorious as an attainment; what of all that relates to himself and his family, if only we except his moral character, can have fairer claims to his protection, or more authorise acts of self-defence, than the elaborate products of his intellect and intellectual industry? Prudence itself would command us to *show*, even if defect or diversion of natural sensibility had prevented us from *feeling*, a due interest and qualified anxiety for the offspring and representatives of our nobler being. I know it, alas! by woeful experience. I have laid too many eggs in the hot sands of this wilderness the world, with ostrich carelessness and ostrich oblivion. The greater part indeed have been trod under foot, and are forgotten; but yet no small number have crept forth into life, some to furnish feathers for the caps of others, and still more to plume the shafts in the quivers of my enemies, of them that unprovoked have lain in wait against my soul.

“Sic vos, non vobis, mellificatis, apes!”²⁰⁸

²⁰⁸ ‘So it is that you bees make your honey, but not for your own benefit.’ The story goes that Vergil had pinned the following anonymous verses, in praise of the emperor Augustus, to the imperial palace gate:

Node pluit tola, redeunt spectacula mane:

Divisum imperium cum Jove Caesar habet.

[‘It rains all night; the morning restores the splendours; so it is that Caesar and Jupiter divide their imperial rule between them.’]

When a lesser poet called Bathyllus pretended to be the author and was rewarded by Augustus, Vergil posted a new line on the gate (*Hos ego versiculos foci, tutit alter honores* [I made these verses, that another timidly claims]), together with the beginning of

An instance in confirmation of the Note, p. 39,²⁰⁹ occurs to me as I am correcting this sheet, with the FAITHFUL SHEPHERDESS open before me.²¹⁰ Seward first traces Fletcher's lines;

More foul diseases than e'er yet the hot
Sun bred thro' his burnings, while the dog
Pursues the raging lion, throwing the fog
And deadly vapour from his angry breath,
Filling the lower world with plague and death.—²¹¹

To Spenser's Shepherd's Calendar,

The rampant lion hunts he fast
With dogs of noisome breath;
Whose baleful barking brings, in haste,
Pyne, plagues, and dreary death!²¹²

He then takes occasion to introduce Homer's simile of the appearance of Achilles' shield to Priam compared with the Dog Star; literally thus—

"For this indeed is most splendid, but it was made an evil sign, and brings many a consuming disease to wretched mortals."²¹³ Nothing can be more simple as a description, or more accurate as a simile; which, (says Mr. S.) is thus *finely* translated by Mr. Pope

Terrific Glory! for his burning breath
Taints the *red* air with fevers, plagues, and death!

Now here (not to mention the tremendous bombast) the *Dog Star*, so called, is turned into a *real* Dog, a very odd Dog, a Fire, Fever, Plague, and death-breathing, *red*-air-tainting Dog; and the whole *visual* likeness is lost, while the likeness in the *effects* is rendered absurd by the exaggeration. In Spenser and Fletcher the thought is justifiable; for the images are at least consistent, and it was the intention of the writers to mark the seasons by this allegory of visualized *Puns*.

another line: *Sic vos non*, repeated three times. Augustus declared the true author should be able to complete the three lines; and when Bathyllus was unable to do so, his imposture was discovered. Finally Vergil stepped forward and wrote:

Sic vos non vobis nidificatis aves;
Sic vos non vobis vellera fertis oves;
Sic vos non vobis mellificatis apes:

['So it is that you birds make your nests, but not for your own benefit / So it is that you sheep make your wool, but not for your own benefit / So it is that you bees make your honey, but not for your own benefit']

²⁰⁹ This edition, p. 27. In 1847 this footnote was moved from the end of this chapter to the relevant note. For further discussion of this note, see introduction, p. xxvi.

²¹⁰ *The Faithful Shepherdess* is a John Fletcher play written in 1609, which Coleridge had been reading in an 1811 edition edited by Thomas Seward.

²¹¹ Fletcher, *The Faithful Shepherdess*, 263–7.

²¹² Spenser, *Shepherd's Calendar* (1579) 7:21–4.

²¹³ *Iliad*, 22:30–1.

CHAPTER 3

The author's obligations to critics, and the probable occasion— Principles of modern criticism—Mr. Southey's works and character.

To anonymous critics in reviews, magazines, and news-journals of various name and rank, and to satirists with or without a name in verse or prose, or in verse-text aided by prose-comment, I do seriously believe and profess, that I owe full two-thirds of whatever reputation and publicity I happen to possess. For when the name of an individual has occurred so frequently, in so many works, for so great a length of time, the readers of these works (which with a shelf or two of BEAUTIES, ELEGANT EXTRACTS and ANAS,²¹⁴ form nine-tenths of the reading of the reading public*) cannot but be familiar with the name, without distinctly remembering whether it was

* For as to the devotees of the circulating libraries, I dare not compliment their *pass-time*, or rather *kill-time*, with the name of *reading*. Call it rather a sort of beggarly daydreaming, during which the mind of the dreamer furnishes for itself nothing but laziness, and a little mawkish sensibility; while the whole *matériel* and imagery of the doze is supplied *ab extra*²¹⁵ by a sort of mental *camera obscura*²¹⁶ manufactured at the printing office, which *pro tempore*²¹⁷ fixes, reflects, and transmits the moving phantasms of one man's delirium, so as to people the barrenness of an hundred other brains afflicted with the same trance or suspension of all common sense and all definite purpose. We should therefore transfer this species of

²¹⁴ There was a vogue for such anthologies. The best known were Vicesimus Knox's *Elegant Extracts in Prose* (1784) and *Elegant Extracts or useful and entertaining pieces of Poetry* (1801); but there were many others, including Henry Waylett (ed.), *Beauties of Literature, selected from various authors* (1791); Alexander Campbell (ed.), *The Beauties of Poetry, being Selections from the Most Approved Modern Poets* (1804), and the anonymously edited *Elegant Extracts: Being a Copious Selection of Instructive, Moral and Entertaining Passages from the Most Eminent British Poets* (1812). Jacques Perron's English-language selection from French authors, *The French Anas*, was published in three volumes in 1805.

²¹⁵ 'From outside'.

²¹⁶ 'Camera Obscura, or Dark Chamber, an optical machine or apparatus, representing an artificial eye, by which the images of external objects, received through a double convex glass, are shown distinctly, and in their native colours, on a white ground placed within the machine . . . this machine serves for many useful and entertaining purposes. For example, it is very useful in explaining the nature of vision, representing a kind of artificial eye: it exhibits very diverting spectacles; showing images perfectly like their objects, clothed in their natural colours, but more intense and vivid, and at the same time accompanied with all their motions; an advantage which no art can imitate' (Charles Hutton, *A Philosophical and Mathematical Dictionary* (2 vols, 1815), 1:265).

²¹⁷ 'For the time being'.

introduced for eulogy or for censure. And this becomes the more likely, if (as I believe) the habit of perusing periodical works may be properly added to Averrhoe's* catalogue of ANTI-MNEMONICS, or weakeners of the memory. But where this has not been the case, yet the reader will be apt to suspect that there must be something more than usually strong and extensive in a reputation, that could either require or stand so merciless and long-continued a cannonading. Without any feeling of *anger* therefore (for which indeed, on my own account, I have no pretext) I may yet be allowed to express some degree of *surprize*, that, after having run the critical gauntlet for a certain class of faults which I *had*, nothing having come before the judgement-seat in the interim, I should, year after year, quarter after quarter, month after month (not to mention sundry petty periodicals of still quicker revolution, "or weekly or diurnal")²¹⁸ have

amusement (if indeed those can be said to retire *a musis*,²¹⁹ who were never in their company, or relaxation be attributable to those, whose bows are never bent) from the genus, *reading*, to that comprehensive class characterized by the power of reconciling the two contrary yet co-existing propensities of human nature, namely, indulgence of sloth, and hatred of vacancy. In addition to novels and tales of chivalry in prose or rhyme, (by which last I mean neither rhythm nor metre) this genus comprizes as its species, gaming, swinging, or swaying on a chair or gate; spitting over a bridge; smoking; snuff-taking; tete a tete quarrels after dinner between husband and wife; conning word by word all the advertisements of the daily advertizer in a public house on a rainy day, &c. &c. &c.

* Ex. gr. *Pediculos e capillis excerptos in arenam jacere incontusos*,²²⁰ eating of unripe fruit; gazing on the clouds, and (in genere)²²¹ on moveable things suspended in the air; riding among a multitude of camels; frequent laughter; listening to a series of jests and humorous anecdotes, as when (so to modernize the learned Saracen's meaning) one man's droll story of an Irishman inevitably occasions another's droll story of a Scotchman, which again by the same sort of conjunction disjunctive leads to some *etourderie*²²² of a Welchman, and that again to some sly hit of a Yorkshireman; the habit of reading tombstones in church-yards, &c. By the bye, this catalogue, strange as it may appear, is not unsusceptible of a sound psychological commentary.²²³

²¹⁸ 'I shall endeavour to . . . give you the histories and characters of all our Periodical Papers, whether monthly, or weekly, or diurnal' (John Gay, *The Present State of Wit, in a Letter to a Friend in the Country* (1711), 1).

²¹⁹ 'To the muses'.

²²⁰ 'Plucking lice out of the hair and throwing them down without crushing them'.

²²¹ 'In general'.

²²² More properly, 'étourderie': French for 'thoughtless blunder'.

²²³ 'Abū l-Walīd Muḥammad bin 'Aḥmad bin Rušd, known in the European tradition as Averroes (1126–98), was a Spanish philosopher and writer. In fact this catalogue of 'anti-mnemonics' was composed not by Averroes but a different Islamic scholar, Burhan al-Din (1135–97). Coleridge found the passage in Jean-Baptiste de Boyer, Marquis d'Argens, *Kabbalistische Briefe* (8 vols, Danzig, 1773–7), IV:126–7 – a work originally published in French (*Lettres cabalistiques*, 2nd edn (7 vols, 1769)), although Coleridge happened to own the German edition. The passage in question concerns a list of things liable to distract a person from useful memorisation, including the words

been for at least 17 years consecutively dragged forth by them into the foremost ranks of the *proscribed*, and forced to abide the brunt of abuse, for faults directly opposite, and which I certainly had not. How shall I explain this?

Whatever may have been the case with others, I certainly cannot attribute this persecution to personal dislike, or to envy, or to feelings of vindictive animosity. Not to the former, for, with the exception of a very few who are my intimate friends, and were so before they were known as authors, I have had little other acquaintance with literary characters, than what may be implied in an accidental introduction, or casual meeting in a mixt company. And, as far as words and looks can be trusted, I must believe that, even in these instances, I had excited no unfriendly disposition.* Neither by letter, nor in conversation,

* Some years ago, a gentleman, the chief writer and conductor of a celebrated review, distinguished by its hostility to Mr. Southey, spent a day or two at Keswick.²²⁴ That he

‘or cast lice upon the earth without killing them’, a remark Coleridge copied out into his notebooks (*Notebooks*, 3:3750). The Latin is Coleridge’s own.

²²⁴ Francis Jeffrey (1773–1850), editor of the *Edinburgh Review*, a journal far from sympathetic to the ‘Lake School’ of poets. Jeffrey visited Keswick in 1810. Neither the exact phrase ‘the School of whining and hypochondriacal poets that haunt the Lakes’, nor anything like it, appears in the *Edinburgh Review*. When Hazlitt reviewed the *Biographia Literaria* in the *Edinburgh Review*, 27 (1817), 507–12, Jeffrey added a long footnote to the piece defending himself against the charges laid in this footnote. After summarising Coleridge’s various accusations, he says: ‘I do not know that I need say any thing in answer to the first imputation; as I suppose I might lawfully visit and even pay compliments to an ingenious gentleman, whose poetry I was, notwithstanding, obliged to characterize as whining and hypochondriacal; and if I found two or three such gentlemen living together—publishing in the same volume, and adopting the same peculiar style and manner, I conceive I was entitled to hold them up as aiming, de facto, at the formation of a new school,—especially if I gave my reasons and proofs at large for that opinion—although one of them did not agree in that opinion, and had modestly assured me, “that they belonged to no school but that of good sense, confirmed by the long established models of the best times of Greece, Italy and England.” But as Mr C.’s statement is so given, as to convey an imputation of great ingratitude or violation of the laws of hospitality on my part, I shall mention, in a few words, as nearly as I can now recollect them, the circumstances of this famous visit . . . I remember perfectly that he complained a good deal of my coupling his name with theirs in the *Review*, saying, that he had published no verses for a long time, and that his own style was very unlike theirs. I promised that I would take his name out of the firm for the future; and I kept my promise. We spoke too of *Christabel*, and I advised him to publish it; but I did not say it was either the finest poem of the kind, or a fine poem at all . . . As to Mr C.’s letter to me, on our older prose writers, I utterly deny that I borrowed any thing from it, or had it at all in my thoughts, in any review I afterwards wrote: And with regard to the reasons which I am alleged to have assigned for specifying Miss Baillie, and Messrs Southey, Wordsworth and Coleridge, as injudicious imitators of these writers, I must say, in direct terms, that the allegation is totally and absolutely false; and that I never either made any such statement, or could have made it, without as great a violation of truth as of common sense and decency. I cannot, indeed,

have I ever had dispute or controversy beyond the common social interchange of opinions. Nay, where I had reason to suppose my convictions fundamentally different, it has been my habit, and I may add, the impulse of my nature, to assign the grounds of my belief, rather

was, without diminution on this account, treated with every hospitable attention by Mr. Southey and myself, I trust I need not say. But one thing I may venture to notice; that at no period of my life do I remember to have received so many, and such high coloured compliments in so short a space of time. He was likewise circumstantially informed by what series of accidents it had happened, that Mr. Wordsworth, Mr. Southey, and I had become neighbours; and how utterly unfounded was the supposition, that we considered ourselves, as belonging to any common school, but that of good sense confirmed by the long-established models of the best times of Greece, Rome, Italy, and England; and still more groundless the notion, that Mr. Southey (for as to myself I have published so little, and that little, of so little importance, as to make it almost ludicrous to mention my name at all) could have been concerned in the formation of a poetic sect with Mr. Wordsworth, when so many of his works had been published not only previously to any acquaintance between them; but before Mr. Wordsworth himself had written any thing but in a diction ornate, and uniformly sustained; when too the slightest examination will make it evident, that between those and the after writings of Mr. Southey, there exists no other difference than that of a progressive degree of excellence from progressive development of power, and progressive facility from habit and increase of experience. Yet among the first articles which this man wrote after his return from Keswick, we were characterized as “the School of whining and hypochondriacal poets that haunt the Lakes.” In reply to a letter from the same gentleman, in which he had asked me, whether I was in earnest in preferring the style of Hooker to that of Dr. Johnson; and Jeremy Taylor to Burke; I stated, somewhat at large, the comparative excellences and defects which characterized our best prose writers, from the reformation, to the first half of Charles 2nd; and that of those who had flourished during the present reign, and the preceding one. About twelve months afterwards, a review appeared on the same subject,²²⁵ in the concluding paragraph of which the reviewer asserts, that his chief motive for entering into the discussion was to separate a rational and qualified admiration of our elder writers, from the indiscriminate enthusiasm of a recent school, who praised what they did not understand, and caricatured what they were unable to imitate,²²⁶ And, that no doubt might be left concerning the persons alluded to, the writer annexes the names of Miss BAILIE,²²⁷ W. SOUTHEY, WORDSWORTH and COLERIDGE. For that which follows, I have only ear-say evidence; but yet such as demands my belief; viz. that on being questioned concerning this apparently wanton

either remember, or find in the Review, any such passage as Mr C. has here imputed to me—nor indeed can I conjecture what passage he has in view, unless it be one at p. 283 of Vol. XVIII., in which I do not say one word about their praising what they do not understand, or caricaturing what they could not imitate, but merely observe, in the course of a general review of the revolutions in our national taste and poetry, that “Southey, Wordsworth, Coleridge, and Miss Baillie, have all of them copied the manner of our older poets; and, along with this indication of good taste, have given great proofs of original genius.” (509) In their 1847 edition of the *Biographia*, Sara and Henry Nelson Coleridge (presumably for reasons of tact) omitted the whole of Coleridge’s footnote here, thereby effectively taking Jeffrey’s side in the dispute.

²²⁵ ‘*The Dramatic Works of John Ford: With an Introduction and Explanatory Notes.* By Henry Weber’, *Edinburgh Review*, 36 (August 1811), 275–304. The review does not contain the sentiments Coleridge here recounts.

²²⁶ There are various errors of punctuation, as here, in Coleridge’s text.

²²⁷ Joanna Baillie (1762–1851), Scottish poet and playwright.

than the belief itself; and not to express dissent, till I could establish some points of complete sympathy, some grounds common to both sides, from which to commence its explanation.

Still less can I place these attacks to the charge of envy. The few pages which I have published, are of too distant a date, and the extent of their sale a proof too conclusive against their having been popular at any time, to render probable, I had almost said possible, the excitement of envy on *their* account; and the man who should envy me on any *other*, verily he must be *envy-mad!*

Lastly, with as little semblance of reason, could I suspect any animosity towards me from vindictive feelings as the cause. I have before said, that my acquaintance with literary men has been limited and distant; and that I have had neither dispute nor controversy. From my first entrance into life, I have, with few and short intervals, lived either abroad or in retirement. My different essays on subjects of national interest, published at different times, first in the Morning Post and then in the Courier, with my courses of Lectures on the principles of criticism as applied to Shakspeare and Milton, constitute my whole publicity; the only occasions on which I *could* offend any member of the republic of letters.²²⁸ With one solitary exception in which my words were first misstated and then wantonly applied to an individual, I could never learn that I had excited the displeasure

that this lady when at Edinburgh had declined a proposal of introducing him to her; that Mr. Southey had written against him; and Mr. Wordsworth had talked contemptuously of him; but that as to *Coleridge* he had noticed him merely because the names of Southey and Wordsworth and Coleridge always went together. But if it were worth while to mix together, as ingredients, half the anecdotes which I either myself know to be true, or which I have received from men incapable of intentional falsehood, concerning the characters, qualifications, and motives of our anonymous critics, whose decisions are oracles for our reading public; I might safely borrow the words of the apocryphal Daniel; “*Give me leave, O SOVEREIGN PUBLIC, and I shall slay this dragon without sword or staff.*” For the compound would be as the “*Pitch, and fat, and hair, which Daniel took, and did seethe them together, and made lumps thereof, and put into the dragon’s mouth, and so the dragon burst in sunder; and Daniel said LO; THESE ARE THE GODS YE WORSHIP.*”²²⁹

²²⁸ Deliberately or otherwise, Coleridge underplays his published output. In addition to the *Lectures on Literature and Essays on his Times* mentioned here, he also during this period delivered the 1795 *Lectures on Politics and Religion* and published, among others, *The Plot Discovered* (1796), *The Watchman* (1796), *The Friend* (1809–10) and *Remorse* (1813).

²²⁹ From the apocryphal ‘Additions to Daniel’, specifically the addition known as ‘Bel and the Dragon’ (14:23–30), which concerns ‘a great Dragon, which they of Babylon worshiped’. Daniel declares the idol a beast not a god, and promises to slay it ‘without sword or staff’ as Coleridge quotes (although, of course, in place of the reference to the ‘sovereign public’, Daniel says ‘O King’). He does this by baking pitch, fat and hair into matzo-cakes, which the dragon eats and which in turn cause him to burst open.

of any among my literary contemporaries. Having announced my intention to give a course of lectures on the characteristic merits and defects of English poetry in its different æras; first, from Chaucer to Milton; second, from Dryden inclusively to Thomson; and third, from Cowper to the present day; I changed my plan, and confined my disquisition to the two former æras, that I might furnish no possible pretext for the unthinking to misconstrue, or the malignant to misapply my words, and having stamp't their own meaning on them, to pass them as current coin in the marts of garrulity or detraction.²³⁰

Praises of the unworthy are felt by ardent minds as robberies of the deserving; and it is too true, and too frequent, that Bacon, Harrington, Machiavel, and Spinoza, are *not* read, because Hume, Condilliac, and Voltaire *are*.²³¹ But in promiscuous company no prudent man will oppugn the merits of a contemporary in his own supposed department; contenting himself with praising in his turn those whom *he* deems excellent. If I should ever deem it my duty at all to oppose the pretensions of individuals, I would oppose them in books which could be weighed and answered, in which I could evolve the whole of my reasons and feelings, with their requisite limits and modifications; not in irrecoverable conversation, where however strong the reasons might be, the feelings that prompted them would assuredly be attributed by some one or other to envy and discontent. Besides I well know, and I trust, have acted on that knowledge, that it must be the ignorant and injudicious who extol the unworthy; and the eulogies of critics without taste or judgement are the natural reward of authors without feeling or genius. “Sint unicuique sua premia.”²³²

²³⁰ Coleridge's lecture series of 1808 was (according to a letter he wrote to Humphrey Davy, 9 Sept 1807; Griggs, *Collected Letters*, 3:30) originally going to discuss 'Modern Poetry', until Coleridge changed his mind.

²³¹ (1) Sir Francis Bacon (1561–1626); (2) James Harrington (1611–77), whose *Commonwealth of Oceana* (1656) is a speculative utopia including many specific proposals for constitutional reform that chimed with radical thinkers in 1790s and 1800s Britain; (3) Italian political theorist, Niccolò di Bernardo dei Machiavelli (1469–1527); (4) Dutch philosopher, Baruch Spinoza (1632–77); (5) Scottish philosopher, David Hume (1711–76); French philosopher, Étienne Bonnot de Condillac (1715–80); (6) the celebrated French writer and thinker, François-Marie Arouet (1694–1778), better known by his pen name Voltaire. Coleridge's point of 'unread worthies' versus 'read unworthies' has as much to do with the more recent generation to which the latter belonged as with their intrinsic merits.

²³² 'Let each be rewarded according to his merits.' Engell and Bate think this 'proverbial', but though the sentiment doubtless is, I can't find it anywhere in this form. Perhaps Coleridge had in mind: 'ut unicuique secundum opera sua fiat retributio . . . et praemia' ['let it be done to everyone according as their work shall be paid back . . . and rewarded] (Lorenzo Altieri, *Elementa philosophiae in adolescentium usum* ['Elements of philosophy for the use of the young'] (1796), 280).

How then, dismissing, as I do, these three causes, am I to account for attacks, the long continuance and inveteracy of which it would require all three to explain. The solution may seem to have been given, or at least suggested, in a note to a preceding page. *I was in habits of intimacy with Mr. Wordsworth and Mr. Southey!* This, however, transfers, rather than removes, the difficulty. Be it, that by an unconscionable extension of the old adage, “noscitur a socio”²³³ my literary friends are never under the water-fall of criticism, but I must be wet through with the spray; yet how came the torrent to descend upon *them*?

First then, with regard to Mr. Southey. I well remember the general reception of his earlier publications; viz. the poems published with Mr. Lovell under the names of Moschus and Bion; the two volumes of poems under his own name, and the Joan of Arc.²³⁴ The censures of the critics by profession are extant, and may be easily referred to:—careless lines, inequality in the merit of the different poems, and (in the lighter works) a predilection for the strange and whimsical; in short, such faults as might have been anticipated in a young and rapid writer, were indeed sufficiently enforced. Nor was there at that time wanting a party spirit to aggravate the defects of a poet, who with all the courage of uncorrupted youth had avowed his zeal for a cause, which he deemed that of liberty, and his abhorrence of oppression by whatever name consecrated. But it was as little objected by others, as dreamt of by the poet himself, that he *preferred* careless and prosaic lines on rule and of forethought, or indeed that he pretended to any other art or theory of poetic diction, except that which we may all learn from Horace, Quintilian, the admirable dialogue de Causis Corruptæ Eloquentiæ, or Strada’s Prolusions;²³⁵ if indeed natural good

²³³ ‘You may know him by the company he keeps.’

²³⁴ The three volumes mentioned here are: (1) *Poems: containing the retrospect, odes, elegies, sonnets, &c* By Robert Lovell, and Robert Southey (1795), in which individual poems were identified by the pseudonyms of the two ancient Greek pastoral poets, as the preface noted ‘the signature of Bion distinguishes the pieces of R. SOUTHEY;—Moschus, R. LOVELL’; (2) *Poems, by Robert Southey* (vol. 1: 1797, vol. 2: 1799); (3) *Joan of Arc, by Robert Southey* (1796).

²³⁵ A selection of works of ancient literary criticism. Horace’s *Ars Poetica* [‘The Art of Poetry’] (also known as *Epistula Ad Pisones*, c.18 BC) was a treatise on poetics; Quintilian (Marcus Fabius Quintilianus) wrote a twelve-volume guidebook on rhetoric and good style, called *Institutio Oratoria* (c.AD 95); *De Causis Corruptæ Eloquentiæ* [‘On the causes of corruption in rhetoric’] (c.100) is an anonymous dialogue, at one time attributed to Quintilian, but more often thought to have been written by Tacitus. The last text mentioned here is a little more obscure: Italian Jesuit rhetorician Famianus Strada’s *Prolusiones academicae, oratoriae, historicae, poeticae &c.* (1619). It is possible that Coleridge is thinking of a Joseph Addison article in *The Guardian* called ‘From Strada’s Prolusions. Paper 1, no 115’, reprinted in Anna Laetitia Barbauld’s *Selections from the Spectator, Tatler, Guardian and Freeholder* (3 vols, 1804), III:283. It starts with a passage that reads almost

sense and the early study of the best models in his own language had not infused the same maxims more securely, and, if I may venture the expression, more vitally. All that could have been fairly deduced was, that in his taste and estimation of writers Mr. Southey agreed far more with Warton, than with Johnson. Nor do I mean to deny, that at all times Mr. Southey was of the same mind with Sir Philip Sidney in preferring an excellent ballad in the *humblest* style of poetry to twenty indifferent poems that strutted in the *highest*.²³⁶ And by what have his works, published since then, been characterized, each more strikingly than the preceding, but by greater splendor, a deeper pathos, profounder reflections, and a more sustained dignity of language and of metre?²³⁷ Distant may the period be, but whenever the time shall come, when all his works shall be collected by some editor worthy to be his biographer, I trust that an excerpta of all the passages, in which his writings, name, and character have been attacked, from the pamphlets and periodical works of the last twenty years, may be an accompaniment. Yet that it would prove medicinal in after times, I dare not hope; for as long as there are readers to be delighted with calumny, there will be found reviewers to calumniate. And such readers will become in all probability more numerous, in proportion as a still greater diffusion of literature shall produce an increase of sciolists, and sciolism²³⁸ bring with it petulance and presumption. In

like a *précis* of the *Biographia's* larger thesis: 'The greatest critics among the antients are those who have the most excelled in all other kinds of composition, and have shown the height of good writing even in the precepts which they have given for it. Among the moderns likewise no critic has ever pleased, or been looked upon as authentic, who did not show by his practice that he was a master of the theory.'

²³⁶ Thomas Warton (1728–90), Oxford Professor of Poetry in the 1750s and author of *The History of English Poetry* (1774–81), championed Spenser and the Elizabethans. Samuel Johnson (1709–84) proposed a more classical model for English writing. The passage from Philip Sidney's *An Apologie for Poetry* (1595) that Coleridge probably has in mind is: 'Certainly I must confess mine own barbarousness; I never heard the old song of Percie and Douglas that I found not my heart moved more than with a trumpet; and yet it is sung but by some blind crowder, with no rougher voice than rude style; which being so evil apparelled in the dust and cobwebs of that uncivil age, what would it work, trimmed in the gorgeous eloquence of Pindar?'

²³⁷ Coleridge has in mind Southey's four great epics, or poetic romances: *Thalaba the Destroyer* (1801), *Madoc* (1805), *The Curse of Kehama* (1810) and *Roderick, Last of the Goths* (1814).

²³⁸ The *OED* (citing this usage by Coleridge as its earliest example) defines this word as 'pretentious superficiality of knowledge'; but it's unlikely this is what Coleridge himself had in mind. The Latin word he is adapting, *sciolus*, means more neutrally 'somebody who knows, who has knowledge' (what we might call 'an expert'), from the verb *scio* 'to understand, to know'. The point here is presumably that an increasing number of experts in literature (as it might be: critics and reviewers) will tend to produce greater degrees of hubris in the experts themselves. It might be added that, after Coleridge's usage here, the word came to mean 'a mere superficial show of knowledge'.

times of old, books were as religious oracles; as literature advanced, they next became venerable preceptors; they then descended to the rank of instructive friends; and, as their numbers increased, they sunk still lower to that of entertaining companions; and at present they seem degraded into culprits to hold up their hands at the bar of every self-elected, yet not the less peremptory, judge, who chuses to write from humour or interest, from enmity or arrogance, and to abide the decision (in the words of Jeremy Taylor) “of him that reads in malice, or him that reads after dinner.”²³⁹

The same gradual retrograde movement may be traced, in the relation which the authors themselves have assumed towards their readers. From the lofty address of Bacon: “these are the meditations of Francis of Verulam, which that posterity should be possessed of, he deemed *their* interest:”²⁴⁰ or from dedication to Monarch or Pontiff, in which the honor given was asserted in equipoise to the patronage acknowledged: from PINDAR’S

—ἐπ’ ἄλλοι-
 σι δ’ ἄλλοι μεγάλοι. τὸ δ’ ἔσχατον κορυ-
 φούται βασιλεύσι. μηκέτι
 Πάπταινε πόρσιον.
 Εἴη σέ τε τούτον
 Ὑψοῦ χρόνον πατεῖν, ἐμέ
 Τε τοσσάδε νικαφόροις
 Ὅμιλεῖν, πρόφαντον σοφίαν καθ’ Ἑλ-
 λανας ἐόντα παντᾶ.

OLYMP. OD. I.²⁴¹

²³⁹ Jeremy Taylor (1613–67), English cleric and theological writer, known as ‘the Shakespeare of Divines’ on account of his prose style. Coleridge quotes from Taylor’s ‘General Dedication to the Polemical Discourses’ (attached to the publication in volume form of *Symbolon Theologikon: Or a Collection of Polemicall Discourses: Wherein the Church of England, in Its Worst as Well as More Flourishing Condition, is Defended in Many Material Points, Against the Attempts of the Papists on One Hand, and the Fanaticks on the Other*, 1657). This is a preface addressed to his patron, Lord Hatton, complaining that ‘men . . . give their sentence upon books, not only before they understand all, not only before they read all, but before they read three pages, receiving their information from humour or interest, from chance or mistake, from him that reads in malice, or from him that reads after dinner.’

²⁴⁰ Coleridge translates from the Latin of the ‘prooemium’ to Bacon’s *Instauratio Magna* [‘Great Instauration’] (1620): ‘Franciscus de Verulamio sic cogitavit, talemque apud se rationem instituit; quem viventibus et posteris notam fieri, ipsorum interesse putavit.’ His point is to emphasise the ‘ipsorum interesse’ [‘for their own intrinsic interest’] part.

²⁴¹ The Greek lines quoted are the last four lines of Pindar’s first Olympian Ode, composed in praise of Hieron of Syracuse, the winner of the Single Horse Race at the 476 BC Olympic games. The Greek means: ‘Some men achieve greatness in one area, others in another; but the peak of the highest limit is kings. Do not set your eyes any

there was a gradual sinking in the etiquette or allowed style of pretension.²⁴²

Poets and Philosophers, rendered diffident by their very number, addressed themselves to “*learned* readers;” then aimed to conciliate the graces of “the *candid* reader;” till, the critic still rising as the author sunk, the amateurs of literature collectively were erected into a municipality of judges, and addressed as THE TOWN!²⁴³ And now finally, all men being supposed able to read, and all readers able to judge, the multitudinous PUBLIC, shaped into personal unity by the magic of abstraction, sits nominal despot on the throne of criticism. But, alas! as in other despotisms, it but echoes the decisions of its invisible ministers, whose intellectual claims to the guardianship of the muses seem, for the greater part, analogous to the physical qualifications which adapt their oriental brethren for the superintendence of the Harem. Thus it is said, that St. Nepomuc was installed the guardian of bridges because he had fallen over one, and sunk out of sight; thus too St. Cecilia is said to have been first propitiated by musicians, because having failed in her own attempts, she had taken a dislike to the art and all its successful professors.²⁴⁴ But I shall probably have occasion hereafter to deliver my convictions more at large concerning this state of things, and its influences on taste, genius and morality.

higher than that! May it be your fate to walk on high all the days of your life, and may it be mine to associate with victorious people as long as I live, celebrated for my skill among Greek-speaking peoples everywhere.’

²⁴² This sentence (‘there was . . . style of pretension’) does not appear in the first edition; but Coleridge noted that he wanted it added in a letter to Basil Montagu of 1 May 1827 (Griggs, *Collected Letters*, 6:675).

²⁴³ Sixteenth-century poet George Gascoigne wrote ‘I esteeme more the prayse of one learned Reader, than I regard the curious carping of ten thousande unlettered tattlers’ (*Epistle to the Reverend Divines* (1575)). Late seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century authors often dedicated books ‘to the candid reader’ (for example: Isaac Sharpe’s *An Appeal to the Clergy of the Church of England to the Bishops* (1708) opens with an address ‘To the Candid Reader’; and clergyman-author Philip Skelton published *The Candid Reader, Or, a Modest . . . Apology for All Books that Ever Were, Or Possibly Can be Wrote* (1744)). Dedicating or commending a book ‘to the town’ was also fairly common practice – for example, Addison’s play *Drummer, or the Haunted House* (1714) opens its preface with: ‘Having recommended this Play to the town, and delivered the copy of it to the book-seller, I think myself obliged to give some account of it’.

²⁴⁴ John of Nepomuk, also known as John Nepomucene (c.1345–93) is a Czech Christian martyr, drowned in the Vltava river on the orders of King Wenceslaus because he refused to reveal what the Queen said to him in the confessional. The irony of his subsequent position as the patron saint of bridges is widely remarked in eighteenth-century writing. Saint Cecilia is the patron saint of musicians and church music, not because (as Coleridge suggests) of her ineptitude, but because as she was dying she sang to God. Indeed, so far from disliking music, devotional representations of her almost always show her playing an organ, or otherwise connected with musical instruments. She was martyred either in the late first or early second century AD.

In the “Thalaba” the “Madoc” and still more evidently in the unique* “Cid,” in the “Kehama,” and, as last, so best, the “Don Roderick;” Southey has given abundant proof, “se cogitâsse quàm sit magnum dare aliquid in manus hominum: nec persuadere sibi posse, non sæpe tractandum quod placere et semper et omnibus cupiat.” Plin. Ep. Lib. 7. Ep 17.²⁴⁵ But on the other hand I guess, that Mr. Southey was quite unable to comprehend, wherein could consist the crime or mischief of printing half a dozen or more playful poems; or to speak more generally, compositions which would be enjoyed or passed over, according as the taste and humour of the reader might chance to be; provided they contained nothing immoral. In the present age “periturae parcere chartae”²⁴⁶ is emphatically an unreasonable demand. The merest trifle, he ever sent abroad had, tenfold better claims to its ink and paper than all the silly criticisms, which proved no more, than that the critic was not one of those, for whom the trifle was written; and than all the grave exhortations to a greater reverence for the public. As if the passive page of a book, by having an epigram or doggrel tale impressed on it, instantly assumed at once loco-motive power and a sort of ubiquity, so as to flutter and buz in the ear of the public to the sore annoyance of the said mysterious personage. But what gives an additional and more ludicrous absurdity to these lamentations is the curious fact, that if in a volume of poetry the critic should find poem or passage which he deems more especially worthless, he is sure to select and reprint it in the review;

* I have ventured to call it “unique”; not only because I know no work of the kind in our language, (if we except a few chapters of the old translation of Froissart)²⁴⁵ none, which uniting the charms of romance and history, keeps the imagination so constantly on the wing, and yet leaves so much for after reflection; but likewise, and chiefly, because it is a compilation, which, in the various excellencies of translation, selection, and arrangement, required and proves greater genius in the compiler, as living in the present state of society, than in the original composers.

²⁴⁵ Coleridge has adapted a phrase (changing it from the first to the third person) from Pliny the Younger’s Letters (7:17). Here is William Melmoth’s translation (from *The Letters of Pliny the Consul*, 1746): ‘I reflect [Coleridge changes this to ‘he reflects to himself’] what an arduous adventure it is to resign any work into the hands of the public; and I [changed to ‘he’] cannot but be persuaded, that frequent revisals, and many consultations, must go to the finishing of a performance, which one desires should universally and for ever please.’

²⁴⁶ From Juvenal’s first *Satire* (1:17–18): ‘stulta est clementia, cum tot ubique / uatibus occurras, periturae parcere chartae’: ‘it’s a foolish mercy, when there are so many poets thronging about, to spare the paper they’re so eager to waste’.

²⁴⁷ Jean Froissart, the fourteenth-century French historian. His *Chronicles* (1373–1400), an account of the Hundred Years War, was used as a source by Shakespeare, and many others. The ‘old translation’ is the one by Sir John Bouchier, Lord Berners, published in stages between 1467 and 1533.

by which, on his own grounds, he wastes as much more paper than the author, as the copies of a fashionable review are more numerous than those of the original book; in some, and those the most prominent instances, as ten thousand to five hundred. I know nothing that surpasses the vileness of deciding on the merits of a poet or painter (not by characteristic defects; for where there is genius, *these* always point to his characteristic *beauties*; but) by accidental failures or faulty passages; except the impudence of defending it, as the proper duty, and most instructive part, of criticism. Omit or pass slightly over, the expression, grace, and grouping of Raphael's *figures*; but ridicule in *detail* the knitting-needles and broom-twigs, that are to represent trees in his back grounds; and never let him hear the last of his *galli-pots*!²⁴⁸ Admit that the *Allegro* and *Penseroso* of Milton are not *without merit*; but repay yourself for this concession, by reprinting at length the *two poems on the University Carrier*! As a fair specimen of his Sonnets, quote "*a Book was writ of late called Tetrachordon*;" and, as characteristic of his rhythm and metre, cite his literal translation of the first and second psalm!²⁴⁹ In order to justify yourself, you need only assert, that had you dwelt chiefly on the beauties and excellencies of the poet, the admiration of these might seduce the attention of future writers from the objects of their love and wonder, to an imitation of the few poems and passages in which the poet was most unlike himself.

But till reviews are conducted on far other principles, and with far other motives; till in the place of arbitrary dictation and petulant sneers, the reviewers support their decisions by reference to fixed canons of criticism, previously established and deduced from the nature of man; reflecting minds will pronounce it arrogance in them thus to announce themselves to men of letters, as the guides of their taste and judgment. To the purchaser and mere reader it is, at all events, an injustice. He who tells me that there are *defects* in a new

²⁴⁸ Small bowls.

²⁴⁹ Coleridge's point here is to take as an example a poet universally acknowledged as great (John Milton, 1608–74) in order to hypothecate a reviewer who would skate over Milton's masterpieces, *L'Allegro* and *Il Penseroso* (both 1631), and concentrate instead upon minor pieces including (1) 'On the University Carrier [Hobson's Epitaph]' (from *Poems*, 1645), (2) 'Sonnet XI: On The Detraction Which Followed Upon The Writing of Certain Treatises' (1646: this is the poem beginning 'a Book was writ of late called Tetrachordon'), and (3) the rheumatic rhythm and metre of Milton's verse paraphrase of the psalms. A example of this latter, his version of Psalm 1, begins:

Bless'd is the man who hath not walk'd astray
 In counsel of the wicked, and ith' way
 Of sinners hath not stood, and in the seat
 Of scorners hath not sat.

work, tells me nothing which I should not have taken for granted without his information. But he, who points out and elucidates the *beauties* of an original work, does indeed give me interesting information, such as experience would not have authorised me in anticipating. And as to compositions which the authors themselves announce with “Hæc ipsi novimus esse nihil”,²⁵⁰ why should we judge by a different rule two printed works, only because the one author is alive, and the other in his grave? What literary man has not regretted the prudery of Spratt in refusing to let his friend Cowley appear in his slippers and dressing gown?²⁵¹ I am not perhaps the only one who has derived an innocent amusement from the riddles, conundrums, tri-syllable lines, &c. &c. of Swift and his correspondents, in hours of languor when to have read his more finished works would have been useless to myself, and, in some sort, an act of injustice to the author. But I am at a loss to conceive by what perversity of judgement, these relaxations of his genius could be employed to diminish his fame as the writer of “Gulliver’s travels”, and the “Tale of a Tub.” Had Mr. Southey written twice as many poems of inferior merit, or partial interest, as have enlivened the journals of the day, they would have added to his honour with good and wise men, not merely or principally as proving the versatility of his talents, but as evidences of the purity of that mind, which even in its levities never wrote a line, which it need regret on any moral account.

I have in imagination transferred to the future biographer the duty of contrasting Southey’s fixed and well-earned fame, with the abuse and indefatigable hostility of his anonymous critics from his early youth to his ripest manhood. But I cannot think so ill of human nature as not to believe, that these critics have already taken shame to themselves, whether they consider the object of their abuse in his moral or his literary character. For reflect but on the variety and extent of his acquirements! He stands second to no man, either as an

²⁵⁰ ‘Thus we knew that these things amount to nothing.’ The original, from Roman poet Martial (13:2), is ‘nos hæc novimus esse nihil’, which means ‘we ourselves knew that these things amount to nothing’. This Latin tag is fairly widely quoted in the eighteenth century (for example, Gay used it as the epigraph to *The Beggar’s Opera*).

²⁵¹ Abraham Cowley (1618–67) was an English poet of Royalist sympathies, very popular in the eighteenth century. Thomas Spratt (1635–1713) published his biography in 1668. To quote from Spratt’s entry in the *Dictionary of National Biography*: ‘In 1667 Spratt’s friend Cowley died, and next year he wrote “An Account of the Life of Mr. Abr. Cowley” . . . Johnson justly spoke of the biography as “a funeral oration rather than a history,” a character, not a life, with its few facts “confused and enlarged through the mist of panegyrick.” Clifford and Spratt possessed many of Cowley’s letters, which were full of charm; but they would not publish them.’

historian or as a bibliographer; and when I regard him as a popular essayist, (for the articles of his compositions in the reviews are, for the greater part, essays on subjects of deep or curious interest rather than criticisms on particular works*) I look in vain for any writer, who has conveyed so much information, from so many and such recondite sources, with so many just and original reflections, in a style so lively and poignant, yet so uniformly classical and perspicuous; no one in short who has combined so much wisdom with so much wit; so much truth and knowledge with so much life and fancy. His prose is always intelligible and always entertaining. In poetry he has attempted almost every species of composition known before, and he has added new ones; and if we except the highest lyric, (in which how few, how very few even of the greatest minds have been fortunate) he has attempted every species successfully; from the political song of the day, thrown off in the playful overflow of honest joy and patriotic exultation, to the wild ballad;** from epistolary ease and graceful narrative, to austere and impetuous moral declamation; from the pastoral claims²⁵² and wild streaming lights of the “Thalaba,” in which sentiment and imagery have given permanence even to the excitement of curiosity; and from the full blaze of the “Kehama,” (a gallery of finished pictures in one splendid fancy piece, in which, notwithstanding, the moral grandeur rises gradually above the brilliance of the colouring and the boldness and novelty of the machinery) to the more sober beauties of

* See the articles on Methodism, in the *Quarterly Review*; the small volume on the *New System of Education*, &c.²⁵³

** See the incomparable “Return to Moscow” and the “Old Woman of Berkeley.”²⁵⁴

²⁵² The 1847 *Biographia* alters this to ‘charms’; subsequent editions usually follow that emendation.

²⁵³ Coleridge is thinking of Southey’s article, ‘On The Evangelical Sects’, *Quarterly Review*, 4 (1810), 480–515 – a review of *Hints to the Public and the Legislature, on the Nature and Effect of Evangelical Preaching* (4 vols, 1808–10) by ‘A Barrister’ – as well as of Southey’s 200-page *The origin, nature, and object, of the new system of education* (1812). A flavour of Southey’s *Quarterly* review suggests how swingeing it is: ‘So far as the immediate sale of a book may be considered as the measure of its success, the Barrister has been a successful writer. Four editions have been printed of his first pamphlet, and the whole extends to four parts,—it might as well reach to forty, so utterly does it set all order at defiance. Want of arrangement, however, is the least of this writer’s faults. The opinions which we hold, concerning the evangelical sects have been already avowed, and will, in the course of this article, be sufficiently explained: but our agreement with the Barrister, in some points, has not prevented us from perusing his book with astonishment and indignation at its ignorance, its calumnious misrepresentations, and its impudent call upon the legislature . . . the Barrister is a libeller, a rank and convicted libeller.’ (Southey, *Quarterly Review*, 4 (1810), 481–4)

²⁵⁴ ‘The March to Moscow’ (1814) and ‘The Old Woman of Berkeley’ (1799).

the “Madoc;” and lastly, from the Madoc to his “Roderic,” in which, retaining all his former excellencies of a poet eminently inventive and picturesque, he has surpassed himself in language and metre, in the construction of the whole, and in the splendor of particular passages.

Here then shall I conclude? No! The characters of the deceased, like the encomia on tombstones, as they are described with religious tenderness, so are they read, with allowing sympathy indeed, but yet with rational deduction. There are men, who deserve a higher record; men with whose characters it is the interest of their contemporaries, no less than that of posterity, to be made acquainted; while it is yet possible for impartial censure, and even for quick-sighted envy, to cross-examine the tale without offence to the courtesies of humanity; and while the eulogist, detected in exaggeration or falsehood, must pay the full penalty of his baseness in the contempt which brands the convicted flatterer. Publicly has Mr. Southey been reviled by men, who (I would fain hope for the honor of human nature) hurled fire-brands against a figure of their own imagination; publicly have his talents been depreciated, his principles denounced; as publicly do I therefore, who have known him intimately, deem it my duty to leave recorded, that it is SOUTHEY’S almost unexampled felicity, to possess the best gifts of talent and genius free from all their characteristic defects. To those who remember the state of our public schools and universities some twenty years past, it will appear no ordinary praise in any man to have passed from innocence into virtue, not only free from all vicious habit, but unstained by one act of intemperance, or the degradations akin to intemperance. That scheme of head, heart, and habitual demeanour, which in his early manhood, and first controversial writings, Milton, claiming the privilege of self-defence, asserts of himself, and challenges his calumniators to disprove;²⁵⁵ this will his school-mates, his fellow-collegians, and his maturer friends, with a confidence proportioned to the intimacy of their knowledge, bear witness to, as again realized in the life of Robert Southey. But still more striking to those, who by biography or by their own experience

²⁵⁵ ‘Be persuaded that I am not one who ever disgraced beauty of sentiment by deformity of conduct, or the maxims of a free-man by the actions of a slave; and that the whole tenor of my life has, by the grace of God, hitherto been unsullied by enormity or crime. Next that those illustrious worthies, who are the objects of my praise, may know that nothing could afflict me with more shame than to have any vices of mine diminish the force or lessen the value of my panegyric upon them; and lastly, that the people of England, whom fate, or duty, or their own virtues, have incited me to defend, may be convinced from the purity and integrity of my life, that my defence, if it do not redound to their honour, can never be considered as their disgrace.’ (John Milton, *Second Defence of the People of England* (1653))

are familiar with the general habits of genius, will appear the poet's matchless industry and perseverance in his pursuits; the worthiness and dignity of those pursuits; his generous submission to tasks of transitory interest, or such as *his* genius alone could make otherwise; and that having thus more than satisfied the claims of affection or prudence, he should yet have made for himself time and power, to achieve more, and in more various departments, than almost any other writer has done, though employed wholly on subjects of his own choice and ambition. But as Southey possesses, and is not possessed by, his genius, even so is he master even of his virtues. The regular and methodical tenor of his daily labours, which would be deemed rare in the most mechanical pursuits, and might be envied by the mere man of business, loses all semblance of formality in the dignified simplicity of his manners, in the spring and healthful cheerfulness of his spirits. Always employed, his friends find him always at leisure. No less punctual in trifles, than steadfast in the performance of highest duties, he inflicts none of those small pains and discomforts which irregular men scatter about them, and which in the aggregate so often become formidable obstacles both to happiness and utility; while on the contrary he bestows all the pleasures, and inspires all that ease of mind on those around him or connected with him, which perfect consistency, and (if such a word might be framed) absolute *reliability*, equally in small as in great concerns, cannot but inspire and bestow: when this too is softened without being weakened by kindness and gentleness. I know few men who so well deserve the character which an antient attributes to Marcus Cato, namely, that he was likest virtue, in as much as he seemed to act aright, not in obedience to any law or outward motive, but by the necessity of a happy nature, which could not act otherwise.²⁵⁶ As son, brother, husband, father, master, friend, he moves with firm yet light steps, alike unostentatious, and alike exemplary. As a writer, he has uniformly made his talents subservient to the best interests of humanity, of public virtue, and domestic piety; his cause has ever been the cause of pure religion and of liberty, of national independence and of national illumination. When future critics shall weigh out his guerdon of praise and censure, it will be Southey the poet only, that will supply them with the scanty materials

²⁵⁶ Marcus Porcius Cato (95–46 BC), known as Cato the Younger to distinguish him from his great-grandfather Cato the Elder: Roman politician and opponent of Julius Caesar, whose name is a byword for Stoic moral integrity, and distaste for political and moral corruption. Coleridge here adapts the judgement of contemporary Roman historian Velleius Paterculus, who called Cato *homo virtuti simillimus*, 'the man who most resembled Virtue' (*Velleius Paterculus Historiarum Libri Duo*, 2.35.2).

for the latter. They will likewise not fail to record, that as no man was ever a more constant friend, never had poet more friends and honorers among the good of all parties; and that quacks in education, quacks in politics, and quacks in criticism were his only enemies.*

* It is not easy to estimate the effects which the example of a young man as highly distinguished for strict purity of disposition and conduct, as for intellectual power and literary acquirements, may produce on those of the same age with himself, especially on those of similar pursuits and congenial minds.²⁵⁷ For many years, my opportunities of intercourse with Mr. Southey have been rare, and at long intervals; but I dwell with unabated pleasure on the strong and sudden, yet I trust not fleeting, influence, which my moral being underwent on my acquaintance with him at Oxford, whither I had gone at the commencement of our Cambridge vacation on a visit to an old school-fellow. Not indeed on my moral or religious principles, for *they* had never been contaminated; but in awakening the sense of the duty and dignity of making my actions accord with those principles, both in word and deed. The irregularities only not universal among the young men of my standing, which I always *knew* to be *wrong*, I then learned to feel as *degrading*; learnt to know that an opposite conduct, which was at that time considered by us as the easy virtue of cold and selfish prudence, might originate in the noblest emotions, in views the most disinterested and imaginative. It is not however from grateful recollections only, that I have been impelled thus to leave these my deliberate sentiments on record; but in some sense as a debt of justice to the man, whose name has been so often connected with mine for evil to which he is a stranger. As a specimen I subjoin part of a note, from “The Beauties of the Anti-jacobin,” in which, having previously informed the public that I had been dishonoured at Cambridge for preaching Deism, at a time when, for my youthful ardour in defence of Christianity, I was decried as a bigot by the proselytes of French Phi-(or to speak more truly Psi)-losophy,²⁵⁸ the writer concludes with these words; “since this time he has left his native country, commenced citizen of the world, *left his poor children fatherless, and his wife destitute. Ex his disce*²⁵⁹ *his friends, LAMB and SOUTHEY.*” With severest truth it may be asserted, that it would not be easy to select two men more exemplary

²⁵⁷ Much of this note originally appeared in the second number of *The Friend* (8 June 1809), responding to attacks on Coleridge, along with the other ‘Lakers’, in Canning’s reactionary newspaper *The Anti-Jacobin* back in the 1790s. The hurt had been so stinging that at the time he had contemplated writing a satire called *Canning and the Anti-Jacobins*; in the event, though, he waited ten years and published this paragraph, later reproducing it in the *Biographia* half a decade later.

²⁵⁸ ‘Phi-(or to speak more truly Psi)-losophy’ is a sort of joke: the Greek roots of the word ‘philosophy’ mean ‘lover of wisdom’; Coleridge replaces the *philos* (‘lover’) with the Greek *psilos* which means ‘bare; stript of hair or feather, smooth; bald; tenuous’ (Liddell and Scott), creating a new word, ‘stripped or bald wisdom’. Oddly, Coleridge himself seems to have misunderstood his own joke. He explained it in a letter to a German friend, J. H. Bohte, in February 1819 (Griggs, *Collected Letters*, 4:922) in these terms: ‘from the Greek *psilos*, slender, and *Sophia*, Wisdom, in opposition to Philosophy, the Love of Wisdom and the Wisdom of Love, a thing still in some repute among your Country men but long obsolete in England’. But *ψιλος* certainly doesn’t mean ‘slender’, and certainly does mean ‘bald, stripped, naked’. More interestingly, in several Platonic dialogues ‘psilos logos’ – ‘bare or naked speech’ – is used as a way of distinguishing prose from the ‘garbed’ speech of poetry (e.g. *Menexenus* 239C), and in Plato’s *Theaetetus* (165A) the ‘psiloi logoi’ are the mere forms of abstract argument, stripped of supporting evidence.

²⁵⁹ ‘Learning from them’.

in their domestic affections than those whose names were thus printed at full length as in the same rank of morals with a denounced infidel and fugitive, who had left his children fatherless and his wife destitute! Is it surprising, that many good men remained longer than perhaps they otherwise would have done adverse to a party, which encouraged and openly rewarded the authors of such atrocious calumnies? *Qualis es, nescio; sed per quales agis, scio et doleo.*²⁶⁰

²⁶⁰ 'I don't know about your character, but as to the character of those through whom you act – I know and regret it.' The Latin here is Coleridge's own composition. 'Nescio quis' (of which 'qualis es, nescio' is a variant) is a common way of saying 'person unknown' or 'author unknown'; and 'scit et dolet', the third-person version of Coleridge's first-person 'scio et doleo', is found in Justus Lipsius's *Politicorum sive Civilis Doctrinae Libri Sex* (1589).

CHAPTER 4

The lyrical ballads with the preface—Mr. Wordsworth's earlier poems—On fancy and imagination—The investigation of the distinction important to the fine arts.

I have wandered far from the object in view, but as I fancied to myself readers who would respect the feelings that had tempted me from the main road; so I dare calculate on not a few, who will warmly sympathize with them. At present it will be sufficient for my purpose, if I have proved, that Mr. Southey's writings no more than my own, furnished the original occasion to this fiction of a *new school* of poetry, and to the clamors against its supposed founders and proselytes.

As little do I believe that "Mr. WORDSWORTH'S Lyrical Ballads" were in *themselves* the cause. I speak exclusively of the two volumes so entitled.²⁶¹ A careful and repeated examination of these confirms me in the belief, that the omission of less than an hundred lines would have precluded nine-tenths of the criticism on this work. I hazard this declaration, however, on the supposition, that the reader has taken it up, as he would have done any other collection of poems purporting to derive their subjects or interests from the incidents of domestic or ordinary life, intermingled with higher strains of meditation which the poet utters in his own person and character; with the proviso, that these poems were perused without knowledge of, or reference to, the author's peculiar opinions, and that the reader had not had his attention previously directed to those peculiarities. In these, as was actually the case with Mr. Southey's earlier works, the lines and passages which might have offended the general taste, would have been considered as mere inequalities, and attributed to inattention, not to perversity of judgement. The men of business who had passed their lives chiefly in cities, and who might therefore be expected to derive the highest pleasure from acute notices of men and manners conveyed in easy, yet correct and pointed language; and all those who, reading but little poetry, are most stimulated with that species of it, which

²⁶¹ The two-volume expanded second edition of *Lyrical Ballads, With Other Poems* had been published in 1800, the first edition (1798) having been a one-volume publication. Coleridge calls it 'Mr. Wordsworth's Lyrical Ballads', but in fact Wordsworth and Coleridge collaborated extensively on the volume.

seems most distant from prose, would probably have passed by the volumes altogether. Others more catholic in their taste, and yet habituated to be most pleased when most excited, would have contented themselves with deciding, that the author had been successful in proportion to the elevation of his style and subject. Not a few perhaps, might by their admiration of "the lines written near Tintern Abbey," those "left upon a Seat under a Yew Tree," the "old Cumberland beggar," and "Ruth," have been gradually led to peruse with kindred feeling the "Brothers," the "Hart leap well," and whatever other poems in that collection may be described as holding a middle place between those written in the highest and those in the humblest style; as for instance between the "Tintern Abbey," and "the Thorn," or the "Simon Lee." Should their taste submit to no further change, and still remain unreconciled to the colloquial phrases, or the imitations of them, that are, more or less, scattered through the class last mentioned; yet even from the small number of the latter, they would have deemed them but an inconsiderable subtraction from the merit of the whole work; or, what is sometimes not unpleasing in the publication of a new writer, as serving to ascertain the natural tendency, and consequently the proper direction of the author's genius.

In the critical remarks, therefore, prefixed and annexed to the "Lyrical Ballads," I believe, that we may safely rest, as the true origin of the unexampled opposition which Mr. Wordsworth's writings have been since doomed to encounter. The humbler passages in the poems themselves were dwelt on and cited to justify the rejection of the theory. What in and for themselves would have been either forgotten or forgiven as imperfections, or at least comparative failures, provoked direct hostility when announced as intentional, as the result of choice after full deliberation. Thus the poems, admitted by *all* as excellent, joined with those which had pleased the far *greater* number, though they formed two-thirds of the whole work, instead of being deemed (as in all right they should have been, even if we take for granted that the reader judged aright) an atonement for the few exceptions, gave wind and fuel to the animosity against both the poems and the poet. In all perplexity there is a portion of fear, which predisposes the mind to anger. Not able to deny that the author possessed both genius and a powerful intellect, they felt *very positive*, but were not *quite certain* that he might not be in the right, and they themselves in the wrong; an unquiet state of mind, which seeks alleviation by quarrelling with the occasion of it, and by wondering at the perverseness of the man, who had written a long and argumentative essay to persuade them, that

Fair is foul, and foul is fair;²⁶²

in other words, that they had been all their lives admiring without judgement, and were now about to censure without reason.*

*In opinions of long continuance, and in which we have never before been molested by a single doubt, to be suddenly *convinced* of an *error*, is almost like being *convicted* of a fault. There is a state of mind, which is the direct antithesis of that, which takes place when we *make a bull*. *The bull* namely²⁶³ consists in the bringing together two incompatible thoughts, with the *sensation*, but without the *sense*, of their connection. The psychological condition, or that which constitutes the possibility of this state, being such disproportionate vividness of two distant thoughts, as extinguishes or obscures the consciousness of the intermediate images or conceptions, or wholly abstracts the attention from them. Thus in the well known bull, "*I was a fine child, but they changed me*,"²⁶⁴ the first conception expressed in the

²⁶² Shakespeare, *Macbeth*, I:i:11.

²⁶³ 'Making a bull', also sometimes called 'making an Irish bull', means comically uttering an illogicality without realising that one has done so, or more broadly making an incongruent or ludicrous statement. The derivation of the phrase is unclear, but may be related to the Middle English sense of 'bull' as a verb meaning 'befool, mock, or cheat'. The phrase in this sense was first used of Irish politician Boyd Roche (1736–1807), who is reputed to have said during parliamentary debate: 'Why we should put ourselves out of our way to do anything for posterity, for what has posterity ever done for us?' Coleridge was particularly fascinated by bulls (in this sense); there are multiple discussions of the phenomenon in his notebooks.

²⁶⁴ Coleridge may have found this in James Gregory's 'A Dissertation on Bulls', in *Philosophical and Literary Essays* (2 vols, 1792):

We hear and read of many wonderful bulls of the truly practical kind, altogether independent of language, and plainly founded in thought alone; such as, sending express for a physician to come without delay to a patient who was in the utmost danger, and telling the doctor, in a postscript of the letter addressed and actually sent to him, not to come, as the patient was already almost well again; or observing gravely, when this story was told, that it was right to add such a postscript, as it saved the sending another express to countermand the doctor; or inclosing a thin sixpence in a snuff-box, that it might not be again to seek when it was wanted to open the box, the lid of which was stiff; or realising Hogarth's ingenious emblem, in one of his election-prints, by cutting away close to the tree the bough on which the person who cut it sat himself; which I once saw successfully performed; and, for the honour of my own country, I must say that it was in Scotland, and by a Scotchman, who narrowly escaped breaking his neck by so doing.

He concludes with what he calls 'the maximum of bulls, and *instar omnium* [representative of the whole]':

A gentleman, when his old nurse came begging to him, harshly refusing her any relief, and driving her away from his door with reproaches, as having been his greatest enemy, telling her that he was assured he had been a fine healthy child till she got him to nurse, when she had changed him for a puny sickly child of her own. If I am rightly informed, France has the honour of having produced this immense and unparalleled bull; which is indeed *perfectum expletumque omnibus suis numeris et partibus* ['perfect in all its details and emblematic of the larger whole; Cicero *De natura deorum*, 2:13], and perfect of its kind.

It's clear from this that Coleridge's 'I was a fine child, but they changed me' means: I was a healthy child but then I was physically replaced by a sickly changeling', rather than (as I have sometimes seen in critical discussion of the passage) 'I was a fine child but growing-up, or "they", altered me for the worse'.

That this conjecture is not wide from the mark, I am induced to believe from the noticeable fact, which I can state on my own knowledge, that the same general censure should have been grounded almost by each different person on some different poem. Among those, whose candour and judgement I estimate highly, I distinctly remember six who expressed their objections to the “Lyrical Ballads” almost in the same words, and altogether to the same purport, at the same time admitting, that several of the poems had given them great pleasure; and, strange as it might seem, the composition which one cited as execrable, another quoted as his favorite. I am indeed convinced in my own mind, that could the same experiment have been tried with these volumes as was made in the well known story of the picture, the result would have been the same; the parts which had been covered by *black* spots on the one day, would be found equally *albo* lapide notatæ on the succeeding.²⁶⁵

However this may be, it was assuredly hard and unjust to fix the

word “*I*,” is that of personal identity—*Ego contemplanus*:²⁶⁶ the second expressed in the word “*me*,” is the visual image or object by which the mind represents to itself its past condition, or rather, its personal identity under the form in which it imagined itself previously to have existed,—*Ego contemplatus*.²⁶⁷ Now the change of one visual image for another involves in itself no absurdity, and becomes absurd only by its immediate juxta-position with the first thought, which is rendered possible by the whole attention being successively absorbed to each singly, so as not to notice the interjacent notion, “changed” which by its incongruity with the first thought, “*I*,” constitutes the *bull*. Add only, that this process is facilitated by the circumstance of the words “*I*,” and “*me*,” being sometimes equivalent, and sometimes having a distinct meaning; sometimes, namely, signifying the act of self-consciousness, sometimes the external image in and by which the mind represents that act to itself, the result and symbol of its individuality. Now suppose the direct contrary state, and you will have a distinct sense of the connection between two conceptions, without that *sensation* of such connection which is supplied by habit. The man *feels*, as if he were standing on his head, though he cannot but *see*, that he is truly standing on his feet. This, as a painful sensation, will of course have a tendency to associate itself with the person who occasions it; even as persons, who have been by painful means restored from derangement, are known to feel an involuntary dislike towards their physician.

²⁶⁵ The Latin means: ‘distinguished by *white* spots’. By ‘story of the picture’, Coleridge does not mean a specific picture or painting; he is alluding to recent developments in the science of retinal optics. He may, for instance, have read the entry on ‘Retention’ in Nicholson’s *British Encyclopedia*: ‘Place about half an inch square of white paper on a black hat, and looking steadily on the centre of it for a minute, remove your eyes to a sheet of white paper; after a second or two a dark square will be seen on the white paper, which will be seen for some time . . . Again, make with ink, on white paper, a very black spot, about half an inch in diameter, with a tail about an inch in length, so as to represent a tadpole. Look steadily at this spot for about a minute, and on moving the eye a little, the figure of the tadpole will be seen on the white part of the paper, which figure will appear whiter or more luminous than the other part of the paper.’ (William Nicholson, ‘Retention’, *British Encyclopedia* (6 vols, 1809), 5:450)

²⁶⁶ ‘The contemplating “*I*”.’

²⁶⁷ ‘The “*I*” that is contemplated.’

attention on a few separate and insulated poems with as much aversion, as if they had been so many plague-spots on the whole work, instead of passing them over in silence, as so much blank paper, or leaves of a bookseller's catalogue; especially, as no one pretends to have found immorality or indelicacy; and the poems therefore, at the worst, could only be regarded as so many light or inferior coins in a roleau of gold, not as so much alloy in a weight of bullion. A friend whose *talents* I hold in the highest respect, but whose *judgement* and strong sound sense I have had almost continued occasion to *revere*, making the usual complaints to me concerning both the style and subjects of Mr. Wordsworth's minor poems; I admitted that there were some few of the tales and incidents, in which I could not myself find a sufficient cause for their having been recorded in metre. I mentioned the "Alice Fell" as an instance; "nay," replied my friend with more than usual quickness of manner, "I cannot agree with you *there!* that I own *does* seem to me a remarkably pleasing poem." In the "Lyrical Ballads" (for my experience does not enable me to extend the remark equally unqualified to the two subsequent volumes)²⁶⁸ I have heard at different times, and from different individuals every single poem *extolled* and *reprobated*, with the exception of those of loftier kind, which as was before observed, seem to have won universal praise. This fact of itself would have made me diffident in my censures, had not a still stronger ground been furnished by the strange contrast of the heat and long continuance of the opposition, with the nature of the faults stated as justifying it. The seductive faults, the *dulcia vitia*²⁶⁹ of Cowley, Marini, or Darwin²⁷⁰ might reasonably be thought capable of corrupting the public judgement for half a century, and require a twenty years war, campaign after campaign, in order to dethrone the usurper and re-establish the legitimate taste. But that a downright simpleness, under the affectation of simplicity, prosaic words in feeble metre, silly thoughts in childish phrases, and a preference of mean, degrading, or at best trivial associations and characters, should succeed in forming a school of imitators, a company of almost *religious* admirers, and this too among young men of ardent minds, liberal education, and not

with academic laurels unbestowed;²⁷¹

²⁶⁸ Wordsworth's *Poems in Two Volumes* (1807). 'Alice Fell', written in 1802, appeared there.

²⁶⁹ 'Sweet faults' – Quintilian's phrase (10.1.129), originally applied as a description to Seneca.

²⁷⁰ Three poets: Abraham Cowley (1618–67), Giambattista Marini (1569–1625, sometimes called 'Marino') and Erasmus Darwin (1731–1802).

²⁷¹ Coleridge adapts the last line of Thomas Warton's 'Sonnet IX' (1753): 'Nor with the Muse's laurel unbestow'd'. Warton in turn was imitating Horace, *Odes* 1:31, lines 20–1.

and that this bare and bald *counterfeit* of poetry, which is characterized as *below* criticism, should for nearly twenty years have well-nigh *engrossed* criticism, as the main, if not the only, *butt* of review, magazine, pamphlets, poem, and paragraph;—this is indeed matter of wonder! Of yet greater is it, that the contest should still continue as* undecided as that between Bacchus and the frogs in Aristophanes; when the former descended to the realms of the departed to bring back the spirit of old and genuine poesy.

Χορος Βατραχων; Διονυσος

X: βρεκεκεκεξ κοάξ κοάξ.

Δ: ἀλλ' ἐξόλοισθ' αὐτῶ κοάξ.

οὐδὲν γάρ ἔσ' ἄλλ' ἢ κοάξ.

οἰμῶζετ'· οὐ γάρ μοι μέλει.

X: ἀλλὰ μὴν κεκραξόμεσθα

γ', ὅποσον ἢ φάρυξ ἂν ἡμῶν

χανδάνη δι' ἡμέρας.

βρεκεκεκεξ κοάξ κοάξ!

Δ: τούτῳ γὰρ οὐ νικήσετε.

X: οὐδὲ μὴν ἡμᾶς σὺ πάντως.

Δ: οὐδὲ μὴν ὑμεῖς γε δὴ μ'

οὐδέποτε. κεκράξομαι γὰρ,

*Without however the apprehensions attributed to the *Pagan* reformer of the poetic republic. If we may judge from the preface to the recent collection of his poems, Mr. W. would have answered with Xanthias—

Σὺ δ' οὐκ ἔδεισας τὸν ψόφον τῶν ῥημάτων
Καὶ τὰς ἀπειλάς; ΞΑΝ. οὐ μὰ Δί' οὐδ' ἐφρόντισα.²⁷²

And here let me dare hint to the authors of the numerous parodies, and pretended imitations of Mr. Wordsworth's style, that at once to conceal and convey wit and wisdom in the semblance of folly and dulness, as is done in the clowns and fools, nay even in the Dogberry,²⁷³ of our Shakespear, is doubtless a proof of genius, or at all events, of satiric talent; but that the attempt to ridicule a silly and childish poem, by writing another still sillier and still more childish, can only prove (if it prove any thing at all) that the parodist is a still greater blockhead than the original writer, and, what is far worse, a *malignant* coxcomb to boot. The talent for mimicry seems strongest where the human race are most degraded. The poor, naked, half human savages of New Holland²⁷⁴ were found excellent mimics: and, in civilized society, minds of the very lowest stamp alone satirize by *copying*. At least the difference which must blend with and balance the likeness, in order to constitute a just imitation, existing here merely in caricature, detracts from the libeller's heart, without adding an iota to the credit of his understanding.

²⁷² 'But weren't you scared by those terrible threats and shouts?' XANTHUS: 'No, not at all. I couldn't care less!' This exchange is from Aristophanes's *Frogs*, 492–3; the speaker of the first line is the god, Dionysus.

²⁷³ The comically inept night-constable from *Much Ado About Nothing*.

²⁷⁴ Australia.

κἄν με δέη δι ἡμέρας
 ἕως ἂν ὑμῶν ἐπικρατήσω τῷ κοᾶξ!
 X: βρεκεκεκεξ ΚΟΑΞ, ΚΟΑΞ!²⁷⁵

During the last year of my residence at Cambridge,²⁷⁶ I became acquainted with Mr. Wordsworth's first publication entitled "Descriptive Sketches;" and seldom, if ever, was the emergence of an original poetic genius above the literary horizon more evidently announced. In the form, style, and manner of the whole poem, and in the structure of the particular lines and periods, there is a harshness and acerbity connected and combined with words and images all a-glow, which might recall those products of the vegetable world, where gorgeous blossoms rise out of a hard and thorny rind and shell, within which the rich fruit is elaborating. The language is not only peculiar and strong, but at times knotty and contorted, as by its own impatient strength; while the novelty and struggling crowd of images, acting in conjunction with the difficulties of the style, demanded always a greater closeness of attention, than poetry, (at all events, than descriptive poetry) has a right to claim. It not seldom therefore justified the complaint of obscurity. In the following extract I have sometimes fancied, that I saw an emblem of the poem itself, and of the author's genius as it was then displayed.

'Tis storm; and hid in mist from hour to hour,
 All day the floods a deepening murmur pour;
 The sky is veiled, and every cheerful sight:

²⁷⁵ Coleridge folds together two quotations from Aristophanes's *Frogs*: 225–7 and 257–67 (omitting Aristophanes's line 265). The god Dionysus, travelling down to the underworld to bring back the spirit of a dead tragic poet (in order to save Athens), encounters a Chorus of Frogs who live in the infernal swamps.

CHORUS. Brekekekex, ko-ax, ko-ax.
 DIONYSUS. Hang you, and hang your ko-axing too!
 You do nothing but ko-ax . . .
 Go, hang yourselves; for what do I care?
 CHORUS. All the same we'll shout aloud,
 As long as our throats last,
 Shouting bellowing all day long
 Brekekekex, ko-ax, ko-ax.
 DIONYSUS: You'll never win this battle.
 CHORUS: You won't be able to beat us.
 DIONYSUS: No, nor you beat me.
 Never! I'll yell all day long if needs be
 Until I've learned to master it
 And put an end to your ko-ax!
 CHORUS: Brekekekex, KO-AX KO-AX!

²⁷⁶ In 1794.

Dark is the region as with coming night;
 Yet what frequent bursts of overpowering light!
 Triumphant on the bosom of the storm,
 Glances the fire-clad eagle's wheeling form;
 Eastward, in long perspective glittering, shine
 The wood-crowned cliffs that o'er the lake recline;
 Wide o'er the Alps a hundred streams unfold,
 At once to pillars turn'd that flame with gold;
 Behind his sail the peasant strives to shun
 The West, that burns like one dilated sun,
 Where in a mighty crucible expire
 The mountains, glowing hot, like coals of fire.²⁷⁷

The poetic PSYCHE, in its process to full developement, undergoes as many changes as its Greek name-sake, the* butterfly. And it is remarkable how soon genius clears and purifies itself from the faults and errors of its earliest products; faults which, in its earliest compositions, are the more obtrusive and confluent, because as heterogeneous elements, which had only a temporary use, they constitute the very *ferment*, by which themselves are carried off. Or we may compare them to some diseases, which must work on the humours, and be thrown out on the surface, in order to secure the patient from their future recurrence. I was in my twenty-fourth year, when I had the happiness of knowing Mr. Wordsworth personally, and while memory lasts, I shall hardly forget the sudden effect produced on my mind, by his recitation of a manuscript poem, which still remains unpublished, but of which the stanza and tone of style were the same as those of the "Female Vagrant" as originally printed in the first volume of the "Lyrical Ballads." There was here, no mark of strained

* The fact, that in Greek Psyche is the common name for the soul, and the butterfly, is thus alluded to in the following stanza from an unpublished poem of the author:

The butterfly the ancient Grecians made
 The soul's fair emblem, and its only name—
 But of the soul, escaped the slavish trade
 Of mortal life! For in this earthly frame
 Our's is the reptile's lot, much toil, much blame,
 Manifold motions making little speed,
 And to deform and kill the things whereon, we feed.
 S.T.C.²⁷⁸

²⁷⁷ Wordsworth, 'Descriptive Sketches', as reprinted in *Poems* (1815) 1:79–80.

²⁷⁸ Perhaps composed specifically for the *Biographia*, this was this poem's first appearance in print. In 'manifold motions making little speed', Coleridge glances the Latin *repto* or *repto* 'to creep, to crawl slowly' (from which the neuter substantive *reptile* the Romans got, and we get, our word).

thought, or forced diction, no crowd or turbulence of imagery, and, as the poet hath himself well described in his lines “on re-visiting the Wye,” manly reflection, and human associations had given both variety, and an additional interest to natural objects, which in the passion and appetite of the first love they had seemed to him neither to need or permit. The occasional obscurities, which had risen from an imperfect control over the resources of his native language, had almost wholly disappeared, together with that worse defect of arbitrary and illogical phrases, at once hackneyed, and fantastic, which hold so distinguished a place in the *technique* of ordinary poetry, and will, more or less, alloy the earlier poems of the truest genius, unless the attention has been specifically directed to their worthlessness and incongruity.* I did not perceive any thing particular in the mere style of the poem alluded to during its recitation, except indeed such difference as was not separable from the thought and manner; and the Spencerian stanza, which always, more or less, recalls to the reader’s mind Spencer’s own style, would doubtless have authorized in my then opinion a more frequent descent to the phrases of ordinary life, than could without an ill effect have been hazarded in the heroic couplet. It was not however the freedom from false taste, whether as to common defects, or to those more properly his own, which made so unusual an impression on my feelings immediately, and subsequently on my judgement. It was the union of deep feeling with profound thought; the fine balance of truth in observing with the imaginative faculty in modifying the objects observed; and above all the original gift of spreading the tone, the *atmosphere*, and with it the depth and height of the ideal world around forms, incidents, and situations, of

* Mr. Wordsworth, even in his two earliest “the Evening Walk and the Descriptive Sketches,” is more free from this latter defect than most of the young poets his contemporaries. It may however be exemplified, together with the harsh and obscure construction, in which he more often offended, in the following lines:—

Mid stormy vapours ever driving by,
 Where ospreys, cormorants, and herons cry;
 Where hardly given the hopeless waste to cheer,
 Denied the bread of life the foodful ear,
 Dwindles the pear on autumn’s latest spray,
 And *apple sickens* pale in summer’s ray;
Ev’n here content has fixed her smiling reign
*With independence, child of high disdain.*²⁷⁹

I hope, I need not say, that I have quoted these lines for no other purpose than to make my meaning fully understood. It is to be regretted that Mr. Wordsworth has not republished these two poems entire.

²⁷⁹ Wordsworth, *Descriptive Sketches* (1793), 317–24; Coleridge’s italics.

which, for the common view, custom had bedimmed all the lustre, had dried up the sparkle and the dew drops. "To find no contradiction in the union of old and new; to contemplate the ANCIENT of days and all his works with feelings as fresh, as if all had then sprang forth at the first creative fiat; characterizes the mind that feels the riddle of the world, and may help to unravel it. To carry on the feelings of childhood into the powers of manhood; to combine the child's sense of wonder and novelty with the appearances which every day for perhaps forty years had rendered familiar;

With sun and moon and stars throughout the year,
And man and woman;²⁸⁰

this is the character and privilege of genius, and one of the marks which distinguish genius from talents. And therefore it is the prime merit of genius and its most equivocal mode of manifestation, so to represent familiar objects as to awaken in the minds of others a kindred feeling concerning them and that freshness of sensation which is the constant accompaniment of mental, no less than of bodily, convalescence. Who has not a thousand times seen snow fall on water? Who has not watched it with a new feeling, from the time that he has read Burn's comparison of sensual pleasure,

To snow that falls upon a river
A moment white—then gone for ever!²⁸¹

In poems, equally, as in philosophic disquisitions, genius produces the strongest impressions of novelty, while it rescues the most admitted truths from the impotence caused by the very circumstance of their universal admission. Truths of all others the most awful and mysterious, yet being at the same time of universal interest, are too often considered as *so* true, that they lose all the life and efficiency of truth, and lie bed-ridden in the dormitory of the soul, side by side, with the most despised and exploded errors." THE FRIEND,* page 76, No.5.²⁸²

This excellence, which in all Mr. Wordsworth's writings is more or less predominant, and which constitutes the character of his mind, I no sooner felt, than I sought to understand. Repeated meditations led me

* As "the Friend" was printed on stamp sheets, and sent only by the post to a very limited number of subscribers, the author has felt less objection to quote from it, though a work of his own. To the public at large indeed it is the same as a volume in manuscript.

²⁸⁰ Milton, Sonnet 23: 'To Mr Cyriack Skinner, Upon His Blindness', 5-6.

²⁸¹ Robert Burns, 'Tom O'Shanter', 61-2.

²⁸² From *The Friend*, 14 Sept 1809.

first to suspect, (and a more intimate analysis of the human faculties, their appropriate marks, functions, and effects matured my conjecture into full conviction) that fancy and imagination were two distinct and widely different faculties, instead of being, according to the general belief, either two names with one meaning, or at furthest, the lower and higher degree of one and the same power. It is not, I own, easy to conceive a more opposite²⁸³ translation of the Greek *Phantasia*, than the Latin *Imaginatio*; but it is equally true that in all societies there exists an instinct of growth, a certain collective, unconscious good sense working progressively to desynonymize* those words originally of the same meaning, which the conflux of dialects supplied to the more homogeneous languages, as the Greek and German: and which the same cause, joined with accidents of translation from original works of different countries, occasion in mixt languages like our own. The first and most important point to be proved is, that two conceptions perfectly distinct are confused under one and the same word, and (this done) to appropriate that word exclusively to the one

* This is effected either by giving to the one word a general, and to the other an exclusive use; as “to put on the back” and “to indorse;”²⁸⁴ or by an actual distinction of meanings as “naturalist,” and “physician;” or by difference of relation as “I” and “Me;” (each of which the rustics of our different provinces still use in all the cases singular of the first personal pronoun). Even the mere difference, or corruption, in the *pronunciation* of the same word, if it have become general, will produce a new word with a distinct signification; thus “property” and “propriety;” the latter of which, even to the time of Charles II. was the *written* word for all the senses of both. Thus too “mister” and “master” both hasty pronunciations of the same word “magister,” “mistress,” and “miss,” “if,” and “give,” &c. &c. There is a sort of *minim immortal* among the *animalcula infusoria*²⁸⁵ which has not naturally either birth, or death, absolute beginning, or absolute end: for at a certain period a small point appears on its back, which deepens and lengthens till the creature divides into two, and the same process recommences in each of the halves now become integral. This may be a fanciful, but it is by no means a bad emblem of the formation of words, and may facilitate the conception, how immense a nomenclature may be organized from a few simple sounds by rational beings in a social state. For each new application, or excitement of the same sound, will call forth a different sensation, which cannot but affect the pronunciation. The after recollections of the sound, without the same vivid sensation, will modify it still further till at length all trace of the original likeness is worn away.

²⁸³ Thus in both 1817 and 1847 editions. Later editors generally correct this to ‘apposite’.

²⁸⁴ Latin: *in dorsum*, ‘on the back’.

²⁸⁵ Bacteria and single-cell organisms: the nomenclature of Danish naturalist Otto Frederik Müller (1730–84), author of *Animalcula infusoria fluviatilia et marina* (1786). The phrase ‘minim immortal’ is something of a problem. Critics have generally taken it to mean ‘a tiny immortality’, ‘a bare-minimum immortality’; but ‘minim immortal’ is not good Latin – ‘a bare-minimum immortality’ would be ‘minimum immortalis’. Perhaps Coleridge intends the phrase as an abbreviation; or perhaps ‘minim’ is a misprint for ‘minam’, in which case the phrase would mean something like ‘there is a drive towards immortality’ (from *mino*, ‘to drive animals’). The 1847 edition de-italicised the phrase, thereby (perhaps) treating the words as English. At any rate, the general sense is clear.

meaning, and the synonyme (should there be one) to the other. But if (as will be often the case in the arts and sciences) no synonyme exists, we must either invent or borrow a word. In the present instance the appropriation had already begun, and been legitimated in the derivative adjective: Milton had a highly *imaginative*, Cowley a very *fanciful* mind. If therefore I should succeed in establishing the actual existence of two faculties generally different, the nomenclature would be at once determined. To the faculty by which I had characterized Milton, we should confine the term *imagination*; while the other would be contra-distinguished as *fancy*. Now were it once fully ascertained, that this division is no less grounded in nature, than that of delirium from mania, or Otway's

Lutes, lobsters, seas of milk, and ships of amber,²⁸⁶

from Shakespear's

What! have his daughters brought him to this pass?²⁸⁷

or from the preceding apostrophe to the elements;²⁸⁸ the theory of the fine arts, and of poetry in particular, could not, I thought, but derive some additional and important light. It would in its immediate effects furnish a torch of guidance to the philosophical critic; and ultimately to the poet himself. In energetic minds, truth soon changes by domestication into power; and from directing in the discrimination and appraisal of the product, becomes influencive in the production. To admire on principle, is the only way to imitate without loss of originality.

It has been already hinted, that metaphysics and psychology have long been my hobby-horse. But to have a hobby-horse, and to be vain of it, are so commonly found together, that they pass almost for the same. I trust therefore, that there will be more good humour than contempt, in the smile with which the reader chastises my self-

²⁸⁶ From Thomas Otway's *Venice Preserv'd*. Coleridge reinforces his point by exaggerating the line's randomness. In the original the heroine Belvedere *has* been driven out of her wits by attempted rape, conspiracy and threat of death, but she makes reference to no lobster:

Are all things ready? Shall we Die most gloriously!
Say not a word of this to my old Father:
Murmuring Streams, soft Shades, and springing Flowers,
Lutes, Laurels, Seas of Milk, and Ships of Amber. (*Venice Preserv'd* (1682), 5:369)

²⁸⁷ Shakespeare's *King Lear*, 3:4:63.

²⁸⁸ Coleridge means *Lear* 3:2:16f. 'I tax you not, you elements, with unkindness; / I never gave you kingdom, call'd you children . . .'

complacency, if I confess myself uncertain, whether the satisfaction from the perception of a truth new to myself may not have been rendered more poignant by the conceit, that it would be equally so to the public. There was a time, certainly, in which I took some little credit to myself, in the belief that I had been the first of my countrymen, who had pointed out the diverse meaning of which the two terms were capable, and analyzed the faculties to which they should be appropriated. Mr. W. Taylor's recent volume of *synonimes*²⁸⁹ I have not yet seen;* but his specification of the terms in question has been clearly shown to be both insufficient and erroneous by Mr. Wordsworth in the preface added to the late collection of his "Lyrical Ballads and other poems." The explanation which Mr. Wordsworth has himself given, will be found to differ from mine, chiefly perhaps, as our objects are different. It could scarcely indeed happen otherwise, from the advantage I have enjoyed of frequent conversation with him on a subject to which a poem of his own first directed my attention,

* I ought to have added, with the exception of a single sheet which I accidentally met with at the printer's. Even from this scanty specimen, I found it impossible to doubt the talent, or not to admire the ingenuity of the author. That his distinctions were for the greater part unsatisfactory to *my* mind, proves nothing against their accuracy; but it may possibly be serviceable to him in case of a second edition, if I take this opportunity of suggesting the query; whether he may not have been occasionally misled, by having assumed, as to me he appears to have done, the non-existence of *any* absolute *synonimes* in our language? Now I cannot but think, that there are many which remain for our posterity to distinguish and appropriate, and which I regard as so much reversionary wealth in our mother-tongue. When two distinct meanings are confounded under one or more words, (and such must be the case, as sure as our knowledge is progressive and of course imperfect) erroneous consequences will be drawn, and what is true in one sense of the word, will be affirmed as true in toto. Men of research, startled by the consequences, seek in the things themselves (whether in or out of the mind) for a knowledge of the fact, and having discovered the difference, remove the equivocation either by the substitution of a new word, or by the appropriation of one of the two or more words, that had before been used promiscuously. When this distinction has been so naturalized and of such general currency, that the language does as it were *think* for us (like the sliding rule which is the mechanic's safe substitute for arithmetical knowledge) we then say, that it is evident to *common sense*. Common sense, therefore, differs in different ages. What was born and christened in the schools passes by degrees into the world at large, and becomes the property of the market and the tea-table. At least I can discover no other meaning of the term, *common sense*, if it is to convey any specific difference from sense and judgement in genere,²⁹⁰ and where it is not used scholastically for the *universal reason*. Thus in the reign of Charles II. the philosophic world was called to arms by the moral sophisms of Hobbs, and the ablest writers exerted themselves in the detection of an error, which a school-boy would now be able to confute by the mere recollection, that *compulsion* and *obligation* conveyed two ideas perfectly disparate, and that what appertained to the one, had been falsely transferred to the other by a mere confusion of terms.

²⁸⁹ William Taylor, *English Synonyms discriminated, with a copious index* (1813).

²⁹⁰ 'In general'.

and my conclusions concerning which, he had made more lucid to myself by many happy instances drawn from the operation of natural objects on the mind. But it was Mr. Wordsworth's purpose to consider the influences of fancy and imagination as they are manifested in poetry, and from the different effects to conclude their diversity in kind; while it is my object to investigate the seminal principle, and then from the kind to deduce the degree. My friend has drawn a masterly sketch of the branches with their *poetic* fruitage. I wish to add the trunk, and even the roots as far as they lift themselves above ground, and are visible to the naked eye of our common consciousness.

Yet even in this attempt I am aware that I shall be obliged to draw more largely on the reader's attention, than so immethodical a miscellany as this can authorize; when in such a work (*the Ecclesiastical Polity*) of such a mind as Hooker's, the judicious author, though no less admirable for the perspicuity than for the port and dignity of his language; and though he wrote for men of learning in a learned age; saw nevertheless occasion to anticipate and guard against "complaints of obscurity," as often as he was to trace his subject "to the highest well-spring and fountain."²⁹¹ Which, (continues he) "because men are not accustomed to, the pains we take are more needful a great deal, than acceptable; and the matters we handle, seem by reason of newness (till the mind grow better acquainted with them) dark and intricate." I would gladly therefore spare both myself and others this labor, if I knew how without it to present an intelligible statement of my poetic creed; not as my *opinions*, which weigh for nothing, but as deductions from established premises conveyed in such a form, as is calculated either to effect a fundamental conviction, or to receive a fundamental confutation. If I may dare once more adopt the words of Hooker, "they, unto whom we shall seem tedious, are in no wise injured by us, because it is in their own hands to spare that labour, which they are not willing to endure." Those at least, let me be permitted to add, who have taken so much pains to render me ridiculous for a perversion of taste, and have supported the charge by attributing strange notions to me on no other authority than their own conjectures, owe it to themselves as well as to me not to refuse their attention to my own statement of the theory, which I *do* acknowledge; or shrink from the trouble of examining the grounds on which I rest it, or the arguments which I offer in its justification.

²⁹¹ Richard Hooker (1554–1600), Anglican priest and theologian. Coleridge here quotes from Hooker's most famous work, *Of the Lawes of Ecclesiastical Politie* (first four books published 1594; fifth book in 1597, the final three after Hooker's death). The passages Coleridge quotes are all from the first chapter of the first book.

CHAPTER 5

On the law of association—Its history traced from Aristotle to Hartley.

There have been men in all ages, who have been impelled as by an instinct to propose their own nature as a problem, and who devote their attempts to its solution. The first step was to construct a table of distinctions, which they seem to have formed on the principle of the absence or presence of the WILL. Our various sensations, perceptions, and movements were classed as active or passive, or as media partaking of both. A still finer distinction was soon established between the voluntary and the spontaneous. In our perceptions we seem to ourselves merely passive to an external power, whether as a mirror reflecting the landscape, or as a blank canvas on which some unknown hand paints it. For it is worthy of notice, that the latter, or the system of idealism may be traced to sources equally remote with the former, or materialism; and Berkeley can boast an ancestry at least as venerable as Gassendi or Hobbs.²⁹² These conjectures, however, concerning the mode in which our perceptions originated, could not alter the natural difference of *things* and *thoughts*. In the former, the cause appeared wholly external, while in the latter, sometimes our will interfered as the producing or determining cause, and sometimes our nature seemed to act by a mechanism of its own, without any conscious effort of the will, or even against it. Our inward experiences were thus arranged in three separate classes, the passive sense, or what the school-men call the merely receptive quality of the mind; the voluntary, and the spontaneous, which holds the middle place between both. But it is not in human nature to meditate on any mode of action,

²⁹² The three philosophers here are: (1) George Berkeley, Bishop of Cloyne (1685–1753), who famously argued that objects in the world do not exist in a material sense but are only ‘ideas’ in the minds of perceivers, since, for physical objects, ‘esse est percipi’ [‘to be is to be perceived’]. (2) Pierre Gassendi (1592–1655), French astronomer and philosopher who attempted to reconcile Epicurean teachings on the material existence of atoms with Christianity. Edward Gibbon called Gassendi ‘le meilleur philosophe des littérateurs, et le meilleur littérateur des philosophes’. (3) Thomas Hobbes (1588–1679), author of the influential work of political philosophy, *Leviathan* (1651), in which he argues that ‘the condition of Man is a condition of Warre of every one against every one’ (Part I, Ch. 14). Coleridge’s point is that Berkeley’s Idealism is just as ancient a thesis as the Materialism of Gassendi and Hobbes.

without enquiring after the law that governs it; and in the explanation of the spontaneous movements of our being, the metaphysician took the lead of the anatomist and natural philosopher. In Egypt, Palestine, Greece, and India the analysis of the mind had reached its noon and manhood, while experimental research was still in its dawn and infancy. For many, very many centuries, it has been difficult to advance a new truth, or even a new error, in the philosophy of the intellect or morals. With regard, however, to the laws that direct the spontaneous movements of thought and the principle of their intellectual mechanism there exists, it has been asserted, an important exception most honorable to the moderns, and in the merit of which our own country claims the largest share. Sir James Mackintosh²⁹³ (who amid the variety of his talents and attainments, is not of less repute for the depth and accuracy of his philosophical enquiries, than for the eloquence with which he is said to render their most difficult results perspicuous, and the driest attractive) affirmed in the lectures, delivered by him in Lincoln's Inn Hall, that the law of association as established in the contemporaneity of the original impressions, formed the basis of all true psychology; and that any ontological or metaphysical science not contained in such (i.e. empirical) psychology, was but a web of abstractions and generalizations. Of this prolific truth, of this great fundamental law, he declared HOBBS to have been the original *discoverer*, while its full application to the whole intellectual system we owed to David Hartley; who stood in the same relation to Hobbs as Newton to Kepler; the law of association being that to the mind, which gravitation is to matter.

Of the former clause in this assertion, as it respects the comparative merits of the ancient metaphysicians, including their commentators, the school-men, and of the modern French and British philosophers from Hobbs to Hume, Hartley, and Condillac,²⁹⁴ this is not the place to speak. So wide indeed is the chasm between this gentleman's philosophical creed and mine, that so far from being able to join hands, we could scarcely make our voices intelligible to each other: and to *bridge* it over, would require more time, skill and power than I believe

²⁹³ Sir James Mackintosh (1765–1832), Scottish politician, historian and legal theorist. In 1799 Coleridge attended his lectures (published the same year as *A Discourse on the Study of the Law of Nature and Nations*) at Lincoln's Inn Hall. These lectures mention Hobbs only in passing, and mention Hartley not at all. (Mackintosh's *Dissertation on the Progress of Ethical Philosophy* does include a whole, admiring chapter on Hartley's 'associations', but that was not begun until 1828 and not published until 1830.)

²⁹⁴ Coleridge spells this name (French philosopher of mind, Étienne Bonnot de Condillac, 1715–80) variously in the *Biographia*.

myself to possess. But the latter clause involves for the greater part a mere question of fact and history, and the accuracy of the statement is to be tried by documents rather than reasoning.

First then, I deny Hobbs's claim in toto: for he had been anticipated by Des Cartes whose work "De Methodo" preceded Hobbs's "De Natura Humana," by more than a year.²⁹⁵ But what is of much more importance, Hobbs builds nothing on the principle which he had announced. He does not even announce it, as differing in any respect from the general laws of material motion and impact: nor was it, indeed, possible for him so to do, compatibly with his system, which was exclusively material and mechanical. Far otherwise is it with Des Cartes; greatly as he too in his after writings (and still more egregiously his followers De la Forge,²⁹⁶ and others) obscured the truth by their attempts to explain it on the theory of nervous fluids, and material configurations. But, in his interesting work, "De Methodo," Des Cartes relates the circumstance which first led him to meditate on this subject, and which since then has been often noticed and employed as an instance and illustration of the law. A child who with its eyes bandaged had lost several of his fingers by amputation, continued to complain for many days successively of pains, now in his²⁹⁷ joint and now in that, of the very fingers which had been cut off.²⁹⁸

²⁹⁵ By quite a bit more than a year, in fact. René Descartes (1596–1650) published his *Discours de la Methode* in 1637, whereas Hobbes's *Treatise on Human Nature* didn't come out until 1650. But Coleridge may have been distracted by the fact that Hobbes's book came out one year after the first *English translation* of Descartes' famous book (*A Discourse of a Method for the Well-Grounding of Reason and the Discovery of Truth in the Sciences*, trans. anon), which appeared in 1649.

²⁹⁶ Louis de La Forge (1632–66), French philosopher and friend of Descartes, whose *Tractatus de mente humana* ['Traité de l'esprit de l'homme'] (1664) developed Cartesian ideas. He asserted that willpower and imagination were functions of the pineal gland and were disseminated throughout the body by means of 'des matieres fluides'.

²⁹⁷ Corrected to 'this' in 1847.

²⁹⁸ The anecdote of the phantom finger is not in the *Discours de la Methode*, but rather in Descartes's later *Principia Philosophiae* (1644) – itself, in essence, a synthesis of the *Discours* and the later *Meditationes de prima philosophia* (1641). It can be found in Book 4, Section 196, in a chapter entitled 'Animam non sentire, nisi quatenus est in cerebro' ['We do not feel in the soul, except to the extent that such sensation is in the brain']: Cum puellae cuidam, manum gravi morbo affectam habenti . . . ob gangraenam in eo serpentem suisset amputatum, & panni in ejus locum ita substituti, ut eo se privatam esse ignoraret, ipsa interim varios dolores, nunc in uno ejus manus quae abscissa erat digito, nunc in alio se sentire querebatur: quod sane aliunde contingere non poterat, quam ex eo, quod nervi qui prius ex cerebro ad manum descendebant, tuncque in brachio juxta cubitum terminabantur, eodem modo ibi moverentur, ac prius moveri debuissent in manu, ad sensum hujus vel illius digiti dolentis, animae in cerebro residenti imprimendum. ['A child, affected with a sickness in the hand . . . had some fingers amputated on account of gangrene, [the surgeon] afterwards placing

Des Cartes was led by this incident to reflect on the uncertainty with which we attribute any particular place to any inward pain or uneasiness, and proceeded after long consideration to establish it as a general law: that contemporaneous impressions, whether images or sensations, recall each other mechanically. On this principle, as a ground work, he built up the whole system of human language, as one continued process of association. He showed, in what sense not only general terms, but generic images (under the name of abstract ideas) actually existed, and in what consists their nature and power. As one word may become the general exponent of many, so by association a simple image may represent a whole class. But in truth Hobbs himself makes no claims to any discovery, and introduces this law of association, or (in his own language) *discursûs mentalis*, as an admitted fact, in the *solution* alone of which, this by causes purely physiological, he arrogates any originality. His system is briefly this;²⁹⁹ whenever the senses are impinged on by external objects, whether by the rays of light reflected from them, or by effluxes of their finer particles, there results a correspondent motion of the innermost and subtlest organs. This motion constitutes a *representation*, and there remains an *impression* of the same, or a certain disposition to repeat the same motion. Whenever we feel several objects at the same time, the *impressions* that are left (or in the language of Mr. Hume, the *ideas*) are linked together. Whenever therefore any one of the movements, which constitute a complex impression, are renewed through the senses, the others succeed mechanically. It follows of necessity therefore that Hobbs, as well as Hartley and all others who derive association from the connection and interdependence of the supposed matter, the movements of which constitute our thoughts, *must* have reduced all its forms to the one law of time. But even the merit of announcing this law with philosophic precision cannot be fairly conceded to him. For the objects

in the cloth a substitute or prosthetic fingers, so that the child was unaware what had passed; nevertheless the child reported various pains as being in that hand with the cut-off finger: which could hardly occur were it not from the fact that the nerves from the brain coming down to the hand still recorded this pain; for although the arm now terminated a cubit from the shoulder, yet, in the same manner as before, the child claimed the fingers could be moved, as if they still possessed their hand; and the meaning of this finger pain must be that the soul, resident in the brain, was printed with the sensations by the nerves.']

²⁹⁹ From here to the end of the paragraph (not including the footnote) Coleridge closely adapts or else directly translates from J. G. E. Maass (1766–1823), whose *Versuch über die Einbildungskraft* ['Essay on the Imagination'] (1792) Coleridge owned in its 1797 second edition. This is the first of several unattributed translations, or more strictly plagiarisms – from Maass and other eighteenth-century German philosophers – in the *Biographia*.

of any two ideas* need not have co-existed in the same sensation in order to become mutually associable. The same result will follow when one only of the two ideas has been represented by the senses, and the other by the memory.

* I here use the word “idea” in Mr. Hume’s sense on account of its general currency among the English metaphysicians; though against my own judgement, for I believe that the vague use of this word has been the cause of much error and more confusion. The word, *ἰδέα*, in its original sense as used by Pindar, Aristophanes, and in the gospel of Matthew, represented the visual abstraction of a distant object, when we see the whole without distinguishing its parts. Plato adopted it as a technical term, and as the antithesis to *εἰδῶλα*,³⁰⁰ or sensuous images; the transient and perishable emblems, or mental words, of ideas. The ideas themselves he considered as mysterious powers, living, seminal, formative, and exempt from time. In this sense the word became the property of the Platonic school; and it seldom occurs in Aristotle, without some such phrase annexed to it, as according to Plato, or as Plato says. Our English writers to the end of Charles 2nd’s reign, or somewhat later, employed it either in the original sense, or platonically, or in a sense nearly correspondent to our present use of the substantive, *Ideal*, always however opposing it, more or less, to *image*, whether of present or absent objects. The reader will not be displeased with the following interesting exemplification from Bishop Jeremy Taylor. “St. Lewis the King sent Ivo Bishop of Chartres on an embassy, and he told, that he met a grave and stately matron on the way with a censor of fire in one hand, and a vessel of water in the other; and observing her to have a melancholy, religious, and phantastic deportment and look, he asked her what those symbols meant, and what she meant to do with her fire and water; she answered, my purpose is with the fire to burn paradise, and with my water to quench the flames of hell, that men may serve God purely for the love of God. But we rarely meet with such spirits which love virtue so metaphysically as to *abstract her from all sensible compositions, and love the purity of the idea.*”³⁰¹ Des Cartes having introduced into his philosophy the fanciful hypothesis of *material ideas*, or certain configurations of the brain, which were as so many moulds to the influxes of the external world,³⁰² Mr. Lock adopted the term, but extended its signification to whatever is the immediate object of the mind’s attention or consciousness. Mr. Hume, distinguishing those representations which are accompanied with a sense of a present object from those reproduced by the mind itself, designated the former by *impressions*, and confined the word *idea* to the latter.

³⁰⁰ *‘Eidola’*: ‘images, idols, doubles, apparitions, phantoms’. This is the plural form; 1847 amended it to the singular form, *εἰδῶλον*, then altered the nouns in the rest of the sentence from plural to single to agree with it.

³⁰¹ From Jeremy Taylor (1613–67) ‘Sermon XXXVII: The Mercy of the Divine Judgments; or, God’s Method in Curing Sinners’, originally in *Twenty-five Sermons* (1653). The original reads (Coleridge has reordered the sentences): ‘But we rarely meet with such spirits which love virtue so metaphysically as to abstract her from all sensible and delicious compositions, and love the purity of the idea. St. Lewis the king sent Ivo bishop of Chartres, on an embassy, the bishop met a woman on the way, grave, sad, fantastic and melancholic, with fire in one hand, and water in the other. He asked her what those symbols meant. She answered, My purpose is with the fire to burn paradise, and with my water to quench the flames of hell, that men may serve God without the incentives of hope and fear, and purely for the love of God.’

³⁰² The reference is to a passage in *Les passions de l’âme*, the last of Descartes’s published works (completed in 1649), which Coleridge read in Latin (*‘De Passioibus Animæ’*) in the *Opera philosophica*. In this work, Descartes suggests that volition and bodily motion are activated in *machinam nostril corporis* [‘in the machine of our body’] when the ‘spirits’ enter certain pores in the brain (*poros cerebri*).

Long however before either Hobbs or Des Cartes the law of association had been defined, and its important functions set forth by Melanchthon, Ammerbach and Ludovicus Vives,³⁰³ more especially by the last. Phantasia, it is to be noticed, is employed by Vives to express the mental power of comprehension, or the *active* function of the mind; and imaginatio for the receptivity (*vis receptiva*) of impressions, or for the *passive* perception.³⁰⁴ The power of combination he appropriates to the former: “quæ singula et simpliciter acceperat imaginatio, ea conjungit et disjungit phantasia.”³⁰⁵ And the law by which the thoughts are spontaneously presented follows thus: “quæ simul sunt a phantasia comprehensa si alterutrum occurrat, solet secum alterum representare.”³⁰⁶ To time therefore he subordinates all the other exciting causes of association. The soul proceeds “a causa ad effectum, ab hoc ad instrumentum, a parte ad totum;”³⁰⁷ thence to the place, from place to person, and from this to whatever preceded or followed, all as being parts of a total impression, each of which

³⁰³ Coleridge mentions these three thinkers because they are all cited in that section of Maass's *Versuch über die Einbildungskraft*, upon which he closely depends for this whole passage. (1) Philipp Schwartzertd (1497–1560), an early German Protestant, known by the Latinized version of his surname ‘Melanchthon’, amongst whose various writings is *Liber de anima* (1540); (2) Veit Amerbach (1503–57), German Lutheran theologian who eventually converted to Catholicism; (3) Juan Luis Vives (Latin name: Ioannes Lodovicus Vives; 1492–1540), Spanish Catholic humanist and scholar, author of many learned works including *De anima et vita* (1538). The Latin quotations from Vives that follow are all derived from Maass rather than from Vives directly.

³⁰⁴ ‘Under the term SENSE, I comprise whatever is passive in our being, without any reference to the questions of Materialism or Immaterialism; all that Man is in common with animals, in *kind* at least – his sensations, and impressions whether of his outward senses, or the inner sense of Imagination. This in the language of the Schools, was called the *vis receptiva*, or *recipient* property of the soul, from the original constitution of which we perceive and imagine all things under the forms of Space and Time. By the UNDERSTANDING, I mean the faculty of thinking and forming *judgments* on the notices furnished by the Sense, according to certain rules existing in itself, which rules constitute its distinct nature. By the pure REASON, I mean the power by which we become possessed of Principle, (the eternal Verities of Plato and Descartes) and of Ideas, (N. B. not images) as the ideas of a point, a line, a circle, in Mathematics; and of Justice, Holiness, Free-Will, &c. in Morals. Hence in works of pure Science the Definitions of necessity precede the Reasoning, in other works they more aptly form the Conclusion. I am not asking my Readers to admit the truth of these distinctions at present, but only to understand my words in the same sense in which I use them.’ (Coleridge, ‘Essay IV: on the Principles of Political Philosophy’, *The Friend*, 7 (28 September 1809))

³⁰⁵ ‘The imagination simply receives, straightforwardly, each after each; but the phantasia conjoins and disjoins.’

³⁰⁶ ‘When the phantasia comprehends several things at once, it will be because one representation has suggested the others.’

³⁰⁷ ‘From cause to effect, from this to its instrument, from the part to the whole.’

may recal the other. The apparent springs “Saltus vel transitus etiam longissimos,”³⁰⁸ he explains by the same thought having been a component part of two or more total impressions. Thus “ex Scipione venio in cogitationem potentiae Turcicae, proper victorias ejus in eâ parte Asiae in qua regnabat Antiochus”³⁰⁹.

But from Vives I pass at once to the source of his doctrines, and (as far as we can judge from the remains yet extant of Greek philosophy) as to the first, so to the fullest and most perfect enunciation of the associative principle, viz., to the writings of Aristotle;³¹⁰ and of these principally to the books “De Anima,” “De Memoria,” and that which is entitled in the old translations “Parva Naturalia.” In as much as later writers have either deviated from, or added to his doctrines, they appear to me to have introduced either error or groundless supposition.

In the first place it is to be observed, that Aristotle’s positions on this subject are unmixed with fiction. The wise Stagyrice speaks of no successive particles propagating motion like billiard balls (as Hobbs;) nor of nervous or animal spirits, where inanimate and irrational solids are thawed down, and distilled, or filtrated by ascension, into living and intelligent fluids, that etch and re-etch engravings on the brain, (as the followers of Des Cartes, and the humoral pathologists in general;) nor of an oscillating ether which was to effect the same service for the nerves of the brain considered as solid fibres, as the animal spirits perform for them under the notion of hollow tubes, (as *Hartley*³¹¹ teaches)—nor finally, (with yet more recent dreamers) of chemical compositions by elective affinity, or of an electric light at once the immediate object and the ultimate organ of inward vision, which rises to the brain like an Aurora Borealis, and there disporting in various shapes (as the balance of plus and minus, or negative and

³⁰⁸ ‘By the most elongated leaps and transitions.’

³⁰⁹ ‘From thinking of Scipio I come to thoughts of the strength of Turkish power, because Scipio’s victories were in that part of Asia where Antiochus reigned.’

³¹⁰ The celebrated Greek philosopher (384–322 BC), student of Plato and wide-ranging thinker, was born in Stageira (in Chalcide) and hence is sometimes called ‘The Stagyrice’. Coleridge discusses *De Anima* [‘On the Soul’], *De Memoria* [‘On Memory’] and *Parva Naturalia* [‘Minor Writings on Nature’]. The *De Anima* postulates that human beings have in effect three souls: we share with plants the capacity for nourishment, reproduction and bare life; with animals we share a soul of sense-perception and action; and unique to us is a soul of intellect and self-reflection.

³¹¹ Descartes believed nerves to be hollow tubes filled with a ‘subtle fluid’. Hartley disagreed, believing nerves to be solid fibres transmitting sense data to the brain and volitional commands back to the body by means of ‘Vibrations of the small, and as one may say, infinitesimal medullary Particles’ (Hartley, *Observations on Man* (1749), Prop IV).

positive, is destroyed or re-established) images out both past and present. Aristotle delivers a just *theory* without pretending to an *hypothesis*; or in other words a comprehensive survey of the different facts, and of their relations to each other without *supposition*, i.e. a fact *placed under* a number of facts, as their common support and explanation; tho' in the majority of instances these hypotheses or suppositions better deserve the name of Ὑποποιήσεῖς, or *suffictions*. He uses indeed the word Κινήσεῖς, to express what we call representations or ideas, but he carefully distinguishes them from material motion, designating the latter always by annexing the words ἐν τόπῳ, or κατὰ τόπον.³¹² On the contrary in his treatise "De Anima," he excludes place and motion from all the operations of thought, whether representations or volitions, as attributes utterly and absurdly heterogeneous.

The *general law* of association, or, more accurately, the *common condition* under which all exciting causes act, and in which they may be generalized, according to Aristotle is this. Ideas by having been together acquire a power of recalling each other; or every partial representation awakes the total representation of which it had been a part. In the practical determination of this common principle to particular recollections, he admits five agents or occasioning causes: 1st, connection in time, whether simultaneous, preceding, or successive; 2nd, vicinity or connection in space; 3rd, interdependence or necessary connection, as cause and effect; 4th, likeness; and 5th, contrast. As an additional solution of the occasional seeming chasms in the continuity of reproduction he proves, that movements or ideas possessing one or the other of these five characters had passed through the mind as intermediate links, sufficiently clear to recal other parts of the same total impressions with which they had co-existed, though not vivid enough to excite that degree of attention which is requisite for distinct recollection, or as we may aptly express it, *after consciousness*.³¹³ In

³¹² The Greek here can be translated as follows: ὑποποιήσεις [hupopoiēsis] means 'a putting under, a subjection' (its root ποιέω, 'to make, fashion or put', is the word from which the word *poetry* is ultimately derived). 'Suffictions' is the English version of the Latin *sufficio*, 'to put under, to put in the place of, to substitute', a word linked to *sufficiens* and *sufficientia*, 'sufficient, adequate', 'sufficiency'. The word ὑποποιήσεις does not appear in Aristotle. The remaining Greek in this passage is quoted from the *De Anima*, via Maass, who also quotes it. κινήσεις [kinēsis] means 'motion, movement' in a literal or metaphorical sense and κινήσεις is the plural form; Chapter 3 of the *De Anima* discusses the soul in terms of the particulars of its 'motion'. ἐν τόπῳ, or κατὰ τόπον [en topō or kata topon] are two declensions of the Greek ἐν τόπο, 'place, position, location' (from which we get our word *topographic*).

³¹³ Coleridge takes this term from Catharine Trotter Cockburn (1679–1749), whose *A Defence of Mr. Lock's Essay of Human Understanding* (1702) was, in its day, one of the most influential works of Lockean interpretation, often printed in the same volume

association then consists the whole mechanism of the reproduction of impressions, in the Aristotelian Psychology.³¹⁴ It is the universal law of the *passive* fancy and *mechanical* memory; that which supplies to all other faculties their objects, to all thought the elements of its materials.

In consulting the excellent commentary of St. Thomas Aquinas on the *Parva Naturalia* of Aristotle, I was struck at once with its close resemblance to Hume's essay on association. The main thoughts were the same in both, the *order* of the thoughts was the same, and even the illustrations differed only by Hume's occasional substitution of more modern examples. I mentioned the circumstance to several of my literary acquaintances, who admitted the closeness of the resemblance, and that it seemed too great to be explained by mere coincidence; but they thought it improbable that Hume should have held the pages of the angelic Doctor worth turning over. But some time after Mr. Payne, of the King's mews, shewed Sir James Mackintosh some odd volumes of St. Thomas Aquinas, partly perhaps from having heard that Sir James (then Mr.) Mackintosh had in his lectures past a high encomium on this canonized philosopher, but chiefly from the fact, that the volumes had belonged to Mr. Hume, and had here and there marginal marks and notes of reference in his own hand writing. Among these volumes was that which contains the *Parva Naturalia*, in the old latin version, swathed and swaddled in the commentary afore mentioned!³¹⁵

as Locke's original book. Cockburn uses 'after consciousness' to elaborate that distinctively Coleridgean topic, *guilt*: 'Rewards and punishments are evidently instituted for the benefit of society, for the encouragement of virtue, or suppression of vice, in the object thus rewarded or punished, and in the rest of the community; but what tendency to the above purposes can either of these have, if dispensed to, one who is not so far him-self as to become conscious of having done any thing to deserve it? . . . guilt also is a forensic term, or a mode of considering any action, which in its essence implies knowledge of a law, offence against that law, and a sense of having offended against it; i. e. an *after consciousness* of the fact; without which after consciousness, punishment would be of little avail . . . Thus goodness, justice, guilt, merit, &c. in general, are ever the same goodness, etc. all the world over, however imperfectly they may appear in any particular subjects, times, and places.' (J. Johnson (ed.), *The Works of John Locke* (12 vols, 1801), 3:170)

³¹⁴ This typo was corrected in 1847.

³¹⁵ Coleridge's accusation here that David Hume had plagiarised Aquinas caused a considerable stir in the immediate aftermath of the publication of the *Biographia*. An article entitled 'David Hume Charged by Mr Coleridge with Plagiarism from St Thomas Aquinas' (*Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*, 3 (1818), 653–7) set out to refute the claim through a detailed analysis of the philosophers' respective arguments; and the case continued to be argued for decades. Thomas Payne (1752–1843) was a London bookseller, from whom Scottish legal theorist and politician James Mackintosh (knighted in 1803) did indeed purchase some Aquinas – in fact the volume in question was the *Secunda Secundae*, not the commentary upon the *Parva Naturalia*. But although the

It remains then for me, first to state wherein Hartley differs from Aristotle; then, to exhibit the grounds of my conviction, that he differed only to err: and next as the result, to shew, by what influences of the choice and judgment the associative power becomes either memory or fancy; and, in conclusion, to appropriate the remaining offices of the mind to the reason, and the imagination. With my best efforts to be as perspicuous as the nature of language will permit on such a subject, I earnestly solicit the good wishes and friendly patience of my readers, while I thus go “sounding on my dim and perilous way.”³¹⁶

bookseller’s catalogue stated that the handwritten annotations in this volume were by Hume, it seems this was not so. James Mackintosh appended a note to his own *Dissertation on the Progress of Ethical Philosophy* (1830) aiming to refute the charge ‘by Mr Coleridge, in his unfortunately unfinished work called *Biographia Literaria*’, and concluding ‘I am obliged, therefore, to conjecture, that Mr. Coleridge, having mislaid his references, has, by mistake, quoted the discourse on *Method*, instead of another work; which would affect his inference from the priority of Descartes to Hobbs.’ (James Mackintosh, *Dissertation on the Progress of Ethical Philosophy*, 2nd edn (1839), 426–9)

³¹⁶ Quoting a modified version of Wordsworth’s *Excursion*, Book 3, line 701. Here is the original line, in its context (*Excursion*, 3:695–701):

Then my soul
Turned inward,—to examine of what stuff
Time’s fetters are composed; and life was put
To inquisition, long and profitless!
By pain of heart—now checked—and now impelled—
The intellectual power, through words and things,
Went sounding on, a dim and perilous way!

CHAPTER 6

**That Hartley's system, as far as it differs from that of Aristotle,
is neither tenable in theory, nor founded in facts.**

Of Hartley's hypothetical vibrations in his hypothetical oscillating ether of the nerves, which is the first and most obvious distinction between his system and that of Aristotle, I shall say little. This, with all other similar attempts to render that an object of the sight which has no relation to sight, has been already sufficiently exposed by the younger Reimarus, Maasse, &c, as outraging the very axioms of mechanics in a scheme, the merit of which consists in its being mechanical.³¹⁷ Whether any other philosophy be possible, but the mechanical; and again, whether the mechanical system can have any claim to be called philosophy; are questions for another place. It is, however, certain, that as long as we deny the former, and affirm the latter, we must bewilder ourselves, whenever we would pierce into the *adyta*³¹⁸ of causation; and all that laborious conjecture can do, is to fill up the

³¹⁷ David Hartley (1705–57) was an English philosopher of mind, whose *Observations on Man, his Frame, his Duty and his Expectations* (1749) offers a materialist, non-spiritual account of the operation of the mind. Hartley argued that nerves were solid, not (as had been previously thought) hollow, and operated by means of certain 'vibrations'. He also developed a doctrine of associations: that experience and self-reflection develop individual consciousness by means of four types of similar association, linking ideas with experience (as a child learns to fear an angry dog once the dog has bitten him, by associating the idea of the dog and the unpleasant experience of being bitten), and in more complex ways by connecting ideas in the brain as meanings, memories and developing correspondences that inform volition and creative mentation. As a young man Coleridge was an enthusiastic Hartleyian, going so far as to christen his son 'Hartley'; but by the time he came to write the *Biographia* he had changed his mind, and had reacted strongly against 'materialism' as a philosophy. Here he cites two German critics: Johann Albert Heinrich Reimarus (1729–1814), a doctor and university professor at Hamburg, whose *Betrachtung der Unmöglichkeit körperlicher Gedächtnis-Eindrücke und eines materiellen Vorstellungs-Vermögens* (1780) ['Concerning the Impossibility of Physical Memory-Impressions and the Material Properties of the Imagination'] challenged Hartleyan ideas; and Johann Maass (1766–1823), who attacked Hartley in his *Versuche: Über die Einbildungskraft* (1792). Coleridge possessed the 1797 second edition of this latter work, which he annotated in detail, and from which he lifted several key passages for the *Biographia*.

³¹⁸ The Latin *adytum* (*adyta* is the plural) means 'the innermost part of a temple, the sanctuary, which none but priests could enter, and from which oracles were delivered'; in general the word was used to mean 'a secret place'. Vergil uses it in the *Aeneid* (5:84) to mean 'a grave'.

gaps of fancy. Under that despotism of the eye (the emancipation from which Pythagoras by his *numeral*, and Plato by his *musical*, symbols, and both by geometric discipline, aimed at, as the first προπαιευτικον³¹⁹ of the mind)—under this strong sensuous influence, we are restless because invisible things are not the objects of vision; and metaphysical systems, for the most part, become popular, not for their truth, but in proportion as they attribute to causes a susceptibility of being *seen*, if only our visual organs were sufficiently powerful.

From a hundred possible confutations let one suffice. According to this system the idea or vibration *a* from the external object *A* becomes associable with the idea or vibration *m* from the external object *M*, because the oscillation *a* propagated itself so as to re-produce the oscillation *m*. But the original impression from *M* was essentially different from the impression *A*: unless therefore different causes may produce the same effect, the vibration *a* could never produce the vibration *m*: and this therefore could never be the means, by which *a* and *m* are associated.³²⁰ To understand this, the attentive reader need only be reminded, that the ideas are themselves, in Hartley's system, nothing more than their appropriate configurative vibrations. It is a mere delusion of the fancy to conceive the pre-existence of the ideas, in any chain of association, as so many differently colored billiard-balls in contact, so that when an object, the billiard-stick, strikes the first or white ball, the same motion propagates itself through the red, green, blue, black, &c. and sets the whole in motion. No! we must suppose the very same force, which *constitutes* the white ball, to *constitute* the red or black; or the idea of a circle to *constitute* the idea of a triangle; which is impossible.

But it may be said, that, by the sensations from the objects *A* and *M*, the nerves have acquired a disposition to the vibrations *a* and *m*, and therefore *a* need only be repeated in order to re-produce *m*. Now we will grant, for a moment, the possibility of such a disposition in a material nerve, which yet seems scarcely less absurd than to say, that a weather-cock had acquired a *habit* of turning to the east, from the wind having been so long in that quarter: for if it be replied, that we must take in the circumstance of *life*, what then becomes of the mechanical philosophy? And what is the *nerve*, but the flint which the wag placed in the pot as the first ingredient of his stone broth, requiring only salt, turnips, and mutton, for the remainder! But if we waive this, and

³¹⁹ The Greek ('propaideutikon') is from *paideuo* 'to teach, to bring up a child'. Plato (*Republic*, 536D) uses the word to describe the preparatory teaching a person must undergo before they are ready to understand Plato's dialectical method.

³²⁰ This passage, and much of the next three paragraphs, is lifted from Maass's *Einbildungskraft* (pages 32–3; Maass uses 'p' and 'a' where Coleridge uses 'a' and 'm').

pre-suppose the actual existence of such a disposition; two cases are possible. Either, every idea has its own nerve and correspondent oscillation, or this is not the case. If the latter be the truth, we should gain nothing by these dispositions; for then, every nerve having several dispositions, when the motion of any other nerve is propagated into it, there will be no ground or cause present, why exactly the oscillation *m* should arise, rather than any other to which it was equally pre-disposed. But if we take the former, and let every idea have a nerve of its own, then every nerve must be capable of propagating its motion into many other nerves; and again, there is no reason assignable, why the vibration *m* should arise, rather than any other *ad libitum*.³²¹

It is fashionable to smile at Hartley's vibrations and vibratiuncles; and his work has been re-edited by Priestley, with the omission of the *material* hypothesis.³²² But Hartley was too great a man, too coherent a thinker, for this to have been done, either consistently or to any wise purpose. For all other parts of his system, as far as they are peculiar to that system, once removed from their mechanical basis, not only lose their main support, but the very motive which led to their adoption. Thus the principle of *contemporaneity*, which Aristotle had made the common *condition* of all the laws of association, Hartley was constrained to represent as being itself the sole *law*. For to what law can the action of *material* atoms be subject, but that of proximity in *place*? And to what law can their motions be subjected, but that of *time*? Again, from this results inevitably, that the will, the reason, the judgment, and the understanding, instead of being the determining causes of association, must needs be represented as its *creatures*, and among its mechanical *effects*. Conceive, for instance, a broad stream, winding through a mountainous country with an indefinite number of currents, varying and running into each other according as the gusts chance to blow from the opening of the mountains. The temporary union of several currents in one, so as to form the main current of the

³²¹ 'At one's pleasure'. Coleridge means '... than any other *you may choose*'.

³²² Joseph Priestley, *Hartley's Theory of the Human Mind, on the Principles of Association of Ideas, with Essays Relating to the Subject of It* (1775). In fact, Priestley's book begins with a long chapter precisely about Hartley's 'vibrations' theory, although Coleridge is correct that Priestley does say he wishes to 'remove' obstacles to public understanding of Hartley's larger theory by 'exhibiting his theory of the human mind, as far as it relates to the doctrine of association of ideas only, omitting even what relates to the doctrine of vibrations, and the anatomical disquisitions which are connected with it'. At the same time he notes that 'I am far from being willing to suppress the doctrine of vibrations; thinking that Dr. Hartley has produced sufficient evidence for it, or as much as the nature of the thing will admit of at present (that is, till we know more of the structure of the body in other respects)' (Priestley, *Hartley's Theory*, v).

moment, would present an accurate image of Hartley's theory of the will.

Had this been really the case, the consequence would have been, that our whole life would be divided between the despotism of outward impressions, and that of senseless and passive memory. Take his law in its highest abstraction and most philosophical form, viz. that every partial representation recalls the total representation of which it was a part; and the law becomes nugatory, were it only for its universality. In practice it would indeed be mere lawlessness. Consider, how immense must be the sphere of a total impression from the top of St. Paul's church; and how rapid and continuous the series of such total impressions. If therefore we suppose the absence of all interference of the will, reason, and judgement, one or other of two consequences must result. Either the ideas (or relicts of such impression) will exactly imitate the order of the impression itself, which would be absolute *delirium*: or any one part of that impression might recal any other part, and (as from the law of continuity, there must exist in every total impression some one or more parts, which are components of some other following total impression, and so on ad infinitum) *any* part of *any* impression might recall *any* part of any *other*, without a cause present to determine *what* it should be. For to bring in the will, or reason, as causes of their own cause, that is, as at once causes and effects, can satisfy those only who, in their pretended evidences of a God having first demanded organization, as the sole cause and ground of intellect, will then coolly demand the pre-existence of intellect, as the cause and ground-work of organization. There is in truth but one state to which this theory applies at all, namely, that of complete light-headedness; and even to this it applies but partially, because the will and reason are perhaps never wholly suspended.

A case of this kind occurred in a Catholic town in Germany a year or two before my arrival at Göttingen, and had not then ceased to be a frequent subject of conversation. A young woman of four or five, and twenty, who could neither read, nor write, was seized with a nervous fever; during which, according to the asseverations of all the priests and monks of the neighbourhood, she became *possessed*, and, as it appeared, by a very learned devil. She continued incessantly talking Latin, Greek, and Hebrew, in very pompous tones and with most distinct enunciation. This possession was rendered more probable by the known fact that she was or had been an heretic. Voltaire humourously advises the devil to decline all acquaintance with medical men;³²³ and

³²³ Voltaire, *Dictionnaire philosophique* ['Philosophical Dictionary'] (1764), in the entry on 'Oracles': 'Le médecin Van-Dale . . . prouva, dans un livre plein de l'érudition la plus

it would have been more to his reputation, if he had taken this advice in the present instance. The case had attracted the particular attention of a young physician, and by his statement many eminent physiologists and psychologists visited the town, and cross-examined the case on the spot. Sheets full of her ravings were taken down from her own mouth, and were found to consist of sentences, coherent and intelligible each for itself, but with little or no connection with each other. Of the Hebrew, a small portion only could be traced to the Bible; the remainder seemed to be in the rabbinical dialect. All trick or conspiracy was out of the question. Not only had the young woman ever been a harmless, simple creature; but she was evidently labouring under a nervous fever. In the town, in which she had been resident for many years as a servant in different families, no solution presented itself. The young physician, however, determined to trace her past life step by step; for the patient herself was incapable of returning a rational answer. He at length succeeded in discovering the place, where her parents had lived: travelled thither, found *them* dead, but an uncle surviving; and from him learnt, that the patient had been charitably taken by an old protestant pastor at nine years old, and had remained with him some years, even till the old man's death. Of this pastor the uncle knew nothing, but that he was a very good man. With great difficulty, and after much search, our young medical philosopher discovered a niece of the pastor's, who had lived with him as his house-keeper, and had inherited his effects. She remembered the girl; related, that her venerable uncle had been too indulgent, and could not bear to hear the girl scolded; that she was willing to have kept her, but that after her patron's death, the girl herself refused to stay. Anxious enquiries were then, of course, made concerning the pastor's habits; and the solution of the phenomenon was soon obtained. For it appeared, that it had been the old man's custom, for years, to walk up and down a passage of his house into which the kitchen door opened, and to read to himself with a loud voice, out of his favorite books. A considerable

recherchée, que les diables n'avaient jamais rendu aucun oracle, n'avaient opéré aucun prodige, ne s'étaient jamais mêlés de rien, et qu'il n'y avait eu de véritables démons que les fripons qui avaient trompé les hommes. Il ne faut pas que le diable se joue jamais à un savant médecin. Je conseille au diable de s'adresser toujours aux facultés de théologie, et jamais aux facultés de médecine' ['The physician Van Dale . . . proved, in a work abounding in the most recondite learning, that the devils had never delivered a single oracle, had never performed a single prodigy, and had never mingled in human affairs at all; and that there never had in reality been any demons but those impostors who had deceived their fellow men. The devil should never ridicule or despise a sensible physician. If the devil would be advised by me, he would always address himself to the faculty of theology, and never to the faculty of medicine.']

number of these were still in the niece's possession. She added, that he was a very learned man and a great Hebraist. Among the books were found a collection of rabbinical writings, together with several of the Greek and Latin fathers; and the physician succeeded in identifying so many passages with those taken down at the young woman's bedside, that no doubt could remain in any rational mind concerning the true origin of the impressions made on her nervous system.

This authenticated case furnishes both proof and instance, that reliques of sensation may exist for an indefinite time in a latent state, in the very same order in which they were originally impressed; and as we cannot rationally suppose the feverish state of the brain to act in any other way than as a stimulus, this fact (and it would not be difficult to adduce several of the same kind) contributes to make it even probable, that all thoughts are in themselves imperishable; and, that if the intelligent faculty should be rendered more comprehensive, it would require only a different and apportioned organization, *the body celestial* instead of *the body terrestrial*, to bring before every human soul the collective experience of its whole past existence. And this, this, perchance, is the dread book of judgement, in the mysterious hieroglyphics every idle word is recorded! Yea, in the very nature of a living spirit, it may be more possible that heaven and earth should pass away, than that a single act, a single thought, should be loosened or lost from that living chain of causes, to all whose links, conscious or unconscious, the free-will, our only absolute *self*, is co-extensive and co-present. But not now dare I longer discourse of this, waiting for a loftier mood, and a nobler subject, warned from within and from without, that it is profanation to speak of these mysteries* τοῖς μηδέποτε φαντασθεῖσιν, ὡς καλὸν τὸ τῆς δικαιοσύνης καὶ σωφροσύνης πρόσωπον, καὶ οὔτε ἔσπερος οὔτε ἐώιος οὔτω καλὰ. Τὸν γὰρ ὀρώντα πρὸς τὸ ὀρώμενον συγγενὲς καὶ ὅμοιον ποιησάμενον δεῖ ἐπιβάλλειν τῇ [θ]έα. οὐ γὰρ ἂν πώποτε εἶδεν Ὀφθαλμὸς Ἥλιον ἡλιοειδῆς μὴ γεγενημένος, οὐδὲ τὸ Καλὸν ἂν ἴδῃ ψυχὴ μὴ καλῆ γενομένη. PLOTINUS

*“To those to whose imagination it has never been presented, how beautiful is the countenance of justice and wisdom; and that neither the morning nor the evening star are so fair. For in order to direct the view aright, it behoves that the beholder should have made himself congenerous and similar to the object beheld. Never could the eye have beheld the sun, had not its own essence been soliform,” (i.e. *pre-configured to light by a similarity of essence with that of light*) “neither can a soul not beautiful attain to an intuition of beauty.”³²⁴

³²⁴ This is Coleridge's own translation of the Plotinus. The original is quoted from *Enneads* 1.6.4 (the first sentence) and *Enneads* 1.6.9 (the remainder of the passage). The word rendered as 'soliform' (ἡλιοειδῆς) means something a little simpler in the original Greek than his lengthy gloss: 'like the sun; bright and beaming' (Liddell and Scott). It's a word that appears several times in Plato's *Republic* (508A, 509A) and elsewhere.

CHAPTER 7

Of the necessary consequences of the Hartleian theory— Of the original mistake or equivocation which procured admission for the theory— Memoria Technica.

We will pass by the utter incompatibility of such a law (if law it may be called, which would itself be a slave of chances) with even that *appearance* of rationality forced upon us by the outward phenomena of human conduct, abstracted from our own consciousness. We will agree to forget this for the moment, in order to fix our attention on that subordination of final to efficient causes in the human being, which flows of necessity from the assumption, that the will, and with the will all acts of thought and attention, are parts and products of this blind mechanism, instead of being distinct powers, whose function it is to controul, determine, and modify the phantasma chaos of association. The soul becomes a mere ens logicum; for, as a real separable being, it would be more worthless and ludicrous than the Grimalkins in the Cat-harpsichord, described in the Spectator.³²⁵ For these did form a part of the process; but, to Hartley's scheme the soul is present only to be pinched or *stroked*, while the very squeals or purring are produced by an agency wholly independent and alien. It involves all the difficulties, all the incomprehensibility (if it be not indeed, ὡς ἔμοιγε δοκεῖ³²⁶ the absurdity), of intercommunion between substances that have no one property in common, without any of the convenient consequences that bribed the judgement to the admission of the *dualistic* hypothesis. Accordingly, this caput mortuum³²⁷ of the Hartleian process has been rejected by his followers, and the consciousness considered as a *result*, as a *tune*, the common product of the breeze and the harp: tho' this again is the mere remotion of

³²⁵ The reference is to a much reprinted piece from the magazine (*Spectator*, 361 (24 April 1712)) that comically treated the 'cat-calling' of a dissatisfied theatre audience as if it was produced by a special musical instrument – not, whatever Coleridge's memory suggested to him, a cat-harpsichord (in fact the specific design of the piece is not specified).

³²⁶ 'As it seems to me.' This Greek phrase is common in Plato's dialogues.

³²⁷ 'Residue'. The Latin phrase (literally 'dead head') was used in alchemy to describe any inert or useless matter left behind after more volatile elements had been combined.

one absurdity to make way for another, equally preposterous. For what is harmony but a mode of relation, the very *esse* of which is *percipi*?³²⁸ An ens rationale,³²⁹ which pre-supposes the power, that by perceiving creates it? The razor's edge becomes a saw to the armed vision; and the delicious melodies of Purcell or Cimarosa might be disjointed stammerings to a hearer, whose partition of time should be a thousand times subtler than ours.³³⁰ But this obstacle too let us imagine ourselves to have surmounted, and "at one bound high over-leap all bound!"³³¹ Yet according to this hypothesis the disquisition, to which I am at present soliciting the reader's attention, may be as truly said to be written by Saint Paul's church, as by *me*: for it is the mere motion of my muscles and nerves; and these again are set in motion from external causes equally passive, which external causes stand themselves in interdependent connection with every thing that exists or has existed. Thus the whole universe co-operates to produce the minutest stroke of every letter, save only that I myself, and I alone, have nothing to do with it, but merely the causeless and *effectless* beholding of it when it is done. Yet scarcely can it be called a beholding; for it is neither an act nor an effect; but an impossible creation of a *something-nothing* out of its very contrary! It is the mere quick-silver plating behind a looking-glass; and in this alone consists the poor worthless I! The sum total of my moral and intellectual intercourse dissolved into its elements are reduced to *extension, motion, degrees of velocity*, and those diminished *copies* of configurative motion, which form what we call notions, and notions of notions. Of such philosophy well might Butler say—

The metaphysics but a puppet motion
That goes with screws, the notion of a notion;
The copy of a copy and lame draught

³²⁸ Playing on Berkeley's celebrated statement, *esse est percipi*: 'to be is to be perceived'.

³²⁹ 'Rational entity'.

³³⁰ In other words, the edge of a razor looks smooth and sharp to us, but when we 'arm' our vision (by looking through a powerful microscope) we see that, much magnified, its blade appears as irregular and crenulated as a saw. 'If a needle, apparently very sharp, be viewed through a microscope, it will seem to have a very blunt, irregular point . . . the case is the same with the edge of the best set razor. When viewed through the microscope, it will appear like the back of a penknife, and at certain distances exhibit indentations like the teeth of a saw, but irregular' (Jacques Ozaman, *Recreations in Mathematics and Natural Philosophy* (1803), 371–2). The famously smooth and harmonious music of both English composer Henry Purcell (1659–95) and Italian composer Domenico Cimarosa (1749–1801) provides Coleridge's aural equivalent of the same idea.

³³¹ Milton, *Paradise Lost*, 4:181.

Unnaturally taken from a thought:
 That counterfeits all pantomimic tricks,
 And turns the eyes, like an old crucifix;
 That counterchanges whatsoe'er it calls
 B' another name, and makes it true or false;
 Turns truth to falsehood, falsehood into truth,
 By virtue of the Babylonian's tooth.

MISCELLANEOUS THOUGHTS.³³²

The inventor of the watch did not in reality invent it; he only look'd on, while the blind causes, the only true artists, were unfolding themselves. So must it have been too with my friend ALLSTON, when he sketched his picture of the dead man revived by the bones of the prophet Elijah.³³³ So must it have been with Mr. SOUTHEY and LORD BYRON, when the one *fancied* himself composing his "RODERICK," and the other his "CHILD HAROLD." The same must hold good of all systems of philosophy; of all arts, governments, wars by sea and by land; in short, of all things that ever have been or that ever will be produced. For according to this system it is not the affections and passions that are at work, in as far as they are *sensations* or *thoughts*. We only *fancy*, that we act from rational resolves, or prudent motives, or from impulses of anger, love, or generosity. In all these cases the real agent is a *something-nothing-every-thing*, which does all of which we know, and knows nothing of all that itself does.

The existence of an infinite spirit, of an intelligent and holy will, must, on this system, be mere articulated motions of the air.³³⁴ For

³³² English poet Samuel Butler (1613–80), whose *Miscellaneous Thoughts* was published posthumously in 1759. These are lines 93–102. 'Babylonian's tooth' is a mode of misdirection used by conjurers. The performer smiles, drawing attention to an apparently iron tooth in his mouth ('Babylonian' because of the iron teeth of Nebuchadnezzar's vision in the Biblical book of *Daniel*), meanwhile undertaking whatever sleight of hand his trick requires. 'The Jugler . . . calls upon *Presto begone*, and the *Babylonian's Tooth* to amuse and divert the Rabble from looking too narrowly into his Tricks' (Butler, *Characters* (1759), 113).

³³³ Coleridge met and befriended the American painter Washington Allston (1779–1843) in 1806. He has presumably misremembered the title of one of Allston's most celebrated pictures, *The Dead Man Restored to Life by Touching the Bones of the Prophet Elisha* (1810–11).

³³⁴ Coleridge means 'empty speech'. See, for instance, Thomas Creech's discussion of Lucretius's *De Rerum Natura*: 'Voice is only Sound articulated: and this Articulation is caus'd by the Air's being more peculiarly modify'd in Speech than in other Sounds . . . for one Motion of the Air necessarily causes one certain Sound; and one certain Sound causes one certain Perception' (Thomas Creech, *Titus Lucretius Carus, On the Nature of Things: in six books* (2 vols, 1714), 2:353).

as the function of the human understanding is no other than merely (to appear to itself) to combine and to apply the phænomena of the association; and as these derive all their reality from the primary sensations; and the sensations again all *their* reality from the impressions ab extra;³³⁵ a God not visible, audible, or tangible, can exist only in the sounds and letters that form his name and attributes. If in *ourselves* there be no such faculties as those of the will, and the scientific reason, we must either have an *innate* idea of them, which would overthrow the whole system; or we can have no idea at all. The process, by which Hume degraded the notion of cause and effect into a blind product of delusion and habit, into the mere sensation of *proceeding* life (nisus vitalis)³³⁶ associated with the images of the memory; this same process must be repeated to the equal degradation of every *fundamental* idea in ethics or theology.

Far, very far am I from burthening with the odium of these consequences the moral characters of those who first formed, or have since adopted the system! It is most noticeable of the excellent and pious Hartley, that in the proofs of the existence and attributes of God, with which his second volume commences, he makes no reference to the principle or results of the first. Nay, he assumes, as his foundations, ideas which, if we embrace the doctrines of his first volume, can exist no where but in the vibrations of the ethereal medium common to the nerves and to the atmosphere. Indeed the whole of the second volume is, with the fewest possible exceptions, independent of his peculiar system. So true is it, that the faith, which saves and sanctifies, is a collective energy, a total act of the whole moral being; that its living sensorium is in the *heart*; and that no errors of the understanding can be morally arraigned unless they have proceeded from the heart.—But whether they be such, no man can be certain in the case of another, scarcely perhaps even in

³³⁵ 'From outside'.

³³⁶ 'Vital tension'. 'Nisus' is a Latin poetic term meaning 'a pressing or resting upon or against', 'a striving, exertion, labour, effort'. Coleridge here draws on a footnote in David Hume's *A Treatise of Human Nature* (1739–40), Section 7 'Of the Idea of Necessary Connexion': 'It may be pretended, that the resistance which we meet with in bodies, obliging us frequently to exert our force, and call up all our power, this gives us the idea of force and power. It is this *nisus*, or strong endeavour of which we are conscious, that is the original impression from which this idea is copied. But, first, we attribute power to a vast number of objects, where we never can suppose this resistance or exertion of force to take place; to the Supreme Being, who never meets with any resistance; to the mind in its command over its ideas and limbs, in common thinking and motion, where the effect follows immediately upon the will, without any exertion or summoning up of force; to inanimate matter, which is not capable of this sentiment.'

his own. Hence it follows by inevitable consequence, that man may perchance determine, *what* is an heresy; but God only can know, *who* is a heretic. It does not, however, by any means follow that opinions fundamentally false are harmless. An hundred causes may co-exist to form one complex antidote. Yet the sting of the adder remains venomous, though there are many who have taken up the evil thing; and it hurted them not!³³⁷ Some indeed there seem to have been, in an unfortunate neighbour-nation at least, who have embraced this system with a full view of all its moral and religious consequences; some—

— who deem themselves most free,
 When they within this gross and visible sphere
 Chain down the winged thought, scoffing ascent,
 Proud in their meanness; and themselves they cheat
 With noisy emptiness of learned phrase,
 Their subtle fluids, impacts, essences,
 Self-working tools, uncaus'd effects, and all
 Those blind omniscients, those Almighty slaves,
 Untenanting Creation of its God!³³⁸

Such men need discipline, not argument; they must be made better men, before they can become wiser.

The attention will be more profitably employed in attempting to discover and expose the paralogisms, by the magic of which such a faith could find admission into minds framed for a nobler creed. These, it appears to me, may be all reduced to one sophism as their common genus; the mistaking the *conditions* of a thing for its *causes* and *essence*; and the process by which we arrive at the knowledge of a faculty, for the faculty itself. The air I breathe is the *condition* of my life, not its cause. We could never have learned that we had eyes but by the process of seeing; yet having seen we know that the eyes must have pre-existed in order to render the process of sight possible. Let us cross-examine Hartley's scheme under the guidance of this distinction; and we shall discover, that contemporaneity (Leibnitz's *Lex Continui*)³³⁹ is the *limit and condition* of the laws of mind,

³³⁷ Referring to Mark 16:18: 'They shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing it shall not hurt them.'

³³⁸ Coleridge, *The Destiny of Nations* (1796), 27–35. The 'neighbour-nation', of course, is Revolutionary France.

³³⁹ Leibniz's 'Law of Continuity' asserts that 'natura non facit saltus' ['nature never makes leaps']: which is to say, not only that any natural development occurs via a coherent succession of contiguous events, but that the conclusion of any such progression can be

itself being rather a law of matter, at least of phaenomena considered as material. At the utmost, it is to *thought* the same, as the law of gravitation is to loco-motion. In every voluntary movement we first counteract gravitation, in order to avail ourselves of it. It must exist, that there may be a something to be counteracted, and which by its re-action, aids the force that is exerted to resist it. Let us consider, what we do when we leap. We first resist the gravitating power by an act purely voluntary, and then by another act, voluntary in part, we yield to it in order to alight on the spot, which we had previously proposed to ourselves. Now let a man watch his mind while he is composing; or, to take a still more common case, while he is trying to recollect a name; and he will find the process completely analogous. Most of my readers will have observed a small water-insect on the surface of rivulets, which throws a cinque-spotted shadow fringed with prismatic colours on the sunny bottom of the brook; and will have noticed, how the little animal *wins* its way up against the stream, by alternate pulses of active and passive motion, now resisting the current, and now yielding to it in order to gather strength and a momentary *fulcrum* for a further propulsion.³⁴⁰ This is no unapt emblem of the mind's self-experience in the act of thinking. There are evidently two powers at work, which relatively to each other are active and passive; and this is not possible without an intermediate faculty, which is at once both active and passive.

extrapolated from its starting position. Leibniz's 1701 formulation of the law is: 'In any supposed continuous transition, ending in any terminus, it is permissible to institute a general reasoning, in which the final terminus may also be included' (J. M. Child (ed. and trans.), *The Early Mathematical Manuscripts of Leibniz* (Chicago: Open Court, 1920), 123).

³⁴⁰ Richard Holmes points out (*Coleridge: Darker Reflections* (HarperCollins, 1998), 397) that Hume had previously described the action of the imagination as 'apt to continue even when its object fails it, and, like a galley put in motion by the oars, carries on its course without any new impulse' (Hume, *Treatise of Human Nature* (1739–40), 1.4.2). Coleridge would also have known Southey's poem, 'For a Tablet on the Banks of a Stream' (written at Bristol in 1796), a piece that connects a sunny rivulet, a water boatman and thought:

If the Sun rides high, the breeze,
That loves to ripple o'er the rivulet,
Will play around thy brow . . . mark how clear
They sparkle o'er the shallows, and behold
Where o'er the surface wheels with restless speed
Yon glossy insect – on the sand below
How its swift shadow flits. (2–9)

'Cinque-spotted' is from Shakespeare: the villainous Iachimo creeps into sleeping Imogen's bedchamber, and observes on her breast 'A mole cinque-spotted, like the crimson drops / I' the bottom of a cowslip' (*Cymbeline*, II.ii.37–8).

(In philosophical language, we must denominate this intermediate faculty in all its degrees and determinations, the IMAGINATION. But in common language, and especially on the subject of poetry, we appropriate the name to a superior degree of the faculty, joined to a superior voluntary controul over it.)

Contemporaneity then, being the common condition of all the laws of association, and a component element in the *materia subjecta*,³⁴¹ the parts of which are to be associated, must needs be co-present with all. Nothing, therefore, can be more easy than to pass off on an incautious mind this constant companion of each, for the essential substance of all. But if we appeal to our own consciousness, we shall find that even *time* itself, as the *cause* of a *particular* act of association, is distinct from contemporaneity, as the *condition* of *all* association. Seeing a mackarel, it may happen, that I immediately think of gooseberries, because I at the same time ate mackarel with gooseberries as the sauce.³⁴² The first syllable of the latter word, being that which had co-existed with the image of the bird so called, I may then think of a goose. In the next moment the image of a swan may arise before me, though I had never seen the two birds together. In the first two former instances, I am conscious that their co-existence in *time* was the circumstance, that enabled me to recollect them; and equally conscious am I that the latter was recalled to me by the joint operation of likeness and contrast. So it is with *cause* and *effect*: so too with *order*. So am I able to distinguish whether it was proximity in time, or continuity in space, that occasioned me to recall B on the mention of A. They cannot be indeed *separated* from contemporaneity; for that would be to separate them from the mind itself. The act of consciousness is indeed identical with *time* considered in its essence (I mean *time* per se, as contra-distinguished from our *notion* of time; for this is always blended with the idea of space, which, as the *contrary* of time, is therefore its measure.) Nevertheless the accident of seeing two objects at the same moment acts, as a distinguishable cause from that of having seen them: and the true practical general law of association is this; that whatever makes certain parts of a total impression more vivid or distinct than the rest, will determine the mind to recall these in preference to others equally linked together by the common condition of contemporaneity, or (what I deem a more appropriate and philosophical term) of *continuity*. But the will itself by confining

³⁴¹ 'Subject matter'.

³⁴² Coleridge presumably knew that the French for 'gooseberry' is 'groseille a maquereau' ['mackerel currants'] ('from its being used as a seasoning to mackerel', *Edinburgh Encyclopedia* (1832), 10:577).

and intensifying* the attention may arbitrarily give vividness or distinctness to any object whatsoever; and from hence we may deduce the uselessness if not the absurdity of certain recent schemes which *promise* an artificial *memory*, but which in reality can only produce a confusion and debasement of the *fancy*. Sound logic, as the habitual subordination of the individual to the species, and of the species to the genus; philosophical knowledge of facts under the relation of cause and effect; a chearful and communicative temper that disposes us to notice the similarities and contrasts of things, that we may be able to illustrate the one by the other; a quiet conscience; a condition free from anxieties; sound health, and above all (as far as relates to passive remembrance) a healthy digestion; *these* are the best, these are the only ARTS OF MEMORY.³⁴³

* I am aware, that this word occurs neither in Johnson's Dictionary nor in any classical writer. But the word, "*to intend*," which Newton and others before him employ in this sense, is now so completely appropriated to another meaning, that I could not use it without ambiguity: while to paraphrase the sense, as by *render intense*, would often break up the sentence and destroy that harmony of the position of the words with the logical position of the thoughts, which is a beauty in all composition, and more especially desirable in a close philosophical investigation. I have therefore hazarded the word, *intensify*: though, I confess, it sounds uncouth to my own ear.³⁴⁴

³⁴³ The reference is to the various 'schemes which *promise* an artificial *memory*' through mnemonic or 'memory palace' devices, several of which use the phrase 'Art of Memory' in their title. For example: Marius D'Assigny, *The Art of Memory, a Treatise useful for all, especially such as are to speak in Publick* (1705); Anon, *The New Art of Memory, Founded Upon the Principles Taught by M. Gregor von Feinaigle* (1812).

³⁴⁴ The *OED* supports Coleridge's claim that he coined this as a new word; but in fact it was in use before the *Biographia*. 'They [Catholic schools] cheapen, they defend, they *intensify* learning; and all this is more than an equivalent for the injury which may arise from their connection with specific creeds' ('Chandler's Life of Bishop Waynflete', *The Monthly Review*, 67 (1812), 67).

CHAPTER 8

The system of DUALISM introduced by Des Cartes—Refined first by Spinoza and afterwards by Leibnitz into the doctrine of Harmonia præstabilita—Hylozoism—Materialism—Neither of these systems, on any possible theory of association, supplies or supersedes a theory of perception, or explains the formation of the associable.

To the best of my knowledge Des Cartes was the first philosopher, who introduced the absolute and essential heterogeneity of the soul as intelligence, and the body as matter. The assumption, and the form of speaking, have remained, though the denial of all other properties to matter but that of extension, on which denial the whole system of dualism is grounded, has been long exploded. For since impenetrability is intelligible only as a mode of resistance; its admission places the essence of *matter* in an act or power, which it possesses in common with *spirit*; and body and spirit are therefore no longer absolutely heterogeneous, but *may* without any *absurdity* be supposed to be different modes, or degrees in perfection, of a common substratum. To this possibility, however, it was not the fashion to advert. The soul was a *thinking* substance; and body a *space-filling* substance. Yet the apparent action of each on the other pressed heavy on the philosopher on the one hand; and no less heavily on the other hand pressed the evident truth, that the law of causality holds only between homogeneous things, i.e. things having some common property; and cannot extend from one world into another, its opposite. A close analysis evinced it to be no less absurd than the question whether a man's affection for his wife, lay North-east, or South-west of the love he bore towards his child?³⁴⁵ Leibnitz's doctrine of a pre-established harmony, which he certainly borrowed from Spinoza, who had himself taken the hint

³⁴⁵ This draws on English thinker John Petvin's *Letters Concerning Mind* (1750), which Coleridge also owned and annotated. Petvin argues that anything that exists does so in a particular place: 'the things that have been, and shall be, have respect, as we said before, to Present, Past, and Future. These, likewise, that now *are*, have moreover Place; that, for Instance, which is here; that which is to the East; that which is to the West.' Coleridge objects that some 'things' are not topographically disposable in this fashion; his marginalium at this point of Petvin's book reads: 'Pray, did Petvin's Love to his Wife stand N.E. or South West of his Esteem for his Friend?'

from Des Cartes's animal machines, was in its *common* interpretation too strange to survive the inventor—too repugnant to our *common sense* (which is not indeed entitled to a judicial voice in the courts of scientific philosophy; but whose whispers still exert a strong secret influence.) Even Wolf the admirer and illustrious systematizer of the Leibnizian doctrine, contents himself with defending the possibility of the idea, but does not adopt it as a part of the edifice.³⁴⁶

The hypothesis of Hylozoism, on the other side, is the death of all rational physiology, and indeed of all physical science;³⁴⁷ for that requires a limitation of terms, and cannot consist with the arbitrary power of multiplying attributes by occult qualities. Besides, it answers no purpose; unless indeed a difficulty can be solved by multiplying it,

³⁴⁶ French philosopher René Descartes (1596–1650) believed the human body to be a material entity to which a non-material soul was connected via the pineal gland. Descartes was not the first to propose this 'dualism', or as Coleridge puts it this 'heterogeneity' ('the soul as intelligence, and the body as matter'), although it is famously associated with his name. Coleridge's 'animal machines' translates the Cartesian phrase 'bête machines' – the soulless bodies of animals, or of the human body considered as separate from the soul. Descartes believed the body affected the soul and vice versa; but other thinkers argued that two entities that had radically nothing in common with one another could not by definition affect one another. Some thinkers argued that all such interactions are actually caused by God. Leibniz thought this explanation implied that God was continuously and miraculously intervening in His creation, a notion he disliked. Instead he developed the theory that things act not on other things, but only on themselves. He thought all these substances (material and immaterial) were created by God with pre-existing natures that harmonize with all other substances in ways that make it look as though different substances were causing other substances to act. So, for example, a clock records that the sun sets at its proper time for 1 November (let's say, at 6pm): but the clock does not *cause* the sun to set, and neither does the sunset *cause* the hands of the clock to turn. Rather both things exist in a harmonious relationship to one another, established by their respective makers. This is what Leibniz called the *harmonia praestabilita* or 'pre-established harmony' of all things. 'Wolf' is Christian Wolff (1679–1754), a German philosopher and mathematician, who developed Leibniz's thought into a 'Wolffian' school by downplaying monads and 'pre-established harmony' and emphasising other elements. Coleridge owned and annotated an English translation of Wolff's *Logic, or Rational Thoughts on the Powers of the Human Understanding* (1770).

³⁴⁷ 'Hylozoism' is the belief that all matter, down to every atom, is imbued with life. Coleridge's 'rational physiology' (*physiologia rationali*) is taken from Kant (who opposed the Hylozoist hypothesis): 'Rational physiology is the cognition of objects insofar as it is obtained not from experience, but rather from a concept of reason. The *object* is always an object of the senses and experience; only the *cognition* of it can be attained through pure concepts of reason, for thereby physiology is distinguished from transcendental philosophy, where the object is also borrowed not from experience but rather from pure reason. Thus to rational physiology [*physiologia rationalis*] will belong, e.g., that a body is infinitely divisible, for a whole of matter belongs to the concept of body. But matter occupies a space, and space is infinitely divisible, thus every appearance of space is as well.' (Kant, *Lectures on Metaphysics* (1775), 28:221; translated by Karl Ameriks and Steve Naragon (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 42)

or we can acquire a clearer notion of our soul, by being told that we have a million of souls, and that every atom of our bodies has a soul of its own.³⁴⁸ Far more prudent is it to admit the difficulty once for all, and then let it lie at rest. There is a sediment indeed at the bottom of the vessel, but all the water above it is clear and transparent. The Hylozoist only shakes it up, and renders the whole turbid.

But it is not either the nature of man, or the duty of the philosopher to despair concerning any important problem until, as in the squaring of the circle, the impossibility of a solution has been demonstrated. How the *esse* assumed as originally distinct from the *scire*,³⁴⁹ can ever unite itself with it; how *being* can transform itself into a *knowing*, becomes conceivable on one only condition; namely, if it can be shown that the *vis representativa*,³⁵⁰ or the Sentient, is itself a species of being; i.e. either as a property or attribute, or as an hypostasis³⁵¹ or self subsistence. The former is indeed the assumption of materialism; a system which could not but be patronized by the philosopher, if only it actually performed what it promises. But how any affection from without can metamorphose itself into perception or will, the materialist has hitherto left, not only as incomprehensible as he found it, but has aggravated it into a comprehensible absurdity. For, grant that an object from without could act upon the conscious *self*, as on a consubstantial object; yet such an affection could only engender something homogeneous with itself. Motion could only propagate motion. Matter has no *Inward*.³⁵² We remove one surface, but to meet

³⁴⁸ 'Democritus was so sensible of this consequence, that if every atom be destitute of a soul, every combination of atoms must be so too, that there was no particular atom, to which he did not assign a soul.' (Richard Fiddes, *Theologia Speculativa* (1718), 31)

³⁴⁹ *Esse* = 'to be'; *scire* = 'to know'.

³⁵⁰ 'Power of representing'. *Vis representativa* is term from Christian Wolff's philosophy: 'Vis igitur Deo inest per eminentiam. In ente finito vis continuo rendit ad status mutationem, veluti vis repraesentativa mundi in anima continuo ad alias aliasque repraesentationes, seu perceptiones: ast in ente infinito vis continuo tendit ad unum eundemque actum, ut ideo sit in se immutabilis, veluti vis repraesentativa mundi in Deo ad repraesentationem eandem omnium mundorum possibilitium simultaneam atque prorsus distinctam.' ['Force operates, then, by means of Divine eminence. In a finite entity, a particular *vis continuo* [linking or connecting force] effects a change in state, the (as it were) *vis repraesentativa* of the world in the soul connecting to other representations, or perceptions, of other things: but in an *infinite* entity the *vis continuo* tends towards one and the same motion, because it is in itself immutable; accordingly the as-it-were *vis repraesentativa* of the Divine world represents the entire world of possibilities as both simultaneous and as wholly distinct.' (Christian Wolff, *Theologia Naturalis* (1737), 45)

³⁵¹ 'Underlying essence.'

³⁵² Here, as elsewhere in this chapter, Coleridge is translating (without acknowledging the fact) Schelling's *Philosophische Schriften* (1809): 'Daher der Materie kein Inneres zukommt' (240). In Coleridge's defence, this position is not original to Schelling, and was indeed

with another. We can but divide a particle into particles; and each atom comprehends in itself the properties of the material universe. Let any reflecting mind make the experiment of explaining to itself the evidence of our sensuous intuitions, from the hypothesis that in any given perception there is a something which has been communicated to it by an impact, or an impression *ab extra*.³⁵³ In the first place, by the impact on the percipient or *ens representans*³⁵⁴ not the object itself, but only its action or effect, will pass into the same. Not the iron tongue, but its vibrations, pass into the metal of the bell.³⁵⁵ Now in our immediate perception, it is not the mere power or act of the object, but the object itself, which is immediately present. We might indeed attempt to explain this result by a chain of *deductions* and *conclusions*; but that, first, the very faculty of deducing and concluding would equally demand an explanation; and secondly, that there exists in fact no such intermediation by logical notions, such as those of cause and effect. It is the object itself, not the product of a syllogism, which is present to our consciousness. Or would we explain this supervention of the object to the sensation, by a productive faculty set in motion by an impulse; still the transition, into the percipient, of the object itself, from which the impulse proceeded, assumes a power that can permeate and wholly possess the soul,

And like a God by spiritual art,
Be all in all, and all in every part.

COWLEY³⁵⁶

And how came the *percipient* here? And what is become of the wonder-promising MATTER, that was to perform all these marvels by force of mere figure, weight and motion? The most consistent proceeding of the dogmatic materialist is to fall back into the common

fairly commonly articulated by eighteenth-century post-Kantian philosophers: see, for example, Jacob Sigismund Beck, 'Grundriss der Critischen Philosophie', *Aetas Kantiana*, 21 (1796), 115: 'Es glebt also kein *innere* Bestimmungsgründe der Veränderung in der Materie; sondern jede Veränderung derselben setzt eine äußere Ursache voraus' ['there is no "inward" to Matter that can determine its change, but every change is the same as the external causes'].

³⁵³ 'From the outside'.

³⁵⁴ 'Representing entity'.

³⁵⁵ Coleridge takes this example from Thomas Brown's *Inquiry into the Relation of Cause and Effect* (1806). 'He who, for the first time, hears a bell rung, if he be ignorant of the theory of sound, will very naturally suppose, that the stroke of the clapper on the bell is the cause of the sound which he hears. He learns, however, that this stroke would be of little effect, were it not for the vibrations excited by it in the particles of the bell itself.' (Brown, *Inquiry*, 4th edn (1835), 149)

³⁵⁶ Abraham Cowley, 'All-Over Love', *The Mistress* (1647), 9–10.

rank of *soul-and-bodyists*; to affect the mysterious, and declare the whole process a revelation *given*, and not to be *understood*, which it would be prophane to examine too closely. *Datur non intelligitur*.³⁵⁷ But a revelation unconfirmed by miracles, and a faith not commanded by the conscience, a philosopher may venture to pass by, without suspecting himself of any irreligious tendency.

Thus, as materialism has been generally taught, it is utterly unintelligible, and owes all its proselytes to the propensity so common among men, to mistake distinct images for clear conceptions; and vice versa, to reject as inconceivable whatever from its own nature is unimaginable. But as soon as it becomes intelligible, it ceases to be materialism. In order to explain *thinking*, as a material phenomenon, it is necessary to refine matter into a mere modification of intelligence, with the two-fold function of *appearing* and *perceiving*. Even so did Priestley in his controversy with Price!³⁵⁸ He stript matter of all its material properties; substituted spiritual powers; and when we expected to find a body, behold! we had nothing but its ghost—the *apparition* of a defunct substance!³⁵⁹

I shall not dilate further on this subject; because it will (if God grant health and permission) be treated of at large and systematically in a work, which I have many years been preparing, on the PRODUCTIVE LOGOS human and divine; with, and as the introduction to, a full commentary on the Gospel of St. John.³⁶⁰ To make myself intelligible

³⁵⁷ ‘Given, not understood’. Coleridge adapts (or parodies) a famous phrase of Erasmus, by which he aimed to stress that divine grace is given freely by God, not earned by man – the benefits of Christ (*‘beneficii Christi’*) are *‘datur, non meritis’* (Erasmus, *Paraphrasis in Epistolas Pauli ad Galatas* (1520), v).

³⁵⁸ Joseph Priestley (1733–1804) collaborated with Unitarian minister and moral philosopher Richard Price (1723–91) on *A Free Discussion of the Doctrine of Materialism and Philosophical Necessity, in a Correspondence Between Dr Price and Dr Priestly* (1778): this ‘correspondence’ enabled them each to articulate their different positions, materialist and spiritualist respectively.

³⁵⁹ Coleridge is making a joking reference to the sceptical ‘shrewd Philosopher’ of Samuel Butler’s *Hudibras* (1663):

Whatever Sceptic could inquire for,
For ev’ry why he had a wherefore: . . .
He could reduce all things to acts,
And knew their natures by abstracts;
Where entity and quiddity,
The ghosts of defunct bodies fly. (Butler, *Hudibras*, Canto 1, lines 131–46)

³⁶⁰ Coleridge planned this work for many years, although he never actually wrote it. On 12 September 1814 he wrote to Daniel Stuart describing it as ‘my most important work . . . The title is: Christianity the one true Philosophy – or 5 Treatises on the Logos, or communicative Intelligence, Natural, Human, and Divine’ (Griggs, *Collected Letters*, 3:533). The following year he wrote to John May (27 September 1815), describing

as far as my present subject requires, it will be sufficient briefly to observe.—1. That all association demands and presupposes the existence of the thoughts and images to be associated.—2. The hypothesis of an external world exactly correspondent to those images or modifications of our own being, which alone (according to this system) we actually behold, is as thorough idealism as Berkeley's, inasmuch as it equally (perhaps, in a more perfect degree) removes all reality and immediateness of perception, and places us in a dream-world of phantoms and spectres, the inexplicable swarm and equivocal generation of motions in our own brains.—3. That this hypothesis neither involves the explanation, nor precludes the necessity, of a mechanism and co-adequate forces in the perceiver, which at the more than magic touch of the impulse from without is to create anew for itself the correspondent object. The formation of a copy is not solved by the mere pre-existence of an original; the copyist of Raphael's Transfiguration must repeat more or less perfectly the process of Raphael.³⁶¹ It would be easy to explain a thought from the image on the retina, and that from the geometry of light, if this very light did not present the very same difficulty. We might as rationally chant the Brahmin creed of the tortoise that supported the bear, that supported the elephant, that supported the world, to the tune of "This is the house that Jack built." The *sic Deo placitum est*³⁶² we all admit as the sufficient cause, and the divine goodness as the sufficient reason; but an answer to the whence? and why? is no answer to the how? which alone is the physiologist's concern. It is a mere sophisma pigrum, and (as Bacon hath said) the arrogance of pusillanimity, which lifts up the idol of a mortal's fancy and commands us to fall down and worship it, as a work of divine wisdom, an ancile or palladium fallen from heaven.³⁶³ By the very same argument the supporters of

this as 'a work, which has employed all my best thoughts & efforts for the last twelve years and more, and on which I would ground my reputation.' He considered calling it 'LOGOSOPHIA: or on the LOGOS Divine and Human'.

³⁶¹ Raphael's painting *The Transfiguration* was painted during the last three years of the artist's life, 1517–20. It was widely copied.

³⁶² Psalms 68:17: 'ut beneplacitum est deo' ['thus is God well pleased'].

³⁶³ 'Sophisma pigrum' ['lazy logic'] and 'raison paresseuse' are both Leibnizian phrases (*Théodicée*, 55). Francis Bacon noted the 'arrogance of pusillanimity' in his *Novum Organum* (1620): 'Et tamen (quod pessimum est) pusillanimitas ista non sine arrogantia et fastidio se offert' ['To enhance the mischief, this pusillanimity is not without its arrogance and disdain'] (*Novum Organum*, 88). The Palladium, an image of Pallas Athena, was a sacred artefact, upon the preservation in situ of which the safety of Troy depended; the word afterwards came to mean any protective charm or artefact. The 'ancile' is the legendary shield of the Roman god of war Mars, said to have fallen from heaven onto Numa Pompilius, while a celestial voice declared that Rome would rule

the Ptolemaic system might have rebuffed the Newtonian, and pointing to the sky with self-complacent* grin have appealed to *common sense*, whether the sun did not move and the earth stand still.

* “And Coxcombs vanquish Berkeley with a grin.” POPE.³⁶⁴

the world while the shield was preserved: the ancile, in other words, was the palladium of Rome.

³⁶⁴ Actually this line is by John Brown, from his *Essay on Satire occasioned by the death of Mr. Pope* (1745), in *A Collection of Poems By Several Hands* (3 vols, 1748), 3:124. ‘Self-complacent grin’ is from the anonymous poem, ‘The Shopkeeper Turned Sailor, or, The Folly Of Going Out Of our Element’ (1807): ‘While prudent Johnny, marching down, / Hires a snug boat for half a crown, / And now with self-complacent grin, / The favor’d boatman hands them in.’

CHAPTER 9

Is philosophy possible as a science, and what are its conditions?—Giordano Bruno—Literary aristocracy, or the existence of a tacit compact among the learned as a privileged order—The author’s obligations to the Mystics—to Emanuel Kant—The difference between the letter and the spirit of Kant’s writings, and a vindication of prudence in the teaching of philosophy—Fichte’s attempt to complete the critical system—Its partial success and ultimate failure—Obligations to Schelling; and among English writers to Saumarez.

After I had successively studied in the schools of Locke, Berkeley, Leibnitz, and Hartley, and could find in neither of them an abiding place for my reason, I began to ask myself; is a system of philosophy, as different from mere history and historic classification possible? If possible, what are its necessary conditions? I was for a while disposed to answer the first question in the negative, and to admit that the sole practicable employment for the human mind was to observe, to collect, and to classify. But I soon felt, that human nature itself fought up against this wilful resignation of intellect; and as soon did I find, that the scheme taken with all its consequences and cleared of all inconsistencies was not less impracticable than contra-natural. Assume in its full extent the position, *nihil in intellectu quod non prius in sensa*, without Leibnitz’s qualifying *præter ipsum intellectum*, and in the same sense, in which the position was understood by Hartley and Condilliac:³⁶⁵ and what Hume had demonstratively deduced from this concession

³⁶⁵ The first Latin phrase here is the so-called ‘Peripatetic axiom’: ‘nothing is in the intellect that was not first in the senses’. It was adopted by Thomas Aquinas (*De Veritate*, 2:3:19) from Aristotle and the Greek Peripatetic school, and was widely discussed by eighteenth-century philosophers. Leibniz’s actual wording of the ‘qualifying’ exception was ‘excipe: nisi intellectus ipse’ [‘besides the mind itself’] (Leibniz, *New Essays on Human Understanding* (written 1704, published 1765), 2:1:6). In a marginalium to Baxter’s *Reliquiæ Baxterianæ*, Coleridge recalls a joke his old schoolmaster James Boyer (see Chapter 1) used to make on this famous philosophical adage: ‘School-masters are commonly Punsters. – “I have endorsed your Bill, Sir!” said a Pedagogue to a Merchant – meaning he had flogged his Son William. “Nihil in intellectu quod non prius in sensu”, my old Master Rd. J. Boyer, the Hercules Furens [‘Mad Hercules’] of the phlogistic Sect, but else an incomparable Teacher, used to translate – first reciting the Latin words & observing that they were the fundamental article of the Peripatetic School – “You must flog a Boy before you can make him understand” – or “You must

concerning cause and effect, will apply with equal and crushing force to all the* other eleven categorical forms, and the logical functions corresponding to them. How can we make bricks without straw? Or build without cement? We learn all things indeed by *occasion* of experience; but the very facts so learned force us inward on the antecedents, that must be pre-supposed in order to render experience itself possible. The first book of Locke's *Essays* (if the supposed error, which it labours to subvert, be not a mere thing of straw, an absurdity which, no man ever did, or indeed ever could, believe) is formed on a Σόφισμα Ετεροζήτησεως,³⁶⁶ and involves the old mistake of *cum hoc: ergo, propter hoc*.³⁶⁷

The term, Philosophy, defines itself as an affectionate seeking after the truth;³⁶⁸ but Truth is the correlative of Being. This again is no way conceivable, but by assuming as a postulate, that both are ab initio,³⁶⁹ identical and coinherent; that intelligence and being are reciprocally each other's Substrate. I presumed that this was a possible conception (*i.e.* that it involved no logical inconsonance) from the length of time during which the scholastic definition of the *Supreme Being*, as *actus purissimus sine ullâ potentialitate*,³⁷⁰ was received in the schools of Theology, both by the Pontifical and the Reformed

* Videlicet; quantity, quality, relation, and mode, each consisting of three subdivisions. Vide *Kritik der reinen Vernunft*, p. 95, and 106. See too the judicious remarks on Locke and Hume.³⁷¹

lay it at the Tail before you can get it into the Head" (Coleridge, *Marginalia*, 1:354). The pun here is presumably the one on 'fundamental'.

³⁶⁶ The Greek ('sophisma heterozētēseos') means 'the sophistry of inquiring in the wrong place' (ζήτησις is Plato's word for an 'inquirer after the truth'; see, for example, *Republic*, 618C). The phrase is from Kant: 'α σόφισμα Ετεροζήτησεως is when someone who wants to prove a proposition proves something else; e.g., he is supposed to prove that the soul is immortal, and he only proves that it is simple.' (Immanuel Kant, *Lectures on Logic* (1770–1800); translated by J. Michael Young (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 410). Coleridge either encountered the phrase here, or else in Maass's *Versuche: Über die Einbildungskraft* (1797), who took it from Kant.

³⁶⁷ 'Because something happens *alongside* another thing, it is thought to be *caused* by that thing.'

³⁶⁸ Coleridge is speaking etymologically: φίλο, 'love of, affection for' + σοφία 'wisdom'.

³⁶⁹ 'From the beginning'.

³⁷⁰ 'Purest actuality, without any potentiality'.

³⁷¹ Kant's *Kritik der reinen* [not 'reineu'] *Vernunft* ['Critique of Pure Reason'] (1781) divides its 'Transcendental deduction of categories' into the four terms Coleridge mentions here, further subdividing them as follows: Quantity (Unity; Plurality; Totality) – Quality (Reality; Negation; Limitation) – Relation (Inherence/Subsistence; Cause/Effect; Reciprocity) – Modality (Possibility/Impossibility; Existence/Inexistence; Necessity/Contingency). Kant argues that these twelve categories are 'pure' conceptions of the understanding, perfectly independent of experience, sense data or anything that can be derived from the external world.

divines. The early study of Plato and Plotinus, with the commentaries and the THEOLOGIA PLATONICA of the illustrious Florentine; of Proclus, and Gemistius Pletho; and at a later period of the *De Immenso et Innumerabili* and the “*De la causa, principio et uno*,” of the philosopher of Nola, who could boast of a Sir Philip Sidney and Fulke Greville among his patrons, and whom the idolaters of Rome burnt as an atheist in the year 1660;³⁷² had all contributed to prepare my mind for the reception and welcoming of the Cogito quia Sum, et Sum quia Cogito; a philosophy of seeming hardihood, but certainly the most ancient, and therefore presumptively the most natural.³⁷³

³⁷² Actually this happened in 1600.

³⁷³ This densely allusive paragraph contains a lot that must be unpacked and explained. Taking the mentioned items in turn: (1) ‘Truth is the correlative of Being’. This is an idea that goes back to Aquinas, whose *Questiones disputatae de veritate* (1256–9) begins: ‘Videtur autem quod verum sit omnino idem quod ens’ [‘So it seems that Truth is exactly the same thing as Being’]. (2) ‘that intelligence and being are reciprocally each other’s Substrate’. Coleridge takes this idea from the Greek Neoplatonic philosopher Proclus (412–85 AD), mentioned again, by name, later in this paragraph. Here is Thomas Taylor (1758–1835) glossing Proclus’s ‘Proposition 161’: ‘For intellect is being, as that which is replenished with being: and consequently true being is a divine intelligible . . . Hence being united with intellect, pre-exists by itself, and is imparticipable. For it is intelligible, not as co-ordinated with intellect, but as eminently perfecting intellect; because it communicates being to intellect, and fills it with essence substantial and real.’ (Taylor, *The Philosophical and Mathematical Commentaries of Proclus* (2 vols, 1791), 2:411). James Engell and W. Jackson Bate concur with the *OED* that Coleridge was ‘the first to use the word “substrate” as a noun for “substratum”’, something he arrived at, they suggest, by Englishing Kant’s ‘das Substratum’ (*Biographia Literaria*, 1:143). But in fact ‘substrate’ had a fairly widespread usage before him: Theophilus Gale talks of ‘substrate matter’ in 1677; and Richard Baxter (whom Coleridge read and annotated in great detail) talked of ‘substrate acts’. (3) ‘the scholastic definition of the *Supreme Being*, as *actus purissimus sine ulla potentialitate* [‘purest actuality, without any potentiality’] was received in the schools of Theology, both by the Pontifical and the Reformed divines.’ ‘Pontifical’ is a fancy way of saying Catholic – ‘Pontifex’ is the Pope – as ‘Reformed’ is of saying Protestant. This definition of God in terms of His pure being and lack of potential is as old as Aristotle (*Metaphysics*, 12–13) and ‘scholasticism’ (that is, the attempt to reconcile Aristotelianism with Christianity), though usually thought of as a medieval phenomenon, was still being practised in the eighteenth century: ‘*essentia Divina est actus purissimus . . . ac ad se invicem se habent tanquam actus purissimi excludentes omnem potentialitatem*’ (Caelestinus Herrmann, *Theologiae Scholasticae Prolegomena* (1720), 96). (4) ‘The early study of Plato and Plotinus, with the commentaries and the THEOLOGIA PLATONICA of the illustrious Florentine’. The ‘illustrious Florentine’ is Marsilio Ficino (1433–99), whose *Theologia Platonica de immortalitate animae* [‘The Theology of Plato on the Immortality of the Soul’] (1482) is a neoplatonic study of Plato. The ‘early study’ of this book that had ‘prepared [Coleridge’s] mind’ occurred in 1805, when he bought and annotated a 1525 copy of this book (printed under the title, *Platonica theologia de immortalitate animorum*). (5) ‘. . . of Proclus, and Gemistius Pletho . . .’. For Proclus, see (2) above. Gemistus (*not* ‘Gemistius’) Pletho (1355–1452) is credited with introducing Plato to the West in the fourteenth century; he helped found the Platonic Academy at Florence at which Ficino taught. (6) ‘. . . and at a later period of the *De Immenso et Innumerabili* and the “*De la*

Why need I be afraid? Say rather how dare I be ashamed of the Teutonic theosophist, Jacob Behmen.³⁷⁴ Many indeed, and gross were his delusions; and such as furnish frequent and ample occasion for the triumph of the learned over the poor ignorant *shoemaker*, who had dared think for himself. But while we remember that these delusions were such, as might be anticipated from his utter want of all intellectual discipline, and from his ignorance of rational psychology, let it not be forgotten that the latter defect he had in common with the most learned theologians of his age. Neither with books, nor with book-learned men was he conversant. A meek and shy quietist, his intellectual powers were never stimulated into fev'rous energy by crowds of proselytes, or by the ambition of proselyting. JACOB BEHMEN was an enthusiast, in the strictest sense, as not merely distinguished, but as contra-distinguished, from a fanatic. While I in

causa, principio et uno," of the philosopher of Nola, who could boast of a Sir Philip Sidney and Fulke Greville among his patrons, and whom the idolaters of Rome burnt as an atheist in the year 1600'. This is Giordano Bruno (1548–1600), the Italian Dominican friar and philosopher who did indeed befriend Sidney and Fulke Greville on a visit to England, and who was indeed burnt at the stake for heresy. Among his many works, postulating an infinite, non-Ptolemaic universe and a God whose Oneness pervades everything are *De la causa, principio, et Uno* (1584), *De l'infinito universo et Mondi* (1584), *De innumerabilibus, immenso, et infigurabili* (1591) and *De imaginum, signorum et idearum compositione* (1591). Coleridge at one point thought to write a life of Bruno. (7) 'Cogito quia Sum, et Sum quia Cogito; a philosophy of seeming hardihood, but certainly the most ancient, and therefore presumptively the most natural.' The Latin means 'I think that which I am, and I am that which I think'. The similarity of this to Descartes's famous *cogito ergo sum* may distract us. Engell and Bate insist that 'C., never sympathetic to the overall approach or system of Descartes, does *not* have in mind Descartes's famous statement . . . which he finds "objectionable" . . . C. likely has in mind the treatment of the "I am" in relation to the "I think" by Kant and Fichte and possibly Schelling' (Engell and Bate, *Biographia Literaria*, 1:145). But it may be more likely that Coleridge is deliberately echoing Descartes by way of ridiculing both himself and this philosophical tradition. He was certainly aware of eighteenth-century critiques of Descartes's statement. 'Cogito, ergo sum non esse primum principium suò locò videbimus. Adde quod hoc *ego* sit obscurum & in eo jam videatur Cartesius quid affirmare. Quod si is est sensus: *Sum, quia cogito*, poterat etiam dicere, sum, quia manus & pedes habeo. Quod si aequipollet isti: *Sum*, tanto apparatu non erat opus' ['We shall see that the *cogito, ergo sum* is not properly an expression of first principles. Quite apart from anything else, this *ego* that Descartes seems to be presupposing is obscure. *Sum quia cogito* would be as much as to say "I am that I have hands and feet". And this is equivalent to "I am, by so much as the work has not appeared" (Christian Thomasius, *Introductio ad philosophiam aulicam* (1703), 75].

³⁷⁴ Jacob Behmen, now more usually spelled 'Jakob Böhme' (1575–1624) was a cobbler, and a German Christian mystic and theological writer whose writings were condemned as heretical. 'There are as many blasphemies in this shoemaker's book as there are lines', wrote Gregorious Richter, after the publication of Böhme's first book, *Aurora*: 'it smells of shoemaker's pitch and filthy blacking. May this insufferable stench be far from us. The Arian poison was not so deadly as this shoemaker's poison.' (Quoted in Hans Martensen, *Jacob Boehme: his Life and Teaching* (1885), 13)

part translate the following observations from a contemporary writer of the Continent,³⁷⁵ let me be permitted to premise, that I might have transcribed the substance from memoranda of my own, which were written many years before his pamphlet was given to the world; and that I prefer another's words to my own, partly as a tribute due to priority of publication; but still more from the pleasure of sympathy in a case where *coincidence* only was possible.

Whoever is acquainted with the history of philosophy, during the two or three last centuries, cannot but admit, that there appears to have existed a sort of secret and tacit compact among the learned, not to pass beyond a certain limit in speculative science. The privilege of free thought, so highly extolled, has at no time been held valid in actual practice, except within this limit; and not a single stride beyond it has ever been ventured without bringing obloquy on the transgressor. The few men of genius among the learned class, who actually did overstep this boundary, anxiously avoided the appearance of having so done. Therefore the true depth of science, and the penetration to the inmost centre, from which all the lines of knowledge diverge to their ever distant circumference, was abandoned to the illiterate and the simple, whom unstilled yearning, and an original ebullency of spirit, had urged to the investigation of the indwelling and living ground of all things. These then, because their names had never been inrolled in the guilds of the learned, were persecuted by the registered livery-men as interlopers on their rights and privileges. All without distinction were branded as fanatics and phantasts; not only those, whose wild and exorbitant imaginations had actually engendered only extravagant and grotesque phantasms, and whose productions were, for the most part, poor copies and gross caricatures of genuine inspiration; but the truly inspired likewise, the originals themselves! And this for no other reason, but because they were the *unlearned*, men of humble and obscure occupations. When, and from whom among the literati by profession, have we ever heard the divine doxology repeated, "I thank thee O father! Lord of Heaven and Earth! because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes." No! the haughty priests of learning, not only banished from the schools and marts of science all, who had dared draw living waters from the *fountain*, but drove them out of the very

³⁷⁵ Almost the entirety of the following paragraph (from 'Whoever is acquainted with the history of philosophy . . .' down to ' . . . and money-changers were suffered to make a den of thieves') is translated from Schelling's *Darlegung des wahren Verhältnisses der Naturphilosophie zu der verbesserten Fichteschen Lehre* (1806).

temple, which mean time “*the buyers, and sellers, and moneychangers*” were suffered to make a “*den of thieves*.”³⁷⁶

And yet it would not be easy to discover any substantial ground for this contemptuous pride in those literati, who have most distinguished themselves by their scorn of BEHMEN, DE THOYRAS, GEORGE FOX,³⁷⁷ &c.; unless it be, that *they* could write orthographically, make smooth periods, and had the fashions of authorship almost literally *at their fingers ends*, while the latter, in simplicity of soul, made their words immediate echoes of their feelings. Hence the frequency of those phrases among them, which have been mistaken for pretences to immediate inspiration; as for instance, “*it was delivered unto me*,” “*I strove not to speak*,” “*I said, I will be silent*,” “*but the word was in my heart as a burning fire*,” “*and I could not forbear*.” Hence too the unwillingness to give offence; hence the foresight, and the dread of the clamours, which would be raised against them, so frequently avowed in the writings of these men, and expressed, as was natural, in the words of the only book, with which they were familiar.³⁷⁸ “Woe is me that

³⁷⁶ Coleridge caps his Schelling-derived paragraph with a trio of Biblical references: (1) ‘In that hour Jesus rejoiced in spirit, and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes: even so, Father; for so it seemed good in thy sight’ (Luke 10:21); (2) ‘For my people have . . . forsaken me the fountain of living waters’ (Jeremiah 2:13); (3) ‘And Jesus went into the temple of God, and cast out all them that sold and bought in the temple, and overthrew the tables of the moneychangers, and the seats of them that sold doves, And said unto them, It is written, My house shall be called the house of prayer; but ye have made it a den of thieves’ (Matthew 21:12–13).

³⁷⁷ The second name here – George Fox (1624–91), founder of the Society of Friends, or ‘Quakers’ – fits the context of this passage obviously enough. But Coleridge scholars profess themselves baffled by the mention of French historian, Paul de Rapin de Thoyras (1661–1725), best known for his eight-volume *Histoire d’Angleterre* (1724). Sara Coleridge suggested that ‘De Thoyras’ was a slip of the pen, or error of dictation, for ‘Taulerus’ – that is Johann Tauler (1300–61), a medieval Christian mystic whose prose style was acclaimed as ‘the noblest in Germany’. But the case for De Thoyras can at least be made, not least on the grounds of shared Protestantism: for following the Edict of Fontainebleau in 1686, he fled France and lived out the rest of his life in England and the Netherlands. As a learned and eloquent scholar he is, it is true, rather a poor match for the description in the remainder of Coleridge’s paragraph – but then so is Johann Tauler, a highly educated Dominican monk known in his day as ‘le docteur illuminé’. Perhaps more likely is that Coleridge is misremembering the name of French preacher and writer Louis Troya d’Assigny (1687–1783), whose *Traité dogmatique et moral de l’esperance chretienne et de la confiance en dieu par Jesus Christ* (1755) is exactly the sort of provincial, earnest religious testimony Coleridge is discussing in this paragraph.

³⁷⁸ The ‘words of the only book, with which they were familiar’ mentioned are all from the Bible: “*It was delivered unto me*” is Luke 4:6; “*I said, I will be silent*” is from Psalm 28:1, and “*but the word was in my heart as a burning fire*” “*and I could not forbear*” are both Jeremiah 20:9. It seems likely that Coleridge intended to add a footnote at this point, but it was somehow omitted; or else that he decided on a footnote as a second thought. At any rate, it appeared in the 1847 edition, and reads as follows: ‘An American Indian with

I am become a man of strife, and a man of contention,—I love peace: the souls of men are dear unto me: yet because I seek for light every one of them doth curse me!”³⁷⁹ O! it requires deeper feeling, and a stronger imagination, than belong to most of those, to whom reasoning and fluent expression have been as a trade learnt in boyhood, to conceive with what *might*, with what inward *strivings* and *commotion*, the perception of a new and vital TRUTH takes possession of an uneducated man of genius. His meditations are almost inevitably employed on the eternal, or the everlasting; for “*the world is not his friend, nor the world’s law.*”³⁸⁰ Need we then be surprised, that under an excitement at once so strong and so unusual, the man’s body should sympathize with the struggles of his mind; or that he should at times be so far deluded, as to mistake the tumultuous sensations of his nerves, and the co-existing spectres of his fancy, as parts or symbols of the truths which were opening on him? It has indeed been plausibly observed, that in order to derive any advantage, or to collect any intelligible meaning, from the writings of these ignorant mystics, the reader must bring with him a spirit and judgement superior to that of the writers themselves:

And what he brings, what needs he elsewhere seek?

PARADISE REGAINED.³⁸¹

—A sophism, which I fully agree with Warburton,³⁸² is unworthy of Milton; how much more so of the awful person, in whose mouth he has placed it? One assertion I will venture to make, as suggested

little variety of images, and a still scantier stock of language, is obliged to turn his few words to many purposes, by likenesses so clear and analogies so remote as to give his language the semblance and character of lyric poetry interspersed with grotesques. Something not unlike this was the case of such men as Behmen and Fox with regard to the Bible. It was their sole armoury of expressions, their only organ of thought.’

³⁷⁹ This passage is from an anti-Slavery sermon by a contemporary preacher, George Cheever: “Woe is me,” exclaimed Jeremiah, “for I am become a man of contention and strife.” I love peace, and I love my people, and I love my country, and out of love I speak to them this word of the Lord. I have neither lent on usury, nor men have lent to me on usury, yet every one of them doth curse me’ (George Barrell Cheever, *God Against Slavery: And the Freedom and Duty of the Pulpit to Rebuke It, as a Sin Against God* (1800), 40). The first sentence is quoted from Jeremiah 15:10. There’s no evidence that Coleridge knew Cheever, although Cheever’s book does praise Coleridge (‘. . . as that great writer, Mr. Coleridge, once remarked. . . (74)).

³⁸⁰ Shakespeare, *Romeo and Juliet*, 5:1:74.

³⁸¹ Book 4, line 325; Christ speaks.

³⁸² English bishop Thomas Warburton (1698–1779), who is quoted in a footnote to Thomas Newton’s 1752 edition of Milton’s *Paradise Regained*. Warburton deplores the line Coleridge quotes: ‘the poet makes the old sophister the Devil always busy in his trade. Tis pity he should make Jesus (as he does here) use the same arms.’

by my own experience, that there exist folios on the human understanding, and the nature of man, which would have a far juster claim to their high rank and celebrity, if in the whole huge volume there could be found as much fulness of heart and intellect, as burst forth in many a simple page of GEORGE FOX, JACOB BEHMEN, and even of Behmen's commentator, the pious and fervid WILLIAM LAW.³⁸³

The feeling of gratitude, which I cherish toward these men, has caused me to digress further than I had foreseen or proposed; but to have passed them over in an historical sketch of my literary life and opinions, would have seemed to me like the denial of a debt, the concealment of a boon. For the writings of these mystics acted in no slight degree to prevent my mind from being imprisoned within the outline of any single dogmatic system. They contributed to keep alive the *heart* in the *head*; gave me an indistinct, yet stirring and working presentiment, that all the products of the mere *reflective* faculty partook of DEATH, and were as the rattling twigs and sprays in winter, into which a sap was yet to be propelled from some root to which I had not penetrated, if they were to afford my soul either food or shelter. If they were too often a moving cloud of smoke to me by day, yet they were always a pillar of fire throughout the night, during my wanderings through the wilderness of doubt, and enabled me to skirt, without crossing, the sandy deserts of utter unbelief.³⁸⁴ That the system is capable of being converted into an irreligious PANTHEISM, I well know. The ETHICS of SPINOZA, may, or may not, be an instance. But at no time could I believe, that *in itself* and *essentially* it is incompatible with religion, natural or revealed: and now I am most thoroughly persuaded of the contrary. The writings of the illustrious sage of Königsberg, the founder of the Critical Philosophy, more than any other work, at once invigorated and disciplined my understanding. The originality, the depth, and the compression of the thoughts; the novelty and subtlety, yet solidity and importance of the distinctions; the adamant chain of the logic; and I will venture to add (paradox as it will appear to those who have taken their notion of IMMANUEL KANT from Reviewers and Frenchmen) the *clearness* and *evidence*, of the "CRITIQUE OF THE PURE REASON;" of the JUDGMENT; of the

³⁸³ For most of his life, William Law (1686–1761) was a conventional Anglican cleric and theological writer. In later life he became fascinated with the work of Jakob Böhme, translated his *The Way to Christ* into English and set in motion a collected edition of Böhme's work.

³⁸⁴ Exodus 13:21: 'And the LORD went before them by day in a pillar of a cloud, to lead them the way; and by night in a pillar of fire, to give them light; to go by day.'

“METAPHISICAL ELEMENTS OF NATURAL PHILOSOPHY,” and of his “RELIGION WITHIN THE BOUNDS OF PURE REASON,” took possession of me as with a giant’s hand.³⁸⁵ After fifteen years familiarity with them, I still read these and all his other productions with undiminished delight and increasing admiration. The few passages that remained obscure to me, after due efforts of thought, (as the chapter on *original apperception*,) and the apparent contradictions which occur, I soon found were hints and insinuations referring to ideas, which KANT either did not think it prudent to avow, or which he considered as consistently *left behind* in a pure analysis, not of human nature in toto, but of the speculative intellect alone. Here therefore he was constrained to commence at the point of *reflection*, or natural consciousness: while in his *moral* system he was permitted to assume a higher ground (the autonomy of the will) as a POSTULATE deducible from the unconditional command, or (in the technical language of his school) the categorical imperative, of the conscience. He had been in imminent danger of persecution during the reign of the late king of Prussia, that strange compound of lawless debauchery, and priest-ridden superstition: and it is probable that he had little inclination, in his old age, to act over again the fortunes, and hair-breadth escapes of Wolf. The expulsion of the first among Kant’s disciples,³⁸⁶ who attempted to complete his system, from the university of Jena, with the confiscation and prohibition of the obnoxious work by the joint efforts of the courts of Saxony and Hanover, supplied experimental proof, that the venerable old man’s caution was not groundless. In spite therefore of his own declarations, I could never believe, that it was possible for him to have meant no more by his *Noumenon*, or THING IN ITSELF, than his mere words express; or that in his own conception he confined the whole *plastic* power to the forms of the intellect, leaving for the external cause, for the *materiale* of our sensations, a matter without form, which is

³⁸⁵ Coleridge singles out from Kant’s extensive bibliography *Kritik der reinen Vernunft* (1781; Coleridge read a 1799 reprint of the 2nd edition from 1787); *Kritik der Urteilskraft* (1790); *Metaphysische Anfangsgründe der Naturwissenschaft* (1786); and *Die Religion innerhalb der Grenzen der bloßen Vernunft* (1793). He annotated his copies of all these works. The passage ‘that remained obscure to me, after due efforts of thought’ mentioned a few lines later is from the *Kritik der reinen Vernunft* – ‘the chapter on *original apperception*’ is the chapter on ‘Elementarlehre’.

³⁸⁶ This was Johann Gittlien Fichte (1762–1814), whom Coleridge goes on to discuss in the following paragraphs. His first book (*Versuch einer Kritik aller Offenbarung* [‘Towards a Critique of All Revelation’], 1792) synthesised Kantian philosophy and religion, and was praised by Kant himself. Fichte taught at the University of Jena, but his 1798 essay, *Über den Grund unsers Glaubens an eine göttliche Weltregierung* [‘On the Grounds of Our Belief in a Divine World-Governance’] provoked accusations of atheism and nihilism and led to him losing his post.

doubtless inconceivable. I entertained doubts likewise, whether, in his own mind, he even laid *all* the stress, which he appears to do on the moral postulates.

An IDEA, in the *highest* sense of that word, cannot be conveyed but by a *symbol*; and, except in geometry, all symbols of necessity involve an apparent contradiction. Φώνησε Συνέτοισιν:³⁸⁷ and for those who could not pierce through this symbolic husk, his writings were not intended. Questions which can not be fully answered without exposing the respondent to personal danger, are not entitled to a fair answer; and yet to say this openly, would in many cases furnish the very advantage which the adversary is insidiously seeking after. Veracity does not consist in *saying*, but in the intention of *communicating*, truth; and the philosopher who cannot utter the whole truth without conveying falsehood, and at the same time, perhaps, exciting the most malignant passions, is constrained to express himself either *mythically* or equivocally. When Kant therefore was importuned to settle the disputes of his commentators himself, by declaring what he meant, how could he decline the honours of martyrdom with less offence, than by simply replying, "I meant what I said, and at the age of near four score, I have something else, and more important to do, than to write a commentary on my own works."³⁸⁸

FICHTE'S Wissenschaftslehre, or *Lore* of Ultimate Science, was to add the key-stone of the arch: and by commencing with an *act*, instead of a *thing* or *substance*, Fichte assuredly gave the first mortal blow to Spinozism, as taught by Spinoza himself; and supplied the *idea* of a system truly metaphysical, and of a *metaphysique* truly systematic: (i.e. having its spring and principle within itself.) But this fundamental idea he overbuilt with a heavy mass of mere *notions*, and psychological acts of arbitrary reflection. Thus his theory degenerated into a crude* egoismus, a boastful and hyperstoic hostility to NATURE, as lifeless, godless, and altogether unholy: while his *religion* consisted in the

* The following burlesque on the Fichtean Egoismus may, perhaps, be amusing to the few who have studied the system, and to those who are unacquainted with it, may convey as tolerable a likeness of Fichte's idealism as can be expected from an avowed caricature.

³⁸⁷ 'Phonēse sunetoisin': from Pindar's second Olympian Ode, line 85 – 'speaking to the wise'.

³⁸⁸ Coleridge paraphrases, rather than quotes, Kant's *Erklärung in Beziehung auf Fichtes Wissenschaftslehre* (published in 1799, when Kant was 75), in which the philosopher attempted to lay to rest speculation about his own work and accusations of atheism by inviting interested parties to read his earlier work more attentively.

assumption of a mere ORDO ORDINANS,³⁸⁹ which we were permitted *exoterice*³⁹⁰ to call GOD; and his *ethics* in an ascetic, and almost monkish, mortification of the natural passions and desires.

In Schelling's "NATUR-PHILOSOPHIE", and the "SYSTEM DES TRAN-

The categorical imperative, or the annunciation of the new Teutonic God, ΕΓΩΕΝΚΑΙΠΑΝ:³⁹¹ a dithyrambic Ode, by QUERKOPF VON KLUBSTICK, Grammarian, and Subrector in Gymnasio****.

Eu! Dei vices gerens, ipse Divus,
(Speak English, Friend!) the God Imperativus,
 Here on this market-cross aloud I cry:
 I, I, I! I itself I!
 The form and the substance, the what and the why,
 The when and the where, and the low and the high,
 The inside and outside, the earth and the sky,
 I, you, and he, and he, you and I,
 All souls and all bodies are I itself I!
 All I itself I!
 (Fools! a truce with this starting!)
 All my I! all my I!
 He's a heretic dog who but adds Betty Martin!³⁹²
 Thus cried the God with high imperial tone;
 In robe of stiffest state, that scoff'd at beauty,
 A pronoun-verb imperative he shone—
 Then substantive and plural-singular grown
 He thus spake on! Behold in I alone
 (For ethics boast a syntax of their own)
 Or if in ye, yet as I doth depute ye,
 In O! I, you, the vocative of duty!
 I of the world's whole Lexicon the root!
 Of the whole universe of touch, sound, sight
 The genitive and ablative to boot:
 The accusative of wrong, the nom'native of right,
 And in all cases the case absolute!
 Self-construed, I all other moods decline:
 Imperative, from nothing we derive us;
 Yet as a super-postulate of mine,
 Unconstrued antecedence I assign
 To X, Y, Z, the God infinitivus!

³⁸⁹ 'Ordering order'.

³⁹⁰ 'Unusually', or 'as a special concession'.

³⁹¹ This parodic poem's title, ΕΓΩΕΝΚΑΙΠΑΝ ['EGŌENKAIIPAN'] means 'Ego and Everything!' or 'Ego and All'. It plays on the pantheistic *ἐν καὶ παν* ['one and all'], poking fun in the process at German epic poet Friedrich Gottlieb Klopstock (1724–1803), whose masterpiece, *Der Messias* ['The Messiah'], took twenty-five years to write, and was published between 1748 and 1773. The Latin of the first line means: 'Hurrah! God's vice-regent, myself God'. 'Imperativus' is the Latin name for the grammatical case known in English as 'the imperative'; and 'infinitivus' (in the last line) is the same for 'the infinitive'.

³⁹² A reference to a contemporary slang or popular idiom, 'my eye and Betty Martin', meaning 'I don't believe you!' or 'that's nonsense!' – an extension of the earlier expression 'my eye!'

SCENDENTALEN IDEALISMUS,” I first found a genial coincidence with much that I had toiled out for myself, and a powerful assistance in what I had yet to do.

I have introduced this statement, as appropriate to the narrative nature of this sketch; yet rather in reference to the work which I have announced in a preceding page,³⁹³ than to my present subject. It would be but a mere act of justice to myself, were I to warn my future readers, that an identity of thought, or even similarity of phrase, will not be at all times a certain proof that the passage has been borrowed from Schelling, or that the conceptions were originally learnt from him. In this instance, as in the dramatic lectures of Schlegel to which I have before alluded, from the same motive of self-defence against the charge of plagiarism, many of the most striking resemblances, indeed all the main and fundamental ideas, were born and matured in my mind before I had ever seen a single page of the German Philosopher; and I might indeed affirm with truth, before the more important works of Schelling had been written, or at least made public. Nor is this coincidence at all to be wondered at. We had studied in the same school; been disciplined by the same preparatory philosophy, namely, the writings of Kaut; we had both equal obligations to the polar logic and dynamic philosophy of Giordano Bruno; and Schelling has lately, and, as of recent acquisition, avowed that same affectionate reverence for the labours of Behmen, and other mystics, which I had formed at a much earlier period. The coincidence of SCHELLING'S system with certain general ideas of Behmen, he declares to have been *mere* coincidence; while *my* obligations have been more direct. *He* needs give to Behmen only feelings of sympathy; while I owe him a debt of gratitude. God forbid! that I should be suspected of a wish to enter into a rivalry with SCHELLING for the honors so unequivocally his right, not only as a great and original genius, but as the *founder* of the PHILOSOPHY OF NATURE, and as the most successful *improver* of the Dynamic System* which, begun by Bruno, was re-introduced (in a

* It would be an act of high and almost criminal injustice to pass over in silence the name of Mr. RICHARD SAUMAREZ,³⁹⁴ a gentleman equally well known as a medical

³⁹³ This is the theological-philosophical monograph promised in Chapter 8 ‘on the PRODUCTIVE LOGOS human and divine’.

³⁹⁴ Richard Saumarez (1764–1835) was a British doctor, chief surgeon to the Magdalen Hospital in Streatham from 1788 to 1805, a man with a large and lucrative practice in London. Coleridge met him in 1812, after reading Saumarez’s *Principles of Physiological and Physical Science* (1812) and finding himself in agreement with its attack on Newtonian optics. Coleridge believed that Newton’s theories on colour were ‘monstrous FICTIONS!’, and wrote to John Rickman of a doctor ‘who has just written a

more philosophical form, and freed from all its impurities and visionary accompaniments) by KANT; in whom it was the native and necessary growth of his own system. KANT'S followers, however, on whom (for the greater part) their master's *cloak* had fallen without, or with a very scanty portion of, his *spirit*, had adopted his dynamic ideas, only as a more refined species of mechanics. With exception of one or two fundamental ideas, which cannot be withheld from FICHTE, to SCHELLING we owe the completion, and the most important victories, of this revolution in philosophy. To me it will be happiness and honor enough, should I succeed in rendering the system itself intelligible to my countrymen, and in the application of it to the most awful of subjects for the most important of purposes. Whether a work is the offspring of a man's own spirit, and the product of original thinking, will be discovered by those who are its sole legitimate judges, by better tests than the mere reference to dates. For readers in general,

man and as a philanthropist, but who demands notice on the present occasion as the author of "a new System of Physiology" in two volumes octavo, published 1797; and in 1812 of "an Examination of the natural and artificial Systems of Philosophy which now prevail" in one volume octavo, entitled, "The Principles of physiological and physical Science." The latter work is not quite equal to the former in style or arrangement; and there is a greater necessity of distinguishing the principles of the author's philosophy from his conjectures concerning colour, the atmospheric matter, comets, &c. which, whether just or erroneous, are by no means necessary consequences of that philosophy. Yet even in this department of this volume, which I regard as comparatively the inferior work, the reasonings by which Mr. Saumarez invalidates the immanence of an infinite power in any finite substance are the offspring of no common mind; and the experiment on the expansibility of the air is at least plausible and highly ingenious. But the merit, which will secure both to the book and to the writer a high and honorable name with posterity, consists in the masterly force of reasoning, and the copiousness of induction, with which he has assailed, and (in my opinion) subverted the tyranny of the mechanic system in physiology; established not only the existence of final causes, but their necessity and efficiency to every system that merits the name of philosophical; and substituting life and progressive power for the contradictory *inert force*, has a right to be known and remembered as the first instaurator of the dynamic philosophy in England. The author's views, as far as concerns himself, are unborrowed and completely his own, as he neither possessed nor do his writings discover, the least acquaintance with the works of Kant, in which the germs of the philosophy exist: and his volumes were published many years before the full development of these germs by Schelling. Mr. Saumarez's detection of the Braunonian system was no light or ordinary service at the time: and I scarcely remember in any work on any subject a confutation so thoroughly satisfactory. It is sufficient at this time to have stated the fact; as in the preface to the work, which I have already announced on the Logos, I have exhibited in detail the merits of this writer, and genuine philosopher, who needed only have taken his foundations somewhat deeper and wider to have superseded a considerable part of my labours.

Book, a biggish one to overthrow Sir Iky's System of Gravitation, Color & the whole 39 Articles of the Hydrostatic, chemic & Physiologic Churches' (17 July 1812; Griggs, *Collected Letters*, 3:414). The 'Braunonian system' mentioned in the final section of this note refers to the theory advanced by Scots surgeon John Brown (1735–88) in his *Elementae Medicinae* (1780).

let whatever shall be found in this or any future work of mine, that resembles, or coincides with, the doctrines of my German predecessor, though contemporary, be wholly attributed to *him*: provided, that the absence of distinct references to his books, which I could not at all times make with truth as designating citations or thoughts actually *derived* from him; and which, I trust, would, after this general acknowledgment be superfluous; be not charged on me as an ungenerous concealment or intentional plagiarism. I have not indeed (eheu! res angusta domi!)³⁹⁵ been hitherto able to procure more than two of his books, viz. the 1st volume of his collected Tracts, and his System of Transcendental Idealism; to which, however, I must add a small pamphlet against Fichte,³⁹⁶ the spirit of which was to *my* feelings painfully incongruous with the principles, and which (with the usual allowance afforded to an antithesis) displayed the love of wisdom rather than the wisdom of love. I regard truth as a divine ventriloquist: I care not from whose mouth the sounds are supposed to proceed, if only the words are audible and intelligible. “Albeit, I must confess to be half in doubt, whether I should bring it forth or no, it being so contrary to the eye of the world, and the world so potent in most men’s hearts, that I shall endanger either not to be regarded or not to be understood.”

MILTON: *Reason of Church Government*.³⁹⁷

And to conclude the subject of citation, with a cluster of citations, which as taken from books, not in common use, may contribute to the reader’s amusement, as a voluntary before a sermon: “Dolet mihi quidem deliciis literarum inescatos subito jam homines adeo esse, præsertim qui Christianos se profitentur, et legere nisi quod ad delectationem facit, sustineant nihil: unde et disciplinæ severiores et philosophia ipsa jam fere prorsus etiam a doctis negliguntur. Quod quidem propositum studiorum, nisi mature corrigitur, tam magnum rebus incommodum dabit, quàm dedit Barbaries olim. Pertinax res Barbaries est, fateor: sed minus potest tamen, quàm illa mollities et *persuasiva prudentia* literarum, si *ratione* caret, sapientiæ virtutisque *specie* mortales misere circumducit. Succedet igitur, ut arbitror, haud ita multo post, pro rusticanâ seculi nostri ruditate captatrix illa *communiloquentia* robur animi virilis omne, omnem virtutem masculam profligatura, nisi cavetur.”

³⁹⁵ ‘Alas! the straitened circumstances of my homelife’. A frequently quoted Latin tag (see for instance, Juvenal, 3.165).

³⁹⁶ Schelling’s *Darlegung des wahren Verhältnisses der Naturphilosophie zu der verbesserten Fichte’schen Lehre* (1806).

³⁹⁷ Book 2, Chapter 1.

SIMON GRYNÆUS, candido lectori, prefixed to the Latin translation of Plato, by Marsilius Ficinus, Lugduni, 1557.³⁹⁸ A too prophetic remark, which has been in fulfilment from the year 1680, to the present 1815. N.B. By “persuasa prudentia,” Grynæus means self-complacent *common sense* as opposed to science and philosophic reason.

“Est medius ordo et velut equestris Ingeniorum quidem sagacium et rebus humanis commodorum, non tamen in primam magnitudinem patentium. Eorum hominum, ut ita dicam, major annona est. Sedulum esse, nihil temere loqui, assuescere labori, et imagine prudentiæ & modestiæ tegere angustiores partes captûs dum exercitationem et usum, quo isti in civilibus rebus pollent, pro natura et magnitudine ingenii plerique accipiunt.”

BARCLAI ARGENIS, p.71.³⁹⁹

“As therefore, physicians are many times forced to leave such methods of curing as themselves know to be fittest, and being over-ruled by the sick man’s impatience, are fain to try the best they can: in like sort, considering how the case doth stand with this present age, full of tongue and weak of brain, behold we would (*if our subject permitted it*)

³⁹⁸ Grynaeus (1493–1541) was a German scholar who translated Aristotle, Plutarch and Dio Chrysostom into Latin, and whose preface to Ficinus’s Plato is addressed to the ‘honest’ or ‘fair reader’ (‘ad candido lectori’). Coleridge himself translated this passage in *The Friend* in 1818 as follows: ‘In very truth, it grieveth me that men, those especially who profess themselves to be Christians, should be so taken with the *sweet Baits* of Literature that they can endure to read nothing but what gives them immediate gratification, no matter how low or sensual it may be. Consequently, the more austere and disciplinary branches of philosophy itself, are almost wholly neglected, even by the learned. – A course of study (if such reading, with such a purpose in view, could deserve that name) which, if not corrected in time, will occasion worse consequences than even barbarism did in the times of our forefathers. Barbarism is, I own, a wilful headstrong thing; but with all its blind obstinacy it has less power of doing harm than this self-sufficient, self-satisfied *plain good common-sense* sort of writing, this prudent saleable popular style of composition, if it be deserted by Reason and scientific Insight; pitifully deceiving the minds of men by an imposing shew of amiableness, and practical Wisdom, so that the delighted Reader knowing nothing knows *all about* almost every thing. There will succeed therefore in my opinion, and that too within no long time, to the rudeness and rusticity of our age, that ensnaring meretricious *popularness* in Literature, with all the tricky humilities of the ambitious candidates for the favorable suffrages of the judicious Public, which if we do not take good care will break up and scatter before it all robustness and manly vigor of intellect, all masculine fortitude of virtue.’

³⁹⁹ *Argenis* (1621) by Scottish satirist and poet John Barclay (1582–1621). The Latin reads: ‘There is a middle order, similar to the equestrian order, of keen men of genius, who have much to offer in the service of the affairs of men, yet men who do not reach the highest magnitude of greatness. One of these men, so to speak, is worth more than the cost of his provisions. They are attentive, speak nothing rash, are accustomed to work hard, and with prudence and moderation can draw a veil over their weaker, while the experience and employment make them able – all this is assumed by the people to be nothing more than their nature and their greatness of character.’

yield to the stream thereof. That way we would be contented to prove our thesis, which being the worse in itself, is notwithstanding now by reason of common imbecility the fitter and likelier to be brooked.”
—HOOKER.⁴⁰⁰

If this fear could be rationally entertained in the controversial age of Hooker, under the then robust discipline of the scholastic logic, pardonably may a writer of the present times anticipate a scanty audience for abstrusest themes, and truths that can neither be communicated or received without effort of thought, as well as patience of attention.

Che s'io non erro al calcular de' punti,
Par ch' *Asinina* Stella a noi predomini,
E'l Somaro e'l castron si sian congiunti.
Il tempo d'Apuleio piu non si nomini:
Che se allora un sol Huom sembrava un Asino,
Mille Asini a' miei di rassembran Huomini!

DI SALVATOR ROSA Satir. I. l.10.⁴⁰¹

⁴⁰⁰ Richard Hooker, *Of the Lawes of Ecclesiastical Politie* (1594), 1:8:2.

⁴⁰¹ Neapolitan Baroque painter, poet and printmaker Salvator Rosa (1615–73) wrote a series of satires on 'Music', 'Poetry', 'Painting', 'Rome' and 'Envy' which were not published until after his death (in 1719 in fact). Coleridge quotes from the *La Musica*, lines 10–15. The Italian means: 'For if I'm not in error in calculating these points, an *Asinine* Star is predominant at the moment, and the Donkey and the Mule are in conjunction. It is no longer the time of Apuleius: in those days, only one man was transformed into an Ass; where nowadays there are a thousand Asses who resemble men!'

CHAPTER 10

A chapter of digression and anecdotes, as an interlude preceding that on the nature and genesis of the imagination or plastic power—On pedantry and pedantic expressions—Advice to young authors respecting publication—Various anecdotes of the author’s literary life, and the progress of his opinions in religion and politics.

“*Esemplastic*. The word is not in Johnson, nor have I met with it elsewhere.” Neither have I! I constructed it myself from the Greek words, εἰς ἐν πλαττεῖν, i.e. to shape into one;⁴⁰² because, having to convey a new sense, I thought that a new term would both aid the recollection of my

⁴⁰² Coleridge’s notebooks for February to June 1813 contain the following passage, often quoted by critics as elucidating Coleridge’s concept of *esemplasy*: ‘His Imagination, if it must be so called, is at all events of the pettiest kind—it is an Imagunculation.—How excellently the German *Einbildungskraft* expresses this prime & loftiest Faculty, the power of co-adunation, the faculty that forms the many into one, *in eins Bildung*.’ (*Notebooks*, vol. 3, ed. Kathleen Coburn (1973), 4176). It’s unclear to whom Coleridge refers in the opening of this passage – possibly Southey. Now, in fact the ‘*ein*’ in the German *Einbildungskraft* means ‘in’, not ‘one’, so the word means ‘informing power’ rather than ‘one-forming power’. ‘Adunation’ is defined in Johnson’s *Dictionary* as ‘an union; being joined’. Nigel Leask thinks it ‘noteworthy that Coleridge here suppresses the German origins of “*esemplastic*”, replacing it with a Greek etymology’ – noteworthy, he implies, as a strategy for defusing the charge of plagiarism against German sources (Leask, *Biographia Literaria*, 389). It may be so; but that Greek etymology is interesting in its own right. Πλάττειν is from πλάττω, ‘to form, mould or shape’ (the more usual form is πλάσσω – from this form we get πλάστος, ‘formed, moulded’, the root of the English word ‘plastic’). Conceivably, Coleridge specifies πλάττω rather than πλάσσω because, as the Attic form of the word, it appears in this form in Plato (for instance: *Phaedrus* 246c; *Republic* 420c), where it is used to mean – to quote Liddell and Scott – ‘to form in the mind, form a notion of a thing’. ‘*ἐν*’ means ‘in’; but ‘*εἰς*’ is a problem. The 1817 edition of the *Biographia* is careless with Greek breathings and accents, but the 1847 supplies them (perhaps taking its cue from Coleridge’s manuscript notes) as follows: εἰς ἐν πλάττειν. The problem is that εἰς does not mean ‘one’ (that’s εἷς, ‘*heis*’); it is, rather, a preposition of place: ‘into’, ‘inwardness’, ‘in-ness’ and the like. 1847’s εἰς is clearly correct – the word is ‘*esemplasy*’ not ‘*hesemplasy*’ after all. We must therefore assume that the emphasis Coleridge intends is ‘to shape *into* one’ rather than ‘to shape into *one*’. The other thing to say about the ‘*εἰς*’ is that it too is Attic dialect: other Greek dialects prefer ‘*ἐς*’ ‘except that’ (to quote Liddell and Scott again) ‘Poets use εἰς before vowels when metre requires a long syllable’. The English pronunciation of ‘*esemplasy*’ with a short initial ‘e’ misses this; although ‘*ēsemplasy*’ would also pun on the Greek ‘ἦς’ [ē̄s] a variant of εἶμι [‘*eimi*’], meaning ‘I am’ or the “I am”. In other words, it’s possible that the invented Greek etymology of ‘*esemplasy*’ is there to emphasise not the *oneness* but the ideational *subjectivity* of the concept.

meaning, and prevent its being confounded with the usual import of the word, imagination. “*But this is pedantry!*” Not necessarily so, I hope. If I am not misinformed, pedantry consists in the use of words unsuitable to the time, place, and company. The language of the market would be in the schools as *pedantic*, though it might not be reprobated by that name, as the language of the schools in the market. The mere man of the world, who insists that no other terms but such as occur in common conversation should be employed in a scientific disquisition, and with no greater precision, is as truly a *pedant* as the man of letters, who either over-rating the acquirements of his auditors, or misled by his own familiarity with technical or scholastic terms, converses at the wine-table with his mind fixed on his musæum or laboratory; even though the latter pedant instead of desiring his wife to *make the tea*, should bid her add to the quant. suff. of *thea sinensis* the oxyd of hydrogen saturated with caloric.⁴⁰³ To use the colloquial (and in truth somewhat *vulgar*) metaphor, if the pedant of the cloyster, and the pedant of the lobby, both *smell equally of the shop*, yet the odour from the Russian binding of good old *authentic-looking* folios and quartos is less annoying than the steams from the tavern or bagnio. Nay, though the pedantry of the scholar should betray a little ostentation, yet a well-conditioned mind would more easily, methinks, tolerate the *fox brush* of learned vanity, than the *sans culotterie* of a contemptuous ignorance, that assumes a merit from mutilation in the self-consoling sneer at the pompous incumbrance of tails.⁴⁰⁴

The first lesson of philosophic discipline is to wean the student’s attention from the DEGREES of things, which alone form the vocabulary of common life, and to direct it to the KIND abstracted from *degree*. Thus the chemical student is taught not to be startled at disquisitions on the heat in ice, or on latent and fixible light.⁴⁰⁵ In such

⁴⁰³ A comically exaggerated, pseudo-scientific way of saying ‘making tea’: ‘add to a sufficient quantity of Chinese tea the oxidized hydrogen [i.e. water] that has been heated’.

⁴⁰⁴ Most of this paragraph, and a good portion of the following paragraph, are recycled almost verbatim from an essay Coleridge published in *Felix Farley’s Bristol Journal* (August/September 1814) entitled ‘On the Principles of Genial Criticism’. The sentiment here may have been lifted in turn from George Ensor’s *The Independent Man; or, An Essay on the Formation of the Development of those Principles and Faculties of the Human Mind which constitute Moral and Intellectual Excellence* (2 vols, 1806): ‘A learned pedant had been a coxcomb in dress, if finery instead of books had caught his attention. Every state and condition has its pedants: – lawyers, and apothecaries, and sportsmen, and village surveyors, and stockjobbers, often display as much pedantry in their respective pursuits as the recluse of a college, with this distinction, – that the pedantry of a learned man has a relish of precious things’ (253).

⁴⁰⁵ The phrase ‘latent heat’ was coined by Joseph Black in 1762 to describe the heat released or absorbed by a body or system during any process that occurs without

discourse the instructor has no other alternative than either to use old words with new meanings (the plan adopted by Darwin in his *Zoonomia*;) or to introduce new terms, after the example of Linnæus, and the framers of the present chemical nomenclature.⁴⁰⁶ The latter mode is evidently preferable, were it only that the former demands a twofold exertion of thought in one and the same act. For the reader (or hearer) is required not only to learn and bear in mind the new definition; but to unlearn, and keep out of his view, the old and habitual meaning; a far more difficult and perplexing task, and for which the mere *semblance* of eschewing pedantry seems to me an inadequate compensation. Where, indeed, it is in our power to recall an appropriate term that had without sufficient reason become obsolete, it is doubtless a less evil to restore than to coin anew. Thus to express in one word, all that appertains to the perception, considered as passive, and merely recipient, I have adopted from our elder classics the word *sensuous*; because *sensual* is not at present used, except in a bad sense, or at least as a *moral* distinction, while *sensitive* and *sensible* would each convey a different meaning. Thus too I have followed Hooker, Sanderson, Milton &c., in designating the *immediateness* of any act or object of knowledge by the word *intuition*,⁴⁰⁷ used some-

a change in temperature: for instance when water goes (at the freezing point) from liquid to solid, or (on boiling) from liquid to gaseous. ‘Latent light’ was a theoretical extrapolation from Black’s work, used to explain phenomena such as phosphorus, or the light emitted by the sparks struck off two flints. ‘Fixable light’ (Coleridge’s spelling is idiosyncratic) is presumably a similar analogous extrapolation – eighteenth-century scientists called gaseous carbonic acid ‘fixable air’ on account of what we would nowadays call its reactivity. That said, it’s not clear how ‘fixable light’ (a concept unknown outside Coleridge) would work.

⁴⁰⁶ Erasmus Darwin’s *Zoonomia; or the Laws of Organic Life* (1794) is a two-volume prose work covering anatomy, pathology and psychology. In its preface, Darwin says: ‘the words idea, perception, sensation, recollection, suggestion and association, are each of them used in this treatise in a more limited sense than in the writers of metaphysic. The author was in doubt, whether he could rather have substituted new words instead of them; but was at length of opinion, that new definitions of words already in use would be less burthensome to the memory of the reader.’ Swedish scientist Carl Linnaeus (1707–78) is sometimes called ‘the father of modern taxonomy’; his first major work, *Systema Naturae* (1735) systematised 4,400 species of animals and 7,700 species of plants, replacing the various vernacular names by which they were previously known with a concise and now standard ‘binomial’ Latin nomenclature.

⁴⁰⁷ Richard Hooker does not use the word ‘intuition’, although he is much concerned with what he calls the fullest development of faith, ‘the intuitive vision of God in the world to come’ (*Of the Lawes of Ecclesiastical Politie* (1594), 12:11). English theologian Robert Sanderson (1587–1663) talks in his *The Case Determined: of the Military Life* (1678) of ‘the intuition of Honour and Glory’ as a ‘lawful and commendable’ thing in a soldier (*The Works of Robert Sanderson* (ed. William Jacobson; 6 vols, 1854), 5:112). And in *Paradise Lost* 5:487–9, the angel Raphael explains to Adam that ‘reason’ is either ‘Discursive, or Intuitive’, adding that ‘discourse / Is ofttest yours, the latter most is ours’. The

times subjectively, sometimes objectively, even as we use the word, thought; now as *the* thought, or act of thinking, and now as *a* thought, or the object of our reflection; and we do this without confusion or obscurity. The very words, *objective* and *subjective*, of such constant recurrence in the schools of yore, I have ventured to re-introduce, because I could not so briefly, or conveniently by any more familiar terms distinguish the percipere from the percipi.⁴⁰⁸ Lastly, I have cautiously discriminated the terms, the REASON, and the UNDERSTANDING, encouraged and confirmed by the authority of our genuine divines, and philosophers, before the revolution.

—both life, and sense,
 Fancy, and *understanding*: whence the soul
Reason receives, and REASON is her *being*,
 DISCURSIVE or INTUITIVE. Discourse*
 Is ofttest your's, the latter most is our's,
 Differing but in *degree*, in *kind* the same.
 PARADISE LOST *Book V*⁴⁰⁹

I say, that I was *confirmed* by authority so venerable: for I had previous and higher motives in my own conviction of the importance, nay, of the necessity of the distinction, as both an indispensable condition and a vital part of all sound speculation in metaphysics, ethical or theological. To establish this distinction was one main object of THE FRIEND;⁴¹⁰ if even in a biography of my own literary life I can with propriety refer to a work, which was printed rather than published, or so published that it had been well for the unfortunate author, if

* But for sundry notes on Shakspeare, &c which have fallen in my way, I should have deemed it unnecessary to observe, that *discourse* here, or elsewhere does not mean what we *now* call discoursing; but the *discursion* of the *mind*, the processes of generalization and subsumption, of deduction and conclusion. Thus, Philosophy has *hitherto* been DISCURSIVE: while Geometry is *always* and *essentially* INTUITIVE.

distinction is one of immediacy of apprehension of truth (*'Discursive or Intuitive - , Tracing Truth from Argument to Argument, Discerning, Examining, Distinguishing, Comparing, Inferring, Concluding. This is Discourse; whether with One Another, or Alone; whether in Words or Mentally. Intuitive is when the Mind Instantly perceives Truth as we with one Glance of the Eye Know if the Object is Red, Green, White, &c. (Jonathan Richardson, Explanatory Notes and Remarks on Milton's Paradise Lost (1734), 229). Coleridge quotes this passage from Paradise Lost at greater length a few lines below in the main text.*

⁴⁰⁸ The 'perceiving' from the 'perceived'.

⁴⁰⁹ Lines 485–90.

⁴¹⁰ Coleridge edited and wrote this journal, publishing it at Penrith between June 1809 and March 1810. It was supposed to be weekly, but in fact only twenty-eight numbers were issued, at increasingly irregular intervals.

it had remained in manuscript! I have even at this time bitter cause for remembering that, which a number of my subscribers have but a trifling motive for forgetting. This effusion might have been spared; but I would fain flatter myself, that the reader will be less austere than an oriental professor of the bastinado, who during an attempt to extort per argumentum baculinum⁴¹¹ a full confession from a culprit, interrupted his outcry of pain by reminding him, that it was “*a mere digression!*” All this noise, Sir! is nothing to the point, and no sort of answer to my QUESTIONS! *Ah! but* (replied the sufferer) *it is the most pertinent reply in nature to your blows.*

An imprudent man of common goodness of heart, cannot but wish to turn even his imprudences to the benefit of others, as far as this is possible. If therefore any one of the readers of this semi-narrative should be preparing or intending a periodical work, I warn him, in the first place, against trusting in the number of names on his subscription list. For he cannot be certain that the names were put down by sufficient authority; or [it should that be ascertained) it still remains to be known, whether they were not extorted by some over zealous friend’s importunity; whether the subscriber had not yielded his name, merely from want of courage to answer, no! and with the intention of dropping the work as soon as possible. One gentleman procured me nearly a hundred names for THE FRIEND, and not only took frequent opportunity to remind me of his success in his canvas, but laboured to impress my mind with the sense of the obligation, I was under to the subscribers; for, (as he very pertinently admonished me) “*fifty-two shillings* a year was a large sum to be bestowed on one individual, where there were so many objects of charity with strong claims to the assistance of the benevolent.” Of these hundred patrons ninety threw up the publication before the fourth number, without any notice; though it was well known to them, that in consequence of the distance, and the slowness and irregularity of the conveyance, I was compelled to lay in a stock of *stamped* paper for at least eight weeks beforehand; each sheet of which stood me in five pence previously to its arrival at my printer’s; though the subscription money was not to be received till the twenty-first week after the commencement of the work; and lastly, though it was in nine cases out of ten impracticable for me to receive the money for two or three numbers without paying an equal sum for the postage.

In confirmation of my first caveat, I will select one fact among *many*.

⁴¹¹ ‘The argument by force’; the Latin literally means ‘the argument by beating with a stick’.

On my list of subscribers, among a considerable number of names equally flattering, was that of an Earl of Cork, with his address. He might as well have been an Earl of Bottle, for aught *I* knew of him, who had been content to reverence the peerage in abstracto, rather than in concretis. Of course *THE FRIEND* was regularly sent as far, if I remember right, as the eighteenth number; i.e. till a fortnight before the subscription was to be paid. And lo! just at this time I received a letter from his Lordship, reproving me in language far more lordly than courteous for my impudence in directing my pamphlets to him, who knew nothing of me or my work! Seventeen or eighteen numbers of which, however, his Lordship was pleased to retain, probably for the culinary or post-culinary conveniences of his servants.⁴¹²

Secondly, I warn all others from the attempt to deviate from the ordinary mode of publishing a work by *the trade*. I thought indeed, that to the purchaser it was indifferent, whether thirty per cent of the purchase-money went to the booksellers or to the government; and that the convenience of receiving the work by the post at his own door would give the preference to the latter. It is hard, I own, to have been labouring for years, in collecting and arranging the materials; to have spent every shilling that could be spared after the necessaries of life had been furnished, in buying books, or in journies for the purpose of consulting them or of acquiring facts at the fountain head; then to buy the paper, pay for the printing, &c. all at least fifteen per cent. beyond what *the trade* would have paid; and then after all to give thirty per cent not of the net profits, but of the gross results of the sale, to a man who has merely to give the books shelf or warehouse room, and permit his apprentice to hand them over the counter to those who may ask for them; and this too copy by copy, although, if the work be on any philosophical or scientific subject, it may be years before the edition is sold off. All this, I confess, must seem an hardship, and one, to which the products of industry in no other mode of exertion are subject. Yet even this is better, far better, than to attempt in any way to unite the functions of author and publisher. But the most prudent mode is to sell the copy-right, at least of one or more editions, for the most that *the trade* will offer. By few only can a large remuneration be expected; but fifty pounds and ease of mind are of more real advantage to a literary man, than the *chance* of five hundred with the *certainty* of insult and degrading anxieties. I shall have been grievously misunderstood, if this statement should be interpreted as written with

⁴¹² That is, to be read at dinner, or used as toilet paper. The peer in question was Edmund Boyle, 8th Earl of Cork (1767–1856).

the desire of detracting from the character of booksellers or publishers. The individuals did not make the laws and customs of their trade, but, as in every other trade take them as they find them. Till the evil can be proved to be removable and without the substitution of an equal or greater inconvenience, it were neither wise or manly even to complain of it. But to use it as a pretext for speaking, or even for thinking, or feeling, unkindly or opprobriously of the tradesmen, as *individuals*, would be something worse than unwise or even than unmanly; it would be immoral and calumnious! My motives point in a far different direction and to far other objects, as will be seen in the conclusion of the chapter.

A learned and exemplary old clergyman, who many years ago went to his reward followed by the regrets and blessings of his flock, published at his own expense two volumes octavo, entitled, a new Theory of Redemption. The work was most severely handled in the Monthly or Critical Review, I forget which,⁴¹³ and this unprovoked hostility became the good old man's favorite topic of conversation among his friends. Well! (he used to exclaim) in the SECOND edition, I shall have an opportunity of exposing both the ignorance and the malignity of the anonymous critic. Two or three years however passed by without any tidings from the bookseller, who had undertaken the printing and publication of the work, and who was perfectly at his ease, as the author was known to be a man of large property. At length the *accounts* were written for; and in the course of a few weeks they were presented by the *rider* for the house,⁴¹⁴ in person. My old friend put on his spectacles, and holding the scroll with no very firm hand, began—*Paper, so much: O moderate enough—not at all beyond my expectation! Printing, so much: well! moderate enough! Stitching, covers, advertisements, carriage, &c. so much.*—Still nothing amiss. *Selleridge* (for orthography is no necessary part of a bookseller's literary acquirements) £3. 3s. Bless me! only three guineas for the what d'ye call it? the *selleridge*? No more, Sir! replied the rider. Nay, but that is *too moderate*! rejoined my old friend. Only three guineas for *selling* a thousand copies of a work in two volumes? O Sir! (cries the young traveller) you have mistaken the word. There have been none of them *sold*; they have been sent back from London long ago; and this £3. 3s. is for the *cellaridge*, or warehouse-room in our book *cellar*.

⁴¹³ It was the *Monthly Review* (May 1791), and the review was pretty swingeing, criticising all the salient terms in James Newton's title (*A New Theory of Redemption, upon Principles equally Agreeable to Revelation and Reason*) as inapposite, and prefacing the review with the mocking epigraph, 'Good Mr. ———, by your leave / Your title's somewhat odd'.

⁴¹⁴ The rep, or commercial traveller.

The work was in consequence preferred from the ominous cellar of the publisher's to the author's garret; and, on presenting a copy to an acquaintance, the old gentleman used to tell the anecdote with great humor and still greater good nature.

With equal lack of worldly knowledge, I was a far more than equal sufferer for it, at the very outset of my authorship. Toward the close of the first year from the time, that in an inauspicious hour I left the friendly cloysters, and the happy grove of quiet, ever honored Jesus College, Cambridge, I was persuaded by sundry Philanthropists and Anti-polemists to set on foot a periodical work, entitled THE WATCHMAN, that (according to the general motto of the work) *all might know the truth, and that the truth might make us free*.⁴¹⁵ In order to exempt it from the stamp-tax, and likewise to contribute as little as possible to the supposed guilt of a war against freedom, it was to be published on every eighth day, thirty-two pages, large octavo, closely printed, and price only FOUR-PENCE. Accordingly with a flaming prospectus,—“*Knowledge is Power,*” &c. *to cry the state of the political atmosphere,* and so forth, I set off on a tour to the North, from Bristol to Sheffield, for the purpose of procuring customers, preaching by the way in most of the great towns, as an hireless volunteer, in a blue coat and white waistcoat, that not a rag of the woman of Babylon might be seen on me.⁴¹⁶ For I was at that time and long after, though a Trinitarian (i.e. ad normam Platonis)⁴¹⁷ in philosophy, yet a zealous Unitarian in Religion; more accurately, I was a *psilanthropist*,⁴¹⁸ one of those who believe our Lord to have been the real son of Joseph, and who lay the main stress on the resurrection rather than on the crucifixion. O! never can I remember those days with either shame or regret. For I was most sincere, most disinterested! My opinions were indeed in many and most important points erroneous; but my heart was single. Wealth, rank, life itself then seemed cheap to me, compared with the interests of (what I believed to be) the truth, and

⁴¹⁵ Coleridge's journal *The Watchman* appeared between 1 March and 13 May 1796; the 'motto', adapted from John 8:32, appeared on the front of all copies. An 'anti-polemist' is someone opposed to the sorts of polemical discourse that characterise political intemperance.

⁴¹⁶ Coleridge preached in ordinary clothes, not clerical gear, the latter signifying the established church identified by some radicals as the 'Whore of Babylon' prophesied in the Biblical *Revelation of St John*.

⁴¹⁷ 'In the Platonic sense'.

⁴¹⁸ The doctrine that Christ was 'a mere man' (*psilos* is the Greek for 'mere'; *anthropos* for man). 'The Achilles' heel of the Psilanthropist — or "mere man" — theory of Christ lies in the adjective. A philosopher, who was asked whether he held it, answered, "I will tell you when you have told me what a 'mere man' is." (*Spectator*, 3 (1753), 276)

the will of my maker. I cannot even accuse myself of having been actuated by vanity; for in the expansion of my enthusiasm I did not think of *myself* at all.

My campaign commenced at Birmingham; and my first attack was on a rigid Calvinist, a tallow chandler by trade. He was a tall dingy man, in whom length was so predominant over breadth, that he might almost have been borrowed for a foundery poker. O that face! a face *κατ' εμφασιν!*⁴¹⁹ I have it before me at this moment. The lank, black, twine-like hair, *pingui-nitescens*,⁴²⁰ cut in a strait line along the black stubble of his thin gunpowder eye brows, that looked like a scorched *after-math* from a last week's shaving. His coat collar behind in perfect unison, both of colour and lustre with the coarse yet glib cordage, that I suppose he called his hair, and which with a *bend* inward at the nape of the neck (the only approach to flexure in his whole figure) slunk in behind his waistcoat; while the countenance lank, dark, very *hard*, and with strong perpendicular furrows, gave me a dim notion of some one looking at me through a *used* gridiron, all soot, grease, and iron! But he was one of the *thorough-bred*, a true lover of liberty, and (I was informed) had proved to the satisfaction of many, that Mr. Pitt was one of the horns of the second beast in the Revelations, *that spoke like a dragon.*⁴²¹ A person, to whom one of my letters of recommendation had been addressed, was my introducer. It was a new event in my life, my first *stroke* in the new business I had undertaken of an author, yea, and of an author trading on his own account. My companion after some imperfect sentences and a multitude of hums and haas abandoned the cause to his client; and I commenced an harangue of half an hour to Phileleutheros,⁴²² the tallow-chandler, varying my notes, through the whole gamut of eloquence, from the ratiocinative to the declamatory, and in the latter from the pathetic to the indignant. I argued, I described, I promised, I prophecied; and beginning with the captivity of nations I ended with the near approach of the millennium, finishing the whole with some of my own verses describing that glorious state out of *the Religious Musings*:

—————Such delights,
As float to earth, permitted visitants!

⁴¹⁹ 'With emphasis' or 'most emphatically'.

⁴²⁰ 'Shining with grease', derived by Coleridge from the Latin for these two terms.

⁴²¹ Revelation 13:10.

⁴²² This name (Greek for 'Lover of Freedom') was a popular pseudonym for radical writers in the later eighteenth century. For instance, an individual calling himself 'Phileleutheros Oriensis' (that is, 'A Lover of Freedom from Oriel College, Oxford') published a number of tracts in the first decade of the nineteenth century.

When in some hour of solemn jubilee
 The massive gates of Paradise are thrown
 Wide open: and forth come in fragments wild
 Sweet echoes of unearthly melodies,
 And odors snatched from beds of Amaranth,
 And they, that from the chrystal river of life
 Spring up on freshen'd wings, ambrosial gales!
Religious Musings, l. 356

My taper man of lights listened with perseverant and praiseworthy patience, though (as I was afterwards told on complaining of certain gales that were not altogether ambrosial) it was a *melting* day with him. And what, Sir! (he said, after a short pause) might the cost be? *Only FOUR-PENCE*, (O! how I felt the anti-climax, the abysmal bathos of that *four-pence!*) *only four-pence, Sir, each number, to be published on every eighth day*. That comes to a deal of money at the end of a year. And how much did you say there was to be for the money? *Thirty-two pages, Sir! large octavo, closely printed*. Thirty and two pages? Bless me, why except what I does in a family way on the Sabbath, that's more than I ever reads, Sir! all the year round. I am as great a one, as any man in Brummagem, Sir! for liberty and truth and all them sort of things, but as to this (no offence, I hope, Sir!) I must beg to be excused.

So ended my first canvas: from causes that I shall presently mention, I made but one other application in person. This took place at Manchester to a stately and opulent wholesale dealer in cottons. He took my letter of introduction, and having perused it, measured me from head to foot and again from foot to head, and then asked if I had any bill or invoice of the thing; I presented my prospectus to him; he rapidly skimmed and hummed over the first side, and still more rapidly the second and concluding page; crushed it within his fingers and the palm of his hand; then most deliberately and *significantly* rubbed and smoothed one part against the other; and lastly putting it into his pocket turned his back on me with an "*over-run* with these articles!" and so without another syllable retired into his counting-house. And, I can truly say, to my unspeakable amusement.

This, I have said, was my second and last attempt. On returning baffled from the first, in which I had vainly essayed to repeat the miracle of Orpheus with the Brummagem patriot,⁴²³ I dined with the

⁴²³ Orpheus's music was so magical it could move mountains. 'Tis said that once to Orpheus' fiddle / These [mountains] danc'd like bears upon a griddle' (*The Age: a Poem, Moral, Political and Metaphysical* (1810), 273).

tradesman who had introduced me to him. After dinner he impertuned me to smoke a pipe with him, and two or three other illuminati of the same rank. I objected, both because I was engaged to spend the evening with a minister and his friends, and because I had never smoked except once or twice in my life time, and then it was herb tobacco mixed with Oronooko.⁴²⁴ On the assurance however that the tobacco was equally mild, and seeing too that it was of a yellow colour; (not forgetting the lamentable difficulty, I have always experienced, in saying, No! and in abstaining from what the people about me were doing) I took half a pipe, filling the lower half of the bole with salt. I was soon however compelled to resign it, in consequence of a giddiness and distressful feeling in my eyes, which as I had drunk but a single glass of ale, must, I knew, have been the effect of the tobacco. Soon after, deeming myself recovered, I sallied forth to my engagement, but the walk and the fresh air brought on all the symptoms again, and I had scarcely entered the minister's drawing-room, and opened a small packet of letters, which he had received from Bristol for me; ere I sunk back on the sofa in a sort of swoon rather than sleep. Fortunately I had found just time enough to inform him of the confused state of my feelings, and of the occasion. For here and thus I lay, my face like a wall that is white-washing, *deathly* pale and with the cold drops of perspiration running down it from my forehead, while one after another there dropt in the different gentlemen, who had been invited to meet, and spend the evening with me, to the number of from fifteen to twenty. As the poison of tobacco acts but for a short time, I at length awoke from insensibility, and looked round on the party, my eyes dazzled by the candles which had been lighted in the interim. By way of relieving my embarrassment one of the gentlemen began the conversation, with "*Have you seen a paper to day, Mr. Coleridge?*" Sir! (I replied, rubbing my eyes,) "I am far from convinced, that a christian is permitted to read either newspapers or any other works of merely political and temporary interest." This remark, so ludicrously inapposite to, or rather, incongruous with, the purpose, for which I was known to have visited Birmingham and to assist me in which they were all then met, produced an involuntary and general burst of laughter; and seldom indeed have I passed so many delightful hours, as I enjoyed in that room from the moment of that laugh to an early hour the next morning. Never, perhaps, in so mixed and numerous a party have I since heard conversation sustained with such animation, enriched with such variety of information

⁴²⁴ A type of Virginia tobacco.

and enlivened with such a flow of anecdote. Both then and afterwards they all joined in dissuading me from proceeding with my scheme; assured me in the most friendly and yet most flattering expressions, that the employment was neither fit for me, nor I fit for the employment. Yet if I determined on persevering in it, they promised to exert themselves to the utmost to procure subscribers, and insisted that I should make no more applications in person, but carry on the canvass by proxy. The same hospitable reception, the same dissuasion, and (that failing) the same kind exertions in my behalf, I met with at Manchester, Derby, Nottingham, Sheffield, indeed, at every place in which I took up my sojourn. I often recall with affectionate pleasure the many respectable men who interested themselves for me, a perfect stranger to them, not a few of whom I can still name among my friends. They will bear witness for me, how opposite even then my principles were to those of jacobinism or even of democracy, and can attest the strict accuracy of the statement which I have left on record in the 10th and 11th numbers of *THE FRIEND*.

From this rememberable tour I returned with nearly a thousand names on the subscription list of the *Watchman*; yet more than half convinced, that prudence dictated the abandonment of the scheme. But for this very reason I persevered in it; for I was at that period of my life so compleatly hag-ridden by the fear of being influenced by selfish motives that to know a mode of conduct to be the dictate of *prudence* was a sort of presumptive proof to my feelings, that the contrary was the dictate of *duty*. Accordingly, I commenced the work, which was announced in London by long bills in letters larger than had ever been seen before, and which (I have been informed, for I did not see them myself) eclipsed the glories even of the lottery puffs. But, alas! the publication of the very first number was delayed beyond the day announced for its appearance.⁴²⁵ In the second number an essay against fast days, with a most censurable application of a text from Isaiah for its motto,⁴²⁶ lost me near five hundred of my subscribers at one blow. In the two following numbers I made enemies of all my Jacobin and Democratic Patrons; for, disgusted by their infidelity, and their adoption of French morals with French *psilosophy*,⁴²⁷ and perhaps

⁴²⁵ It was advertised to appear on 5 Feb 1796, but did not actually appear until 1 March.

⁴²⁶ The text was 'Wherefore my Bowels shall sound like a Harp' (Isaiah 16:11). Coleridge's piece was entitled 'Essay on Fasts' and appeared on 9 March 1796.

⁴²⁷ To repeat the substance of the note in Chapter 3, where Coleridge first introduces this term: the Greek roots of the word 'philosophy' mean 'lover of wisdom'; Coleridge replaces the *philos* ('lover') with the Greek *psilos*, which means 'bare; stript of hair or feather, smooth; bald; tenuous', creating a new word, 'stripped or bald wisdom' by way

thinking, that charity ought to begin nearest home; instead of abusing the Government and the Aristocrats chiefly or entirely, as had been expected of me, I levelled my attacks at “*modern patriotism*,” and even ventured to declare my belief, that whatever the motives of ministers might have been for the sedition (or as it was then the fashion to call them, the *gagging*) bills, yet the bills themselves would produce an effect to be desired by all the true friends of freedom, as far as they should contribute to deter men from openly declaiming on subjects, the principles of which they had never bottomed and from “pleading to the poor and ignorant, instead of pleading *for* them.”⁴²⁸ At the same time I avowed my conviction, that national education and a concurring spread of the gospel were the indispensable condition of any true political amelioration. Thus by the time the seventh number was published, I had the mortification (but why should I say this, when in truth I cared too little for any thing that concerned my worldly interests to be at all mortified about it?) of seeing the preceding numbers exposed in sundry old iron shops for a penny a piece. At the ninth number I dropt the work.⁴²⁹ But from the London publisher I could not obtain a shilling; he was a ——— and set me at defiance.⁴³⁰ From other places I procured but little, and after such delays as rendered that little worth nothing; and I should have been inevitably thrown into jail by my Bristol printer, who refused to wait even for a month, for a sum between eighty and ninety pounds, if the money had not been paid for me by a man⁴³¹ by no means affluent, a dear friend who attached himself to me from my first arrival at Bristol, who has continued my friend with a fidelity unconquered by time or even by my own apparent neglect; a friend from whom I never received an advice that was not wise, nor a remonstrance that was not gentle and affectionate.

Conscientiously an opponent of the first revolutionary war, yet with my eyes thoroughly opened to the true character and impotence of the favorers of revolutionary principles in England, principles which I

of mocking the meagreness of French political philosophy.

⁴²⁸ Coleridge actually published this sentiment in *The Friend* (No. 10, 19 Oct 1809) rather than *The Watchman*: ‘it is the duty of the enlightened Philanthropist to plead *for* the poor and ignorant, not *to* them’.

⁴²⁹ In fact, ten issues of *The Watchman* were issued.

⁴³⁰ The London publisher was John Parsons, of Paternoster Row. A letter Coleridge wrote to J. P. Estlin (6 January 1798) about his debts to his Bristol printer Nathaniel Biggs reveals which word is decorously omitted above: ‘I owe Biggs 5£—Parsons, the Bookseller, owes me more than this considerably; but he is a rogue, & will not pay me’ (Griggs, *Collected Letters*, 1:368).

⁴³¹ Thomas Poole (1765–1837).

held in abhorrence (for it was part of my political creed, that whoever ceased to act as an *individual* by making himself a member of any *society* not sanctioned by his Government, forfeited the rights of a citizen) a vehement anti-ministerialist, but after the invasion of Switzerland, a more vehement anti-gallican, and still more intensely an anti-jacobin, I retired to a cottage at Stowey, and provided for my scanty maintenance by writing verses for a London Morning Paper.⁴³² I saw plainly, that literature was not a profession, by which I could expect to live; for I could not disguise from myself, that whatever my talents might or might not be in other respects, yet they were not of the sort that could enable me to become a popular writer; and that whatever my opinions might be in themselves, they were almost equi-distant from all the three prominent parties, the Pittites, the Foxites, and the Democrats. Of the unsaleable nature of my writings I had an amusing memento one morning from our own servant girl. For happening to rise at an earlier hour than usual, I observed her putting an extravagant quantity of paper into the grate in order to light the fire, and mildly checked her for her wastefulness; la, Sir! (replied poor Nanny) why, it is only "WATCHMEN."

I now devoted myself to poetry and to the study of ethics and psychology; and so profound was my admiration at this time of Hartley's *Essay on Man*, that I gave his name to my first born. In addition to the gentleman, my neighbour, whose garden joined on to my little orchard, and the cultivation of whose friendship had been my sole motive in choosing Stowey for my residence, I was so fortunate as to acquire, shortly after my settlement there, an invaluable blessing in the society and neighbourhood of one, to whom I could look up with equal reverence, whether I regarded him as a poet, a philosopher, or a man.⁴³³ His conversation extended to almost all subjects, except physics and politics; with the latter he never troubled himself. Yet neither my retirement nor my utter abstraction from all the disputes of the day could secure me in those jealous times from suspicion and obloquy, which did not stop at me, but extended to my excellent friend, whose perfect innocence was even adduced as

⁴³² France invaded Switzerland in March 1798. Thomas Poole had arranged for Coleridge and his family to live in a cottage at Nether Stowey in Somerset. Coleridge contributed a number of poems to the *Morning Post* expressive of his disillusionment with the turn of events in revolutionary France, amongst them 'Recantation: an Ode' (April 1798), which later became 'France: an Ode'.

⁴³³ William Wordsworth, whom Coleridge had first met in Sept 1795. On 16 July 1797 Wordsworth and his sister rented Alfoxden, a manor house three miles from Nether Stowey, partly in order to be close to Coleridge.

a proof of his guilt. One of the many busy *sycophants** of that day (I here use the word sycophant, in its original sense, as a wretch who *flatters* the prevailing party by *informing* against his neighbours, under pretence that they are exporters of prohibited *figs* or fancies! for the moral application of the term it matters not which)—one of these sycophantic law-mongrels, discoursing on the *politics* of the neighbourhood, uttered the following *deep* remark: “As to *Coleridge*, there is not so much harm in *him*, for he is a whirl-brain that talks whatever comes uppermost; but that ——! he is the *dark* traitor. *You never hear HIM say a syllable on the subject.*”

Now that the hand of providence has disciplined *all* Europe into sobriety, as men tame wild elephants, by alternate blows and caresses,⁴³⁴ now that Englishmen of all classes are restored to their old English notions and feelings; it will with difficulty be credited, how great an influence was at that time possessed and exerted by the spirit of secret defamation (the too constant attendant on party-zeal!) during the restless interim from 1793 to the commencement of the Addington administration, or the year before the truce of Amiens.⁴³⁵ For by the latter period the minds of the partizans, exhausted by excess of stimulation and humbled by mutual disappointment, had become languid. The same causes, that inclined the nation to peace, disposed the individuals to reconciliation. Both parties had found themselves in the wrong. The one had confessedly mistaken the moral character of the revolution, and the other had miscalculated both its moral and its physical resources. The experiment was made at the price of great,

* Συκοῦς φαίνειν, to shew or detect figs, the exportation of which from Attica was forbidden by the laws.⁴³⁶

⁴³⁴ The Napoleonic Wars had been brought to an end with the Second Treaty of Paris, on 20 November 1815. The ‘caresses’ Coleridge mentions as part of the mode of taming elephants are sexual in nature. ‘They then let loose some tame females, whose pudenda are anointed with a certain oil to entice the males, who, following the females, are led into the inclosure, and there confined and taken . . . After they are taken, they are first inclosed in such a narrow place that they have scarce room to stand, and their fore-legs and tusks are tied together; then the keepers mount them, beat them with clubs, and kick them with their heels, threatening to starve them if they do not behave quietly’ (*The Polite Miscellany: a Collection of Essays &c.* (1764), 293).

⁴³⁵ Henry Addington, Viscount Sidmouth, became Prime Minister in March 1801; the Treaty of Amiens was in March 1802.

⁴³⁶ Coleridge found this in Aristophanes, and the annotations thereupon. Here is the (later) Greek Lexicon of Liddell and Scott on Σύκοφάντης; ‘a false accuser, a backbiter, slanderer, Aristophanes etc. (but never used by the Greeks in the modern sense of *sycophant*, εἰς κόλαξ) – generally a false adviser . . . the word was derived, according to Ister and Philomenest, from συκοῦν φαίνω, and properly meant *one who informed against persons exporting figs* from Attica, or perhaps *persons plundering sacred fig-trees*’.

almost we may say, of humiliating sacrifices; and wise men foresaw that it would fail, at least in its direct and ostensible object. Yet it was purchased cheaply, and realized an object of equal value, and, if possible, of still more vital importance. For it brought about a national unanimity unexampled in our history since the reign of Elizabeth; and providence, never wanting to a good work when men have done their parts, soon provided a common focus in the cause of Spain,⁴³⁷ which made us all once more Englishmen by at once gratifying and correcting the predilections of both parties. The sincere reverers of the throne felt the cause of loyalty ennobled by its alliance with that of freedom; while the *honest* zealots of the people could not but admit, that freedom itself assumed a more winning form, humanized by loyalty and consecrated by religious principle. The youthful enthusiasts who, flattered by the morning rainbow of the French revolution, had made a boast of *expatriating* their hopes and fears, now disciplined by the succeeding storms and sobered by increase of years, had been taught to prize and honor the spirit of nationality as the best safeguard of national independence, and this again as the absolute pre-requisite and necessary basis of popular rights.

If in Spain too disappointment has nipped our too forward expectations, yet all is not destroyed that is checked. The crop was perhaps springing up too rank in the stalk to *kern* well; and there were, doubtless, symptoms of the Gallican *blight* on it.⁴³⁸ If superstition and despotism have been suffered to let in their woolvish sheep to trample and eat it down even to the surface, yet the roots remain alive, and the second growth may prove the stronger and healthier for the temporary interruption. At all events, to *us* heaven has been just and gracious. The *people* of England did their best, and have received their rewards. Long may we continue to deserve it! Causes, which it had been too generally the habit of former statesmen to regard as

⁴³⁷ Arthur Wellesley, later the Duke of Wellington, landed with his troops in Portugal in August 1808 to support the Spanish insurrection against Napoleon, who had replaced the King of Spain with his brother Joseph. This led to the Peninsular War, which eventually led (in 1814) to an invasion of France and the initial defeat of Napoleon.

⁴³⁸ In 1814, following the fall of Napoleon, Ferdinand VII was restored to the Spanish throne on the understanding that he would rule according to the terms of the recently passed Liberal Constitution of 1812. Within months of arriving in Spain, however, Ferdinand had abolished the Constitution and arrested the liberal leaders responsible for framing it. 'Kern' is a verb that means 'to harden' or 'to form seeds' ('TO KERN, v n. probably from *kernel*, or, by change of a vowel, corrupted from *corn*. To harden, as ripened corn. – TO KERN v.a. To form into grains; to turn milk into curds; to powder with salt.' (John Wilkes, *Encyclopedia Londinensis, or, Universal Dictionary of Arts* (1812), 11:685)).

belonging to another world, are now admitted by all ranks to have been the main agents of our success. “*We fought from heaven; the stars in their courses fought against Sisera.*”⁴³⁹ If then unanimity grounded on moral feelings has been among the least equivocal sources of our national glory, that man deserves the esteem of his countrymen, even as patriots, who devotes his life and the utmost efforts of his intellect to the preservation and continuance of that unanimity by the disclosure and establishment of *principles*. For by these all *opinions* must be ultimately tried; and (as the feelings of men are worthy of regard only as far as they are the representatives of their fixed opinions) on the knowledge of these all unanimity, not accidental and fleeting, must be grounded. Let the scholar, who doubts this assertion, refer only to the speeches and writings of EDMUND BURKE at the commencement of the American war, and compare them with his speeches and writings at the commencement of the French revolution. He will find the *principles* exactly the same and the deductions the same; but the practical inferences almost opposite in the one case from those drawn in the other; yet in both equally legitimate and in both equally confirmed by the results. Whence gained he this superiority of foresight? Whence arose the striking *difference*, and in most instances even the discrepancy between the grounds assigned by *him*, and by those who voted *with him*, on the same questions? How are we to explain the notorious fact, that the speeches and writings of EDMUND BURKE are more interesting at the present day, than they were found at the time of their first publication; while those of his illustrious confederates are either forgotten, or exist only to furnish proofs, that the same conclusion, which one man had deduced scientifically, *may* be brought out by another in consequence of errors that luckily chanced to neutralize each other. It would be unhandsome as a conjecture, even were it not, as it actually is, false in point of fact, to attribute this difference to the deficiency of talent on the part of Burke’s friends, or of experience, or of historical knowledge. The satisfactory solution is, that Edmund Burke possessed and had sedulously sharpened that eye, which sees all things, actions, and events, in relation to the *laws* that determine their existence and circumscribe their possibility. He referred habitually to *principles*. He was a *scientific* statesman; and therefore a *seer*. For every *principle* contains in itself the germs of a prophecy; and as the prophetic power is the essential privilege of science, so the fulfilment of its oracles supplies the outward and (to men in general) the *only* test of its claim to the title. Wearisome as Burke’s refinements appeared

⁴³⁹ Judges 5:20.

to his parliamentary auditors, yet the cultivated classes throughout Europe have reason to be thankful, that

——he went on refining,
And thought of convincing, while they thought of dining.⁴⁴⁰

Our very sign-boards (said an illustrious friend to me) give evidence, that there has been a TITIAN in the world. In like manner, not only the debates in parliament, not only our proclamations and state papers, but the essays and leading paragraphs of our journals are so many remembrancers of EDMUND BURKE. Of this the reader may easily convince himself, if either by recollection or reference he will compare the opposition newspapers at the commencement and during the five or six following years of the French revolution with the sentiments, and grounds of argument assumed in the same class of Journals at present, and for some years past.

Whether the spirit of jacobinism, which the writings of Burke exorcised from the higher and from the literary classes, may not like the ghost in Hamlet, be heard moving and mining in the underground chambers with an activity the more dangerous because less noisy, may admit of a question. I have given my opinions on this point, and the grounds of them, in my letters to Judge Fletcher occasioned by his CHARGE to the Wexford grand jury, and published in the *Courier*.⁴⁴¹

⁴⁴⁰ Coleridge quotes Oliver Goldsmith's verse-portrait of Burke in *Retaliation* (1774), lines 35–6. The whole passage is as follows:

Here lies our good Edmund, whose genius was such,
We scarcely can praise it, or blame it too much;
Who, born for the Universe, narrow'd his mind,
And to party gave up what was meant for mankind.
Though fraught with all learning, yet straining his throat
To persuade Tommy Townshend to lend him a vote;
Who, too deep for his hearers, still went on refining,
And thought of convincing, while they thought of dining; (lines 29–36)

⁴⁴¹ Six letters were printed in the *Courier* addressed to Judge William Fletcher and signed 'an Irish Protestant' between 20 September and 10 December 1814. It is assumed that these are the letters to which Coleridge is referring here, although he was in no sense 'Irish'. The 'CHARGE' was the Judge's lengthy address to the jury, reprinted in many magazines and journals under the heading 'JUDGE FLETCHER'S CHARGE', in which the Judge praised the people of Wexford because the crimes being tried at the summer Assizes of 1814 were all 'as far as I can collect from the examinations, originating in private malice and individual revenge; and not connected with any of those disturbances of which we have heard so much, in different parts of the kingdom'. The majority of Fletcher's 'Charge' was a peroration against political agitation and nationalist politics; although it also argues that the poverty of the general populace needed to be addressed, and that Orange Lodges and associations were 'producing embittering recollections, and inflicting wounds upon the feelings of others; and I do emphatically state it as my settled opinion, that, until those Associations are effectually

Be this as it may, the evil spirit of jealousy, and with it the cerberean whelps of feud and slander, no longer walk their rounds, in cultivated society.

Far different were the days to which these anecdotes have carried me back. The dark guesses of some zealous Quidnunc met with so congenial a soil in the grave alarm of a titled Dogberry of our neighbourhood,⁴⁴² that a SPY was actually sent down from the government *pour surveillance* of myself and friend. There must have been not only abundance, but *variety* of these “honorable men” at the disposal of Ministers: for this proved a very honest fellow. After three week’s truly Indian perseverance in tracking us (for we were commonly together) during all which time seldom were we out of doors, but he contrived to be within hearing (and all the while utterly unsuspected; how indeed *could* such a suspicion enter our fancies?) he not only rejected Sir Dogberry’s request that he would try yet a little longer, but declared to him his belief, that both my friend and myself were as good subjects, for aught he could discover to the contrary, as any in His Majesty’s dominions. He had repeatedly hid himself, he said, for hours together behind a bank at the sea-side (our favorite seat) and overheard our conversation. At first he fancied, that we were aware of our danger; for he often heard me talk of one *Spy Nozy*, which he was inclined to interpret of himself, and of a remarkable feature belonging to him; but he was speedily convinced that it was the name of a man who had made a book and lived long ago. Our talk ran most upon books, and we were perpetually desiring each other to look at *this*, and to listen to *that*; but he could not catch a word about politics. Once he had joined me on the road; (this occurred, as I was returning home alone from my friend’s house, which was about three miles from my own cottage) and passing himself off as a traveller, he had entered into conversation with me, and talked of purpose in a *democrat* way in order to draw me out. The result, it appears, not only convinced him that I was no friend of jacobinism; but (he added) I had “plainly

put down, and the arms taken from their hands, in vain will the north of Ireland expect tranquillity or peace’.

⁴⁴² Quidnunc is a character in Arthur Murphy’s once-popular play, *The Farce of the Upholsterer* (1758). Young Bell loves Quidnunc’s beautiful daughter, but his way is blocked by her father: ‘the Man’s distracted about the Balance of Power and will give his Daughter to none but a Politician . . . his Head runs upon Ways and Means, and Schemes for paying off the national Debt: The Affairs of *Europe* engross all his Attention, while the Distresses of his lovely Daughter pass unnoticed’ (Murphy, *The Upholsterer, a Farce in Two Acts As it is Performed at the Theatre Royal in Covent-Garden* (1763), 6). Dogberry is the incompetent but self-satisfied night constable from Shakespeare’s *Much Ado About Nothing*.

made it out to be such a silly as well as wicked thing, that he felt ashamed though he had only *put it on*." I distinctly remembered the occurrence, and had mentioned it immediately on my return, repeating what the traveller with his Bardolph nose⁴⁴³ had said, with my own answer; and so little did I suspect the true object of my "tempter ere accuser,"⁴⁴⁴ that I expressed with no small pleasure my hope and belief, that the conversation had been of some service to the poor misled malcontent. This incident therefore prevented all doubt as to the truth of the report, which through a friendly medium came to me from the master of the village inn, who had been ordered to entertain the *Government Gentleman* in his best manner, but above all to be silent concerning such a person being in his house. At length, he received Sir Dogberry's commands to accompany his guest at the final interview; and, after the absolving suffrage of *the gentleman honored with the confidence of Ministers* answered, as follows, to the following queries? D. Well, landlord! and what do you know of the person in question? L. I see him often pass by with maister —, my landlord, (*i.e., the owner of the house*) and sometimes with the new-comers at Holford; but I never said a word to him or he to me. D. But do you not know, that he has distributed papers and hand-bills of a seditious nature among the common people? L. No, your honor! I never heard of such a thing. D. Have you not seen this Mr. Coleridge, or heard of, his haranguing and talking to knots and clusters of the inhabitants?—What are you grinning at, Sir? L. Beg your honor's pardon! but I was only thinking, how they'd have stared at him. If what I have heard be true, your honor! they would not have understood a word, he said. When our vicar was here, Dr. L.⁴⁴⁵ the master of the great school and canon of Windsor, there was a great dinner party at maister ———'s; and one of the farmers, that was there, told us that he and the Doctor talked real Hebrew Greek at each other for an hour together after dinner. D. Answer the question, Sir! Does he ever harangue the people? L. I hope your honor an't angry with me. I can say no more than I know. I never saw him talking with any one, but my landlord, and our curate, and the strange gentleman. D. Has he not been seen wandering on the hills towards the Channel, and along the shore, with books and papers in his hand, taking charts and maps of the country? L. Why, as to that, your honor! I own, I have heard; I am sure, I would not wish

⁴⁴³ The character of Bardolph in Shakespeare's two *Henry IV* plays has a large, red, pustular nose.

⁴⁴⁴ Milton, *Paradise Lost*, 4:10.

⁴⁴⁵ Dr William Langford (1763–1814), Chaplain in Ordinary to His Majesty, Canon of Windsor, and Under Master of Eton School in the 1790s.

to say ill of any body; but it is certain, that I have heard—D. Speak out man! don't be afraid, you are doing your duty to your King and Government. What have you heard? L. Why, folks do say, your honor! as how that he is a *Poet*, and that he is going to put Quantock and all about here in print; and as they be so much together, I suppose that the strange gentleman has some *consarn* in the business.—So ended this formidable inquisition, the latter part of which alone requires explanation, and at the same time entitles the anecdote to a place in my literary life. I had considered it as a defect in the admirable poem of the TASK,⁴⁴⁶ that the subject, which gives the title to the work, was not, and indeed could not be, carried on beyond the three or four first pages, and that throughout the poem, the connections are frequently awkward, and the transitions abrupt and arbitrary. I sought for a subject, that should give equal room and freedom for description, incident, and impassioned reflections on men, nature, and society, yet supply in itself a natural connection to the parts, and unity to the whole. Such a subject I conceived myself to have found in a stream, traced from its source in the hills among the yellow-red moss and conical glass-shaped tufts of Bent,⁴⁴⁷ to the first break or fall, where its drops become audible, and it begins to form a channel; thence to the peat and turf barn, itself built of the same dark squares as it sheltered; to the sheep-fold; to the first cultivated plot of ground; to the lonely cottage and its bleak garden won from the heath; to the hamlet, the villages, the market-town, the manufactories, and the seaport. My walks therefore were almost daily on the top of Quantock, and among its sloping coombs. With my pencil and memorandum-book in my hand, I was *making studies*, as the artists call them, and often moulding my thoughts into verse, with the objects and imagery immediately before my senses. Many circumstances, evil and good, intervened to prevent the completion of the poem, which was to have been entitled “THE BROOK.” Had I finished the work, it was my purpose in the heat of the moment to have dedicated it to our then committee of public

⁴⁴⁶ *The Task* by William Cowper, first published in 1785. The titular ‘task’ was set by Cowper’s friend Lady Austen – with the intention of cheering up his melancholy mind – to write a poem in Miltonic blank verse about a sofa. ‘A lady, fond of blank verse, demanded a poem of that kind from the author, and gave him the SOFA for a subject. He obeyed; and, having much leisure, connected another subject with it; and, pursuing the train of thought to which his situation and turn of mind led him, brought forth at length, instead of the trifle which he at first intended, a serious affair – a Volume!’ (Preface to first edition).

⁴⁴⁷ A variety of wild grass. ‘The roots of the bent, like those of the common couch-grass, strike deep into the soil and spread out in every direction’ (Robert Somerville, *General View of the Agriculture of East Lothian* (1805), 299).

safety as containing the charts and maps, with which I was to have supplied the French Government in aid of their plans of invasion. And these too for a tract of coast that from Clevedon to Minehead scarcely permits the approach of a fishing-boat!

All my experience from my first entrance into life to the present hour is in favor of the warning maxim, that the man, who opposes in toto the political or religious zealots of his age, is safer from their obloquy than he who differs from them in one or two points or perhaps only in degree. By that transfer of the feelings of private life into the discussion of public questions, which is the *queen bee* in the hive of party fanaticism, the partizan has more sympathy with an intemperate Opposite than with a moderate Friend. We now enjoy an intermission, and long may it continue! In addition to far higher and more important merits, our present bible societies and other numerous associations for national or charitable objects, may serve perhaps to carry off the superfluous activity and fervor of stirring minds in innocent hyperboles and the bustle of management. But the poison-tree is not dead, though the sap may for a season have subsided to its roots. At least let us not be lulled into such a notion of our entire security, as not to keep watch and ward, even on our best feelings. I have seen gross intolerance shewn in support of toleration; sectarian antipathy most obtrusively displayed in the promotion of an undistinguishing comprehension of sects: and acts of cruelty (I had almost said) of treachery, committed in furtherance of an object vitally important to the cause of humanity; and all this by men too of naturally kind dispositions and exemplary conduct.

The magic rod of fanaticism is preserved in the very adyta of human nature;⁴⁴⁸ and needs only the re-exciting warmth of a master hand to bud forth afresh and produce the old fruits. The horror of the peasant's war in Germany, and the direful effects of the Anabaptist's tenets (which differed only from those of jacobinism by the substitution of theological for philosophical jargon) struck all Europe for a time with affright. Yet little more than a century was sufficient to obliterate all effective memory of these events. The same principles

⁴⁴⁸ This sentence and the three that follow it were originally published in *The Friend*, No. 7 (28 September 1809). The Latin *adytum* (of which *adyta* is the plural) means 'the innermost part of a temple, the sanctuary, which none but priests could enter, and from which oracles were delivered'; and in general the word was used to mean 'a secret place'. Coleridge uses the word in Chapter 6. The cod-Mosaic 'magic rod of fanaticism' image is not original to Coleridge – see for instance: 'If the dry rock was originally struck by the magic wand of fanaticism; no sooner had the waters gushed forth, than they were swelled into a roaring stream by domestic treason and foreign villainy.' (Anon, *Fanaticism and Treason* (1780), 81)

with similar though less dreadful consequences were again at work from the imprisonment of the first Charles to the restoration of his son. The fanatic maxim of extirpating fanaticism by persecution produced a civil war. The war ended in the victory of the insurgents; but the temper survived, and Milton had abundant grounds for asserting, that “Presbyter was but OLD PRIEST writ large!”⁴⁴⁹ One good result, thank heaven! of this zealotry was the re-establishment of the church. And now it might have been hoped, that the mischievous spirit would have been bound for a season, “and a seal set upon him, that he might deceive the nation no more.”⁴⁵⁰ But no! The ball of persecution was taken up with undiminished vigor by the persecuted. The same fanatic principle, that under the solemn oath and covenant, had turned cathedrals into stables, destroyed the rarest trophies of art and ancestral piety, and hunted the brightest ornaments of learning and religion into holes and corners, now marched under episcopal banners, and having first crowded the prisons of England emptied its whole vial of wrath on the miserable covenanters of Scotland (*Laing’s History of Scotland.—Walter Scott’s bards, ballads &c.*)⁴⁵¹ A merciful providence at length constrained both parties to join against a common enemy. A wise Government followed; and the established church became, and now is, not only the brightest example, but our best and only sure bulwark, of toleration! The true and indispensable bank against a new inundation of persecuting zeal—ESTO PERPETUA!⁴⁵²

A long interval of quiet succeeded; or rather, the exhaustion had produced a cold fit of the ague which was symptomatized by indifference among the many, and a tendency to infidelity or scepticism in the educated classes. At length those feelings of disgust and hatred, which for a brief while the multitude had attached to the crimes and absurdities of sectarian and democratic fanaticism, were transferred to the oppressive privileges of the noblesse, and the luxury; intrigues and favoritism of the continental courts. The same principles dressed in the ostentatious garb of a fashionable philosophy once more rose triumphant and effected the French revolution. And have we not within the last three or four years had reason to apprehend, that the

⁴⁴⁹ Milton’s poem, ‘On the New Forcers of Conscience under the Long Parliament’ (1620), ends: ‘And succour our just Fears / When they [Parliament] shall read this clearly in your charge / New Presbyter is but Old Priest writ Large.’ (lines 17–20)

⁴⁵⁰ Revelation 20:3.

⁴⁵¹ Published 1802 and 1802–3 respectively.

⁴⁵² ‘May it last forever!’ Fra Paolo Sarpi (1552–1623), Venetian scholar and patriot, died with these words (referring to the independent Venetian republic) on his lips.

detestable maxims and correspondent measures of the late French despotism had already bedimmed the public recollections of democratic phrensy; had drawn off to other objects the electric force of the feelings which had massed and upheld those recollections; and that a favorable concurrence of occasions was alone wanting to awaken the thunder and precipitate the lightning from the opposite quarter of the political heaven? (See *THE FRIEND*, p.110)⁴⁵³

In part from constitutional indolence, which in the very hey-day of hope had kept my enthusiasm in check, but still more from the habits and influences of a classical education and academic pursuits, scarcely had a year elapsed from the commencement of my literary and political adventures before my mind sunk into a state of thorough disgust and despondency, both with regard to the disputes and the parties disputant. With more than *poetic* feeling I exclaimed:

The sensual and the dark rebel in vain,
 Slaves by their own compulsion! In mad game
 They break their manacles, to wear the *name*
 Of freedom, graven on a heavier chain.
 O liberty! with profitless endeavor
 Have I pursued thee many a weary hour;
 But thou nor swell'st the victor's pomp, nor ever
 Didst breathe thy soul in forms of human power!
 Alike from all, howe'er they praise thee,
 (Nor prayer nor boastful name delays thee)
 From superstition's harpy minions
 And factious blasphemy's obscener slaves,
 Thou speedest on thy cherub pinions,
 The guide of homeless winds and playmate of the waves!

FRANCE, a *Palinodia*.⁴⁵⁴

I retired to a cottage in Somersetshire at the foot of Quantock, and devoted my thoughts and studies to the foundations of religion and morals. Here I found myself all afloat. Doubts rushed in; broke upon me "*from the fountains of the great deep,*" and fell "*from the windows of heaven.*"⁴⁵⁵ The fontal truths of natural religion and the books of Revelation alike contributed to the flood; and it was long ere my

⁴⁵³ This paragraph reworks material from an essay called 'Government and Reason', originally published in *The Friend*, No. 7 (28 September 1809).

⁴⁵⁴ Lines 85–98. This poem was first published as 'The Recantation: an Ode' in the *Morning Post*, 16 April 1798. Coleridge reworked it many times, finally reprinting it as 'France: An Ode' in *Sybilline Leaves* (1817).

⁴⁵⁵ Genesis 7:11.

ark touched on an Ararat, and rested. The *idea* of the Supreme Being appeared to me to be as necessarily implied in all particular modes of being as the idea of infinite space in all the geometrical figures by which space is limited. I was pleased with the Cartesian opinion, that the idea of God is distinguished from all other ideas by involving its *reality*; but I was not wholly satisfied.⁴⁵⁶ I began then to ask myself, what proof I had of the outward *existence* of any thing? Of this sheet of paper for instance, as a thing in itself, separate from the phenomenon or image in my perception. I saw, that in the nature of things such proof is impossible; and that of all modes of being, that are not objects of the senses, the existence is *assumed* by a logical necessity arising from the constitution of the mind itself, by the absence of all motive to doubt it, not from any absolute contradiction in the supposition of the contrary. Still the existence of a being, the ground of all existence, was not yet the existence of a moral creator, and governor. “In the position, that all reality is either contained *in* the necessary being as an *attribute*, or exists *through* him, as its *ground*, it remains undecided whether the properties of intelligence and will are to be referred to the Supreme Being in the former or only in the latter sense; as inherent attributes, or only as *consequences* that have existence in other things *through* him. Thus organization, and motion, are regarded as *from* God not *in* God. Were the latter the truth, then notwithstanding all the pre-eminence which must be assigned to the ETERNAL FIRST from the sufficiency, unity, and independence of his being, as the dread ground of the universe, his nature would yet fall far short of that, which we are bound to comprehend in the idea of GOD. For without any knowledge or determining resolve of its own it would only be a blind necessary ground of other things and other spirits; and thus would be distinguished from the FATE of certain ancient philosophers in no respect, but that of being more definitely and intelligibly described.” KANT’s *einzig möglicher Beweisgrund: vermischte Schriften, Zweiter Band, §102, and §103.*⁴⁵⁷

For a very long time indeed I could not reconcile personality with

⁴⁵⁶ This isn’t quite what Descartes argues (in the *De Methodo*, Part 4); Coleridge may be thinking of Pistorius’s gloss on David Hartley rather than the Cartesian original: ‘If we except the known Cartesian proof of the possibility of a perfect being, from his reality, all proofs of the existence of God are founded on the position of sufficient causes, and, as far as they are solid and convincing, depend on the truth and universality of this position.’ (Hermann Andrew Pistorius, *Notes and Additions to Dr Hartley’s Observations on Man* (1801))

⁴⁵⁷ Kant, *The Only Possible Argument in Support of a Demonstration of the Existence of God* (1763).

infinity; and my head was with Spinoza, though my whole heart remained with Paul and John. Yet there had dawned upon me, even before I had met with the Critique of the Pure Reason, a certain guiding light. If the mere intellect could make no certain discovery of a holy and intelligent first cause, it might yet supply a demonstration, that no legitimate argument could be drawn from the intellect *against* its truth. And what is this more than St. Paul's assertion, that by wisdom (more properly translated by the powers of reasoning) no man ever arrived at the knowledge of God?⁴⁵⁸ What more than the sublimest, and probably the oldest, book on earth has taught us,

Silver and gold man searcheth out:
Bringeth the ore out of the earth, and darkness into light.

But where findeth he wisdom?
Where is the place of understanding?

The abyss crieth; it is not in me!
Ocean echoeth back; not in me!

Whence then cometh wisdom?
Where dwelleth understanding?

Hidden from the eyes of the living
Kept secret from the fowls of heaven!

Hell and death answer;
We have heard the rumour thereof from afar!

GOD marketh out the road to it;
GOD knoweth its abiding place!

He beholdeth the ends of the earth;
He surveyeth what is beneath the heavens!

And as he weighed out the winds, and measured the sea,
And appointed laws to the rain,
And a path to the thunder,
A path to the flashes of the lightning!

Then did he see it,
And he counted it;
He searched into the depth thereof,
And with a line did he compass it round!

⁴⁵⁸ 1 Corinthians 1:17–21.

But to man he said,
 The fear of the Lord is wisdom for THEE!
 And to avoid evil,
 That is *thy* understanding.
 JOB, CHAP. 28th.⁴⁵⁹

I become convinced, that religion, as both the corner-stone and the key-stone of morality, must have a *moral* origin; so far at least, that the evidence of its doctrines could not, like the truths of abstract science, be wholly independent of the will. It were therefore to be expected, that its *fundamental* truth would be such as MIGHT be denied; though only, by the *fool*, and even by the fool from the madness of the *heart* alone!⁴⁶⁰

The question then concerning our faith in the existence of a God, not only as the *ground* of the universe by his essence, but as its maker and judge by his wisdom and holy will, appeared to stand thus. The sciential *reason*, the objects of which are purely theoretical, remains neutral, as long as its name and semblance are not usurped by the opponents of the doctrine. But it *then* becomes an effective ally by exposing the false shew of demonstration, or by evincing the equal demonstrability of the contrary from premises equally logical.⁴⁶¹ The *understanding* mean time suggests, the analogy of *experience* facilitates, the belief. Nature excites and recalls it, as by a perpetual revelation. Our feelings almost necessitate it; and the law of conscience peremptorily commands it. The arguments, that at all apply to it, are in its favor; and there is nothing against it, but its own sublimity. It could not be intellectually more evident without becoming morally less effective; without counteracting its own end by sacrificing the *life*

⁴⁵⁹ Coleridge translates not directly from the Bible, but rather from the German verse rendering of this Biblical passage by Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi (1743–1819) in his *Über die Lehre des Spinoza* (1785).

⁴⁶⁰ ‘The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God’ (Psalms 14:1).

⁴⁶¹ The 1847 edition of the *Biographia* includes a footnote at this point, probably a marginalium by Coleridge to the first edition, later incorporated: ‘Wherever A=B, and A is not=B, are equally demonstrable, the premise in each undeniable, the induction evident, and the conclusion legitimate—the result must be, either that contraries can both be true, (which is absurd,) or that the faculty and forms of reasoning employed are inapplicable to the subject—i.e. that there is a *μετάβασις εἰς ἄλλο γένος* [‘a trespass into a different field or genus’; quoted from Aristotle’s *Analytica Posteriora*, 75a]. Thus, the attributes of Space and Time applied to Spirit are heterogeneous—and the proof of this is, that by admitting them *explicite* or *implicite* contraries may be demonstrated true—i.e. that the same, taken in the same sense, is true and not true.—That the world had a beginning in Time and a bound in Space; and That the world had not a beginning and has no limit;—That a self originating act is, and is not possible, are instances.’ This footnote is a restatement of Kant’s antinomies of reason from the *Critique of Pure Reason*.

of faith to the cold mechanism of a worthless because compulsory assent. The belief of a God and a future state (if a passive acquiescence may be flattered with the name of *belief*) does not indeed always beget a good heart; but a good heart so naturally begets the belief, that the very few exceptions must be regarded as strange anomalies from strange and unfortunate circumstances.

From these premises I proceeded to draw the following conclusions. First, that having once fully admitted the existence of an infinite yet self-conscious Creator, we are not allowed to ground the irrationality of any other article of faith on arguments which would equally prove that to be irrational, which we had allowed to be *real*. Secondly, that whatever is deducible from the admission of a *self-comprehending* and *creative* spirit may be legitimately used in proof of the *possibility* of any further mystery concerning the divine nature. *Possibilitatem* mysteriorum, (Trinitatis, &c.) contra insultus Infidelium et Hereticorum a contradictionibus vindico; haud quidem *veritatem*, quæ revelatione solâ stabiliri possit; says LEIBNITZ in a letter to his Duke. He then adds the following just and important remark. "In vain will tradition or texts of scripture be adduced in support of a doctrine, donec clava impossibilitatis et contradictionis e manibus horum Herculum extorta fuerit. For the heretic will still reply, that texts, the literal sense of which is not so much *above* as directly *against* all reason, must be understood *figuratively*, as Herod is a fox, &c."⁴⁶²

These principles I held, *philosophically*, while in respect of revealed religion I remained a zealous Unitarian. I considered the *idea* of the Trinity a fair scholastic inference from the being of God, as a creative intelligence; and that it was therefore entitled to the rank of an *esoteric* doctrine of natural religion. But seeing in the same no practical or moral bearing, I confined it to the schools of philosophy, The admission of the logos, as *hypostasized* (i.e. neither a mere attribute, nor a personification) in no respect removed my doubts concerning the incarnation and the redemption by the cross; which I could neither reconcile *in reason* with the impassiveness of the Divine Being, nor in my moral feelings with the sacred distinction between

⁴⁶² Leibniz corresponded with the Duke of Brunswick between 1671 and 1673. Coleridge quotes from a letter that is part of this exchange, from October 1671. The Latin means: (1) 'I have set out to free the *possibility* of divine mysteries (for instance, the Trinity) from all contradiction, in order to counter the attacks of Infidels and Heretics; but not, indeed, divine *truth*, which is something that can only be established by revelation.' (2) 'until the club of impossibility and logical-contradiction has been snatched from the hands of these Herculeses'. Christ calls Herod Antipas 'that fox' in Luke 13:32. This is a favourite text of those who seek to demonstrate that it is not necessarily appropriate to read the Bible as always expressing the literal truth.

things and persons, the vicarious payment of a debt and the vicarious expiation of guilt. A more thorough revolution in my philosophic principles, and a deeper insight into my own heart, were yet wanting. Nevertheless, I cannot doubt, that the difference of my metaphysical notions from those of Unitarians in general contributed to my final re-conversion to the whole truth in Christ; even as according to his own confession the books of certain Platonic philosophers (*libri quorundam Platonicorum*) commenced the rescue of St. Augustine's faith from the same error aggravated by the far darker accompaniment of the Manichaeian heresy.⁴⁶³

While my mind was thus perplexed, by a gracious providence for which I can never be sufficiently grateful, the generous and munificent patronage of Mr. JOSIAH, and Mr. THOMAS WEDGEWOOD⁴⁶⁴ enabled me to finish my education in Germany. Instead of troubling others with my own crude notions and juvenile compositions I was thenceforward better employed in attempting to store my own head with the wisdom of others. I made the best use of my time and means; and there is therefore no period of my life on which I can look back with such unmingled satisfaction. After acquiring a tolerable sufficiency in the German language* at Ratzeburg, which with my voyage and journey thither I have described In THE FRIEND,⁴⁶⁵ I proceeded through Hanover to Göttingen.

* To those, who design to acquire the language of a country in the country itself, it may be useful, if I mention the incalculable advantage which I derived from learning all the words, that could possibly be so learnt, with the objects before me, and without the intermediation of the English terms. It was a regular part of my morning studies for the first six weeks of my residence at Ratzeburg, to accompany the good and kind old pastor, with whom I lived, from the cellar to the roof, through gardens, farm yard, &c. and to call

⁴⁶³ Augustine's account of his reconversion is in the seventh book of his *Confessions*. The precise phrase '*libri quorundam Platonicorum*' ['the books of certain Platonists'] does not appear in Augustine, who talks rather of 'quosdam Platonicorum libros'. Coleridge is conflating this phrase in his memory with the title of German philosopher Johann F. Fischer's *Defensione locorum quorundam Platonicorum* (1767).

⁴⁶⁴ Spelled thus in the first edition; corrected to the actual surname 'Wedgwood' in later editions. The Wedgwood brothers (Josiah, 1769–1843; Thomas 1771–1805) ran the celebrated pottery and porcelain company. They decided to give Coleridge financial patronage in 1798, at first offering a lump sum of £100, and when that was declined a no-strings-attached lifetime annuity of £150. Coleridge transferred these funds to his wife (from whom he was living apart) in 1805. When the one surviving Wedgwood brother wrote to him in 1812 explaining how great the company's Napoleonic War losses were, Coleridge immediately gave up the money. Given how important the Wedgwoods' financial support had been to Coleridge, it is perhaps surprising that he was so careless about spelling their name.

⁴⁶⁵ 'Satyrane's Letters', originally published in *The Friend*, 23 November to 28 December 1809; reprinted towards the end of the *Biographia*, below.

Here I regularly attended the lectures on physiology in the morning, and on natural history in the evening, under BLUMENBACH,⁴⁶⁶ a name as dear to every Englishman who has studied at that university, as it is venerable to men of science throughout Europe! Eichhorn's lectures on the New Testament were repeated to me from notes by a student from Ratzeburg, a young man of sound learning and indefatigable industry, who is now, I believe, a professor of the oriental languages at Heidelberg.⁴⁶⁷ But my chief efforts were directed towards a grounded knowledge of the German language and literature. From professor TYCHSEN⁴⁶⁸ I received as many lessons in the Gothic of Ulphilas⁴⁶⁹ as sufficed to make me acquainted with its grammar, and the radical words of most frequent occurrence; and with the occasional assistance of the same philosophical linguist, I

every, the minutest, thing by its German name. Advertisements, farces, jest books, and the conversation of children while I was at play with them, contributed their share to a more home-like acquaintance with the language than I could have acquired from works of polite literature alone, or even from polite society. There is a passage of *heartly* sound sense in Luther's German letter on interpretation, to the translation of which I shall prefix, for the sake of those who read the German, yet are not likely to have dipt often in the massive folios of this heroic reformer, the simple, sinewy, idiomatic words of the original. "Denn man muss nicht die Buchstaben in der Lateinischen Sprache fragen wie man soll Deutsch reden: sondern man muss die Mutter in Hause, die Kinder auf den Gassen, den gemeinen Mann auf dem Markte, darum fragen: und denselbigen auf das Maul sehen wie sie reden, und darnach dollmetschen. So verstehen sie es denn, und merken dass man Deutsch mit ihnen redet."⁴⁷⁰

TRANSLATION:

For one must not ask the letters in the Latin tongue, how one ought to speak German; but one must ask the mother in the house, the children in the lanes and alleys, the common man in the market, concerning this; yea, and look at the *moves* of their mouths while they are talking, and thereafter interpret. They understand you then, and mark that one talks German with them.

⁴⁶⁶ Johann Friedrich Blumenbach (1752–1840), celebrated in his own day for his writings on natural history and medicine, including *Handbuch der Naturgeschichte* (1779–80), *Über den Bildungstrieb und das Zeugungsgeschäfte* (1781) and the three-volume *Medicinische Bibliothek* (1783–95).

⁴⁶⁷ Friedrich Wilken (1777–1840), Professor of Oriental Languages at Heidelberg from 1807 to 1817. He is most famous for his eight-book history of the Crusades, published 1807–32: *Geschichte der Kreuzzüge nach morgenländischen und abendländischen Berichten*. 'Eichhorn' is Johann Gottfried Eichhorn (1752–1827), Göttingen Professor of Philosophy in the 1790s.

⁴⁶⁸ Thomas Christian Tychsel (1758–1834), Professor of Theology at Göttingen, who also taught early German languages. His most famous work by the time of the writing of the *Biographia* was to do with the archaeology of the Holy Land, *Grundriß einer Archäologie der Hebräer* (1789).

⁴⁶⁹ Ulphilas, or Wulfila ('little wolf') (c.310–83), was a Christian missionary to the German regions, for whose conversion he translated the Bible into the Gothic language, in the process inventing the 'Gothic alphabet' out of adapted Greek characters.

⁴⁷⁰ From Luther's *Sendbrief vom Dolmetschen der helighe schrift* (1530).

read through* OTTFRIED'S metrical paraphrase of the gospel,⁴⁷¹ and the most important remains of the THEOTIOSCAN,⁴⁷² or the transitional state of the Teutonic language from the Gothic to the old German of the Swabian period. Of this period (the polished dialect of which is analogous to that of our Chaucer, and which leaves the philosophic student in doubt, whether the language has not since then lost more in sweetness and flexibility, than it has gained in condensation and copiousness) I read with sedulous accuracy the MINNESINGER⁴⁷³ (or

* This paraphrase, written about the time of Charlemagne, is by no means deficient in occasional passages of considerable poetic merit. There is a flow, and a tender enthusiasm in the following lines (at the conclusion of Chapter V), which, even in the translation will not, I flatter myself, fail to interest the reader. Otffried is describing the circumstances immediately following the birth of our Lord.

She gave with joy her virgin breast;
 She hid it not, she bared the breast,
 Which suckled that divinest babe!
 Blessed, blessed were the breasts
 Which the Saviour infant kiss'd;
 And blessed, blessed was the mother
 Who wrapp'd his limbs in swaddling clothes,
 Singing placed him on her lap,
 Hung o'er him with her looks of love,
 And soothed him with a lulling motion.
 Blessed! for she shelter'd him
 From the damp and chilling air;
 Blessed, blessed! for she lay
 With such a babe in one blest bed,
 Close as babes and mothers lie!
 Blessed, blessed evermore,
 With her virgin lips she kiss'd,
 With her arms, and to her breast
 She embraced the babe divine,
 Her babe divine the virgin mother!
 There lives not on this ring of earth
 A mortal, that can sing her praise.
 Mighty mother, virgin pure,
 In the darkness and the night
 For us she *bore* the heavenly Lord!

Most interesting is it to consider the effect, when the feelings are wrought above the natural pitch by the belief of something mysterious, while all the images are purely natural. Then it is, that religion and poetry strike deepest.

⁴⁷¹ Otfrid of Weissenburg (c.800–after 870) was a monk at the Abbey in what is modern-day Wissembourg, who wrote a rhyming-couplet version of the gospels now called the *Evangelienbuch*. Coleridge's translation included in the footnote here may be evidence of a detailed knowledge of Old High German, or it may not – the edition of Otfrid he consulted included a Latin translation on facing pages.

⁴⁷² i.e. 'Old High German'.

⁴⁷³ The collective name for a group of about 150 lyric and ballad poets of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, whose main topic was courtly love. They were superseded by the

singers of love, the provencal poets of the Swabian court) and the metrical romances; and then laboured through sufficient specimens of the *master singers*, their degenerate successors; not however without occasional pleasure from the rude, yet interesting strains of HANS SACHS⁴⁷⁴ the cobbler of Nuremberg. Of this man's genius five folio volumes with double columns are extant in print, and nearly an equal number in manuscript; yet the indefatigable bard takes care to inform his readers, that he never *made a shoe the less*, but had virtuously reared a large family by the labor of his hands.

In Pindar, Chaucer, Dante, Milton, &c. &c. we have instances of the close connection of poetic genius with the love of liberty and of genuine reformation. The *moral* sense at least will not be outraged, if I add to the list the name of this honest shoemaker (a trade by the bye remarkable for the production of philosophers and poets). His poem intitled the MORNING STAR, was the very first publication that appeared in praise and support of LUTHER;⁴⁷⁵ and an excellent hymn of Hans Sachs, which has been deservedly translated into almost all the European languages, was commonly sung in the Protestant churches, whenever the heroic reformer visited them.

In Luther's own German writings, and eminently in his translation of the bible, the *German* language commenced. I mean the language as it is at present *written*; that which is called the HIGH GERMAN, as contra-distinguished from the PLATT-TEUSTCH, the dialect on the flat or northern countries, and from the OBER-TEUTSCH, the language of the middle and Southern Germany. The High German is indeed a *lingua communis*,⁴⁷⁶ not actually the native language of any province, but the choice and fragranciness of all the dialects. From this cause it is at once the most copious and the most grammatical of all the European tongues.

Within less than a century after Luther's death the German was inundated with pedantic barbarisms. A few volumes of this period I

'Meistersingers' or 'master singers' of the fourteenth century, who were affiliated with specific guilds of craftsmen.

⁴⁷⁴ Hans Sachs (1494–1576) was one such 'meistersinger', affiliated to a shoemaker's guild and a working cobbler as well as a poet. Sachs claimed to have written 1,700 verse narratives, more than 200 plays and over 4,000 other poems. He became a zealous Lutheran, and in 1523 wrote the poem to which Coleridge refers in the following paragraph: 'Die wittenbergisch Nachtigall, Die man jetzt höret überall'.

⁴⁷⁵ In fact Sachs's poem to Luther was 'To the Nightingale, that men hear singing everywhere' ('Die wittenbergisch Nachtigall, Die man jetzt höret überall', of 1523; see previous footnote). The 'Morningstar' poem ('Wie schön leucht uns Morgenstern', 1597) was actually by Phillip Nicolai (1556–1608).

⁴⁷⁶ 'Common tongue'.

read through from motives of curiosity; for it is not easy to imagine any thing more fantastic, than the very appearance of their pages. Almost every third word is a Latin word with a Germanized ending, the Latin portion being always printed in Roman letters, while in the last syllable the German character is retained.

At length, about the year 1620, OPITZ⁴⁷⁷ arose, whose genius more nearly resembled that of Dryden than any other poet, who at present occurs to my recollection. In the opinion of LESSING, the most acute of critics, and of ADELUNG, the first of Lexicographers,⁴⁷⁸ Opitz, and the Silesian poets, his followers, not only restored the language, but still remain the models of pure diction. A stranger has no vote on such a question; but after repeated perusal of the work my feelings justified the verdict, and I seemed to have acquired from them a sort of *tact* for what is *genuine* in the style of later writers.

Of the splendid era, which commenced with Gellert, Klopstock, Ramler, Lessing, and their compeers, I need not speak.⁴⁷⁹ With the opportunities which I enjoyed, it would have been disgraceful not to have been familiar with their writings; and I have already said as much, as the present biographical sketch requires, concerning the German philosophers, whose works, for the greater part, I became acquainted with at a far later period.

Soon after my return from Germany I was solicited to undertake the literary and political department in the Morning Post; and I acceded to the proposal on the condition, that the paper should thenceforwards be conducted on certain fixed and announced principles, and that I should neither be obliged nor requested to deviate from them in favor of any party or any event. In consequence, that Journal became and for many years continued *anti-ministerial* indeed,

⁴⁷⁷ Martin Opitz von Boberfeld (1597–1639), generally considered the greatest German poet of his generation. His *Buch von der deutschen Poeterey* (1624) established a set of widely followed precedents for ‘pure’ use of language with respect to style, verse and rhyme.

⁴⁷⁸ Gotthold Ephraim Lessing (1729–81), the famous writer and philosopher, author of, amongst many other things, *Laokoon, oder Über die Grenzen der Malerei und Poesie* (1766), *Nathan der Weise* [‘Nathan the Wise’] (1779) and *Die Erziehung des Menschengeschlechts* [‘The Education of the Human Race’] (1780); and Johann Christoph Adelung (1732–1806), compiler of the dictionary, *Grammatisch-kritisches Wörterbuch der hochdeutschen Mundart* (1774–86).

⁴⁷⁹ These individuals are Christian Fürchtegott Gellert (1715–69), poet, author of *Geistliche Oden und Lieder* (1758), whose hymn ‘Die Ehre Gottes aus der Natur’ was set to music by Beethoven; Friedrich Gottlieb Klopstock (1724–1803), best known for his epic poem *Der Messias* [‘The Messiah’] (1748–73), whom Coleridge recalls meeting in person in ‘Satyrane’s Letters’, below; Karl Wilhelm Ramler (1725–98), poet and director of the Royal Theatre, Berlin; and Gotthold Ephraim Lessing (1729–81) for whom see previous note.

yet with a very qualified approbation of the opposition, and with far greater earnestness and zeal both anti-jacobin and anti-gallican. To this hour I cannot find reason to approve of the first war either in its commencement or its conduct. Nor can I understand, with what reason either Mr. Percival (whom I am singular enough to regard as the best and wisest minister of this reign) nor the present administration,⁴⁸⁰ can be said to have pursued the plans of Mr. PITT. The love of their country, and perseverant hostility to French principles and French ambition are indeed honourable qualities common to them and to their predecessor. But it appears to me as clear as the evidence of the facts can render any question of history, that the successes of the Percival and of the existing ministry have been owing to their having pursued measures the direct contrary to Mr. Pitt's. Such for instance are the concentration of the national force to one object; the abandonment of the *subsidizing* policy, so far at least as neither to goad or bribe the continental courts into war, till the convictions of their subjects had rendered it a war of their own seeking; and above all, in their manly and generous reliance on the good sense of the English people, and on that loyalty which is linked to the very* heart of the nation by the system of credit and the interdependence of property.

* Lord Grenville has lately re-asserted (in the House of Lords) the imminent danger of a revolution in the earlier part of the war against France.⁴⁸¹ I doubt not, that his Lordship

⁴⁸⁰ Lord Liverpool's government, formed after the previous Prime Minister, Spencer Perceval (1762–1812), was assassinated, on 11 May 1812.

⁴⁸¹ Grenville made the comments to which Coleridge refers in the House of Lords on 5 February 1817, in support of the Bill that went on to become The Habeas Corpus Suspension Act 1817 (57 Geo. III, c. 3). In his speech, Grenville compared this proposal with the previous suspension of habeas corpus in 1794, at the beginning of the war with France: 'Lord Grenville thought it not judicious to compare the present state of things [in 1817] with that which existed when similar measures to those now under consideration were adopted [i.e. 1794]. He thought that the danger, though of a different kind to that of any former period, was still very formidable, and required the serious attention of Parliament. It was certainly impossible that the seditious could effect their object; yet: they might succeed in plunging their country in misery and wretchedness for some time, if not prevented. Let it not be supposed, that because there were no persons of rank and distinction lending their assistance to these schemes, that they would be harmless . . . Even at that very hour [i.e. 1794], the extirpation of religious and moral policy, and a proper love of government and social order, formed one of the most fearful circumstances in the contemplation of the state of France. Under the name of Parliamentary Reform the wildest projects were entertained [in Britain], fraught with the utter ruin of the country.' ('Parliamentary History', *The Literary Panorama and National Register* 6 (1817), 855).

is sincere; and it must be flattering to his feelings to believe it. But where are the evidences of the danger, to which a future historian can appeal? Or must he rest on an assertion? Let me be permitted to extract a passage on the subject from *THE FRIEND*. “I have said that to withstand the arguments of the lawless, the Antijacobins proposed to suspend the law, and by the interposition of a particular statute to eclipse the blessed light of the universal sun, that spies and informers might tyrannize and escape in the ominous darkness. Oh! if these mistaken men intoxicated and bewildered with the panic of property, which they themselves were the chief agents in exciting, had ever lived in a country where there really existed a general disposition to change and rebellion! Had they ever travelled through Sicily; or through France at the first coming on of the revolution; or even alas! through too many of the provinces of a sister island;⁴⁸² they could not but have shrunk from their own declarations concerning the state of feeling, and opinion at that time predominant throughout Great Britain. There was a time (heaven grant! that that time may have passed by) when by crossing a narrow strait, they might have learnt the true symptoms of approaching danger, and have secured themselves from mistaking the meetings and idle rant of such sedition, as shrunk appalled from the sight of a constable, for the dire murmuring and strange consternation which precedes the storm or earthquake of national discord. Not only in coffee-houses and public theatres, but even at the tables of the wealthy, they would have heard the advocates of existing Government defend their cause in the language and with the tone of men, who are conscious that they are in a minority. But in England, when the alarm was at its highest, there was not a city, no not a town or village, in which a man suspected of holding democratic principles could move abroad without receiving some unpleasant proof of the hatred, in which his supposed opinions were held by the great majority of the people; and the only instances of popular excess and indignation were in favour of the Government and the Established Church. But why need I appeal to these invidious facts? Turn over the pages of history and seek for a single instance of a revolution having been effected without the concurrence of either the nobles, or the ecclesiastics, or the monied classes, in any country, in which the influences of property had ever been predominant, and where the interests of the proprietors were interlinked! Examine the revolution of the Belgic provinces under Philip 2nd;⁴⁸³ the civil wars of France in the preceding generation;⁴⁸⁴ the history of the American revolution, or the yet more recent events in Sweden and in Spain;⁴⁸⁵ and it will be scarcely possible not to perceive that in England from 1791 to the peace of Amiens⁴⁸⁶ there were neither tendencies to confederacy nor actual confederacies, against which the existing laws had not provided both sufficient safeguards and an ample punishment. But alas! the panic of property had been struck in the first instance for party purposes; and when it became general, its propagators caught it themselves and ended in believing their own lie; even as our bulls in Borrowdale sometimes run mad with the echo of their own bellowing. The consequences were most injurious. Our attention was concentrated on a monster, which could not survive the convulsions, in which it had been brought forth; even the enlightened Burke himself too often talking and reasoning, as if a perpetual and organized anarchy had been a possible thing! Thus while we were warring against French doctrines, we took little heed, whether the means by which we attempted to overthrow them, were not likely to aid and augment the far more formidable evil of French ambition. Like children we ran away from the yelping of a cur, and took shelter at the heels of a vicious war horse.”

⁴⁸² Ireland.

⁴⁸³ In the course of a prolonged uprising, King Phillip II of Spain was deposed as king of the Netherlands in 1581 and the Dutch Republic was declared.

⁴⁸⁴ The French Wars of Religion (1562–98) that began with a Catholic massacre of Protestants at Vassy in 1562.

⁴⁸⁵ A *coup-d'état* had overthrown King Gustav IV Adolf in Sweden in March 1809; there had been a Spanish rebellion against Napoleonic rule in 1808.

⁴⁸⁶ 25 March 1802.

Be this as it may, I am persuaded that the Morning Post proved a far more useful ally to the Government in its most important objects, in consequence of its being generally considered as moderately anti-ministerial, than if it had been the avowed eulogist of Mr. Pitt. (The few, whose curiosity or fancy should lead them to turn over the Journals of that date, may find a small proof of this in the frequent charges made by the Morning Chronicle, that such and such essays or leading paragraphs had been sent from the Treasury.) The rapid and unusual increase in the sale of the Morning Post is a sufficient pledge, that genuine impartiality with a respectable portion of literary talent will secure the success of a newspaper without the aid of party or ministerial patronage. But by impartiality I mean an honest and enlightened adherence to a code of intelligible principles previously announced, and faithfully referred to in support of every judgment on men and events; not indiscriminate abuse, not the indulgence of an editor's own malignant passions, and still less, if that be possible, a determination to make money by flattering the envy and cupidity, the vindictive restlessness and self-conceit of the half-witted vulgar; a determination almost fiendish, but which, I have been informed, has been boastfully avowed by one man, the most notorious of these *mob-sycophants*! From the commencement of the Addington administration to the present day, whatever I have written in the MORNING POST, or (after that paper was transferred to other proprietors) in the COURIER, has been in defence or furtherance of the measures of Government.

Things of this nature scarce survive the night
 That gives them birth; they perish in the sight,
 Cast by so far from *after-life*, that there
 Can scarcely aught be said, but that *they were*!
 CARTWRIGHT'S *Prolog. to the Royal Slave*.⁴⁸⁷

Yet in these labors I employed, and, in the belief of partial friends wasted, the prime and manhood of my intellect. Most assuredly, they added nothing to my fortune or my reputation. The industry of the week supplied the necessities of the week. From Government or the friends of Government I not only never received remuneration, or ever expected it; but I was never honoured with a single acknowledgement, or expression of

⁴⁸⁷ William Cartwright (1611–43) was an English playwright and Anglican priest. His *The Royal Slave: a Tragi-Comedy* (1636) was performed in front of the King and Queen at Christ Church, Oxford, with music by Henry Lawes.

satisfaction. Yet the retrospect is far from painful or matter of regret. I am not indeed silly enough to take, as any thing more than a violent hyperbole of party debate, Mr. FOX's assertion that the *late* war (I trust that the epithet is not prematurely applied) *was a war produced by the MORNING POST*; or I should be proud to have the words inscribed on my tomb.⁴⁸⁸ As little do I regard the circumstance, that I was a specified object of Buonaparte's resentment during my residence in Italy in consequence of those essays in the *Morning Post* during the peace of Amiens. (Of this I was warned, *directly*, by Baron VON HUMBOLDT,⁴⁸⁹ the Prussian Plenipotentiary, who at that time was the minister of the Prussian court at Rome; and indirectly, through his secretary, by Cardinal Fesch himself.) Nor do I lay any greater weight on the confirming fact, that an order for my arrest was sent from Paris, from which danger I was rescued by the kindness of a noble Benedictine, and the gracious connivance of that good old man, the present Pope. For the late tyrant's vindictive appetite was omnivorous, and preyed equally on a* Duc D'Enghien, and the writer of a

* I seldom think of the murder of this illustrious Prince without recollecting the lines of Valerius Flaccus (Argonaut. Lib. I.30):

——super ipsius ingens
 Instat fama viri, virtusque haud læta Tyranno;
 Ergo ante ire metus, juvenemque exstinguere pergit.⁴⁹⁰

⁴⁸⁸ Fox's actual statement did not specify either Coleridge or the *Morning Post*. In Parliamentary debate, on 23 November 1802, Fox claimed that 'the cry for war' was 'not the real cry of the people of England; it is their supposed cry, which the coalition of a certain number of newspapers ascribes to them'.

⁴⁸⁹ Friedrich Wilhelm Christian Karl Ferdinand von Humboldt (1767–1835) was a Prussian diplomat and philosopher, who served as Prussian ambassador to Rome in 1802, when Coleridge met him. Joseph Cardinal Fesch (1763–1839), Archbishop of Lyons, was one of Napoleon's uncles and French Ambassador to the same city. The Pope at the time was Pius VII (1742–1823). Coleridge was warned by Napoleon's brother, who was also in the city, not that the French Emperor was specifically aware of him, but that he ought to take care anyhow: 'I do not know that you have said, or written anything against my brother Napoleon, but as an Englishman, the supposition is not unreasonable. If you have, my advice is, that you leave Italy as soon as you possibly can.' Coleridge left Rome soon after this. A selection of Coleridge's anti-Napoleon essays from 1804 was translated into French, but these did not appear until 1810 ('Extraits de quelques Lettres publiées dans le Journal the Courier, par M. T. Coleridge [*sic*], Auteur d'une Feuille périodique intitulée The Friend', *L'Ambigu, ou, Variétés Littéraires, et Politiques*, 28 (10 January 1810), 3–16).

⁴⁹⁰ The phrase 'the murder of this illustrious Prince' refers to the fate of Louis Antoine Henri de Bourbon-Condé, Duc d'Enghien (1772–1804), a member of a high-rank aristocratic French family who was arrested and executed by Napoleon. The Latin is from near the opening of Flaccus's epic poem, and describes the anxiety that Pelias, tyrant of Haemonia and 'the terror of nations', feels at the prowess of his brother Aeson's son, Jason, who he fears is destined to overthrow him. The lines translate into English as: 'above all, in fact, it was the great renown of the hero himself that weighed on his

newspaper paragraph. Like a true* vulture, Napoleon with an eye not less telescopic, and with a taste equally coarse in his ravin, could descend from the most dazzling heights to pounce on the leveret in the brake, or even on the field mouse amid the grass. But I do derive a gratification from the knowledge, that my essays contributed to introduce the practice of placing the questions and events of the day in a moral point of view; in giving a dignity to particular measures by tracing their policy or impolicy to permanent principles, and an interest to principles by the application of them to individual measures. In Mr. Burke's writings indeed the germs of almost all political truths may be found. But I dare assume to myself the merit of having first explicitly defined and analyzed the nature of Jacobinism; and that in distinguishing the jacobin from the republican, the democrat, and the mere demagogue, I both rescued the word from remaining a mere term of abuse, and put on their guard many honest minds, who even in their heat of zeal against jacobinism, admitted or supported principles from which the worst parts of that system may be legitimately deduced. That these are not necessary *practical* results of such principles, we owe to that fortunate inconsequence of our nature, which permits the heart to rectify the errors of the understanding. The detailed examination of the consular Government⁴⁹¹ and its pretended constitution, and the proof given by me, that it was a consummate despotism in masquerade, extorted a recantation even from the Morning Chronicle, which had previously extolled this constitution as the perfection of a wise and regulated liberty. On every great occurrence I endeavoured to discover in past history the event, that most nearly resembled it. I procured, wherever it was possible, the contemporary historians, memorialists, and pamphleteers. Then fairly subtracting the points of difference from those of likeness, as the balance favored the former or the latter, I conjectured that the result would be the same or different. In the series of** essays entitled

* θηρα' δὲ καὶ τὸν χῆνα καὶ τὴν Δορκάδα
Καὶ τὸν Λαγῶν, καὶ τὸ τῶν Ταύρων γένος
PHILE, *de animal. propriet.*⁴⁹²

** A small selection from the numerous articles furnished by me to the Morning Post and Courier, chiefly as they regard the sources and effects of jacobinism and the

mind, for such renown is never welcome to a tyrant. Accordingly, he attempted to allay his fears by destroying the son of Aeson.'

⁴⁹¹ In France.

⁴⁹² The Greek is from a poem by the medieval Byzantine poet Manuel Philes (c. 1275–1345), called 'The Eagle' (*De animalibus proprietate: de aquilis*): 'for he is not above preying on the goose, and the antelope, and the coney, and every kind of bull.'

“a comparison of France under Napoleon with Rome under the first Cæsars,” and in those which followed “on the probable final restoration of the Bourbons,” I feel myself authorized to affirm, by the effect produced on many intelligent men, that, were the dates wanting, it might have been suspected that the essays had been written within the last twelve months. The same plan I pursued at the commencement of the Spanish revolution, and with the same success, taking the war of the United Provinces with Philip 2nd as the ground work of the comparison. I have mentioned this from no motives of vanity, nor even from motives of self-defence, which would justify a certain degree of egotism, especially if it be considered, how often and grossly I have been attacked for sentiments, which I have exerted my best powers to confute and expose, and how grievously these charges acted to my disadvantage while I was in Malta.⁴⁹³ Or rather they would have done so, if my own feelings had not precluded the wish of a settled establishment in that island. But I have mentioned it from the full persuasion that, armed with the two-fold knowledge of history and the human mind, a man will scarcely err in his judgement concerning the sum total of any future national event, if he have been able to procure the original documents of the past, together with authentic accounts of the present, and if he have a philosophic tact for what is truly important in facts, and in most instances therefore for such facts as the DIGNITY OF HISTORY has excluded from the volumes of our modern compilers, by the courtesy of the age entitled historians.⁴⁹⁴

To have lived in vain must be a painful thought to any man, and

connection of certain systems of political economy with jacobinical despotism, will form part of “THE FRIEND,” which I am now completing, and which will be shortly published, for I can scarcely say republished, with the numbers arranged in Chapters according to their subjects:

Accipe principium rursus, corpusque *coactum*
Desere; mutata melior procede rigura.⁴⁹⁵

⁴⁹³ Coleridge was in Malta between May 1804 and September 1805.

⁴⁹⁴ Coleridge includes this as a dig at the anonymously authored *History of Modern Europe, with an Account of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire . . . to the Peace of Paris, in 1763* (5 vols, 1789) – written, as the title page puts it, ‘in a Series of Letters from a Nobleman to his Son’ (hence Coleridge’s reference to ‘entitled historians’). It is this author who excludes certain details from Voltaire’s account of recent French history on the following grounds: ‘this is a perfectly ludicrous image; and . . . utterly inconsistent with the dignity of history’ (5:184).

⁴⁹⁵ The Latin is from late Roman poet Claudius Claudianus (370–404), who wrote a poem about the Phoenix. It means: ‘receive back this principle again, *forced* as you are to abandon this body; change your form into something better’. The emphasis on *coactum* is Coleridge’s own.

especially so to him who has made literature his profession. I should therefore rather condole than be angry with the mind, which could attribute to no worthier feelings, than those of vanity or self-love, the satisfaction which I acknowledged myself to have enjoyed from the republication of my political essays (either whole or as extracts) not only in many of our own provincial papers, but in the federal journals throughout America. I regarded it as some proof of my not having labored altogether in vain, that from the articles written by me shortly before and at the commencement of the late unhappy war with America,⁴⁹⁶ not only the sentiments were adopted, but in some instances the very language, in several of the Massachusetts state-papers.

But no one of these motives nor all conjointly would have impelled me to a statement so uncomfortable to my own feelings, had not my character been repeatedly attacked, by an unjustifiable intrusion on private life, as of a man incorrigibly idle, and who intrusted not only with ample talents, but favored with unusual opportunities of improving them, had nevertheless suffered them to rust away without any efficient exertion either for his own good or that of his fellow-creatures. Even if the compositions, which I have made public, and that too in a form the most certain of an extensive circulation, though the least flattering to an author's self-love, had been published in *books*, they would have filled a respectable number of volumes, though every passage of merely temporary interest were omitted. My prose writings have been charged with a disproportionate demand on the attention; with an excess of refinement in the mode of arriving at truths; with beating the ground for that which might have been run down by the eye; with the length and laborious construction of my periods; in short with obscurity and the love of paradox. But my severest critics have not pretended to have found in my compositions triviality, or traces of a mind that shrunk from the toil of thinking. No one has charged me with tricking out in other words the thoughts of others, or with hashing up anew the *crambe jam decies coctam*⁴⁹⁷ of English literature or philosophy. Seldom have I written that in a day, the acquisition or investigation of which had not cost me the previous labor of a month.

But are books the only channel through which the stream of intellectual usefulness can flow? Is the diffusion of truth to be estimated by publications; or publications by the truth, which they diffuse or

⁴⁹⁶ 1812–15.

⁴⁹⁷ 'Cabbage boiled ten times over already'.

at least contain? I speak it in the excusable warmth of a mind stung by an accusation, which has not only been advanced in reviews of the widest circulation, not only registered in the bulkiest works of periodical literature, but by frequency of repetition has become an admitted fact in private literary circles, and thoughtlessly repeated by too many who call themselves my friends, and whose own recollections ought to have suggested a contrary testimony. Would that the criterion of a scholar's utility were the number and moral value of the truths, which he has been the means of throwing into the general circulation; or the number and value of the minds, whom by his conversation or letters, he has excited into activity, and supplied with the germs of their after-growth! A distinguished rank might not indeed, even then, be awarded to my exertions, but I should dare look forward with confidence to an honorable acquittal. I should dare appeal to the numerous and respectable audiences, which at different times and in different places honored my lecture-rooms with their attendance, whether the points of view from which the subjects treated of were surveyed, whether the grounds of my reasoning were such, as they had heard or read elsewhere, or have since found in previous publications. I can conscientiously declare, that the complete success of the *REMORSE* on the first night of its representation⁴⁹⁸ did not give me as great or as heart-felt a pleasure, as the observation that the pit and boxes were crowded with faces familiar to me, though of individuals whose names I did not know, and of whom I knew nothing, but that they had attended one or other of my courses of lectures. It is an excellent though perhaps somewhat vulgar proverb, that there are cases where a man may be as well "*in for a pound as for a penny.*" To those, who from ignorance of the serious injury I have received from this rumour of having dreamt away my life to no purpose, injuries which I unwillingly remember at all, much less am disposed to record in a sketch of my literary life; or to those, who from their own feelings, or the gratification they derive from thinking contemptuously of others, would like Job's comforters attribute these complaints, extorted from me by the sense of wrong, to self-conceit or presumptuous vanity, I have already furnished such ample materials, that I shall gain nothing by withholding the remainder. I will not therefore hesitate to ask the consciences of those, who from their long acquaintance with me and with the circumstances are best qualified to decide

⁴⁹⁸ Coleridge's play *Remorse* opened at Drury Lane on 23 Jan 1813 and ran for twenty nights. Coleridge himself earned the very respectable sum of £400 from this performance and from sales of the published playscript.

or be my judges, whether the restitution of the *sum cuique*⁴⁹⁹ would increase or detract from my literary reputation. In this exculpation I hope to be understood as speaking of myself comparatively, and in proportion to the claims, which others are intitled to make on my time or my talents. By what I *have* effected, am I to be judged by my fellow men; what I *could* have done, is a question for my own conscience. On my own account I may perhaps have had sufficient reason to lament my deficiency in self-controul, and the neglect of centering my powers to the realization of some permanent work. But to verse rather than to prose, if to either, belongs the [“]voice of mourning” for

Keen pangs of love awakening as a babe
 Turbulent, with an outcry in the heart,
 And fears self-will'd that shunn'd the eye of hope,
 And hope that scarce would know itself from fear;
 Sense of past youth, and manhood come in vain
 And genius given and knowledge won in vain,
 And all which I had cull'd in wood-walks wild,
 And all which patient toil had rear'd, and all
 Commune with thee had open'd out—but flowers
 Strew'd on my corpse, and borne upon my bier
 In the same coffin, for the self-same grave!

S.T.C.⁵⁰⁰

These will exist, for the future, I trust only in the poetic strains, which the feelings at the time called forth. In those only, gentle reader,

Affectus animi varios, bellumque sequacis
 Perlegis invidiæ, curasque revolvis inanes;
 Quas humilis tenero stylus olim effudit in ævo.
 Perlegis et lacrymas, et quod pharetratus acutâ
 Ille puer puero fecit mihi cuspide vulnus.
 OMNIA PAULATIM CONSUMIT LONGIOR ÆTAS
 VIVENDOQUE SIMUL MORIMUR, RAPIMURQUE MANENDO.
 Ipse mihi collatus enim non ille videbor;

⁴⁹⁹ 'To each his own'.

⁵⁰⁰ Coleridge, 'To William Wordsworth', lines 65–72.

Frons alia est, moresque alii, nova mentis imago,
Vox aliudque sonat. Jamque observatio vitæ
Multa dedit:—lugere nihil, ferre omnia; jamque
Paulatim lacrymas rerum experientia tersit.⁵⁰¹

⁵⁰¹ Quoted from a poem Petrarch (1304–74) addressed to his friend Marco Barbato. In English: ‘you read about various emotions in the mind, the war waged by persistent malice; the inane cares that once, when in low tender style, as a young man I poured from my pen. You read about tears as well, and the wound I received from the quiver of that boy with the piercing arrows. TIME MARCHES ON, CONSUMING ALL THINGS BY DEGREES, AND TO LIVE IS ALSO TO DIE, TO REST IS TO BE HURRIED ON. I do not see myself when I compare who I am now with that person; my face has changed, my habits are different, new images in my mind, and the sound of my voice has changed too. For now I have learned a great deal from the observation of life: not to grieve, but to endure all things; for now experience has little by little dried up my tears.’

CHAPTER 11

An affectionate exhortation to those who in early life feel themselves disposed to become authors.

It was a favorite remark of the late Mr. Whitbread's,⁵⁰² that no man does any thing from a single motive. The separate motives, or rather moods of mind, which produced the preceding reflections and anecdotes have been laid open to the reader in each separate instance. But an interest in the welfare of those, who at the present time may be in circumstances not dissimilar to my own at my first entrance into life, has been the constant accompaniment, and (as it were) the under-song of all my feelings. WHITEHEAD exerting the prerogative of his laureatship addressed to youthful poets a poetic CHARGE, which is perhaps the best, and certainly the most interesting, of his works.⁵⁰³ With no other privilege than that of sympathy and sincere good wishes, I would address an affectionate exhortation to the youthful literati, grounded on my own experience. It will be but short; for the beginning, middle, and end converge to one charge: NEVER PURSUE LITERATURE AS A TRADE. With the exception of one extraordinary man, I have never known an individual, least of all an individual of genius, healthy or happy without a *profession*, i.e. some *regular* employment, which does not depend on the will of the moment, and which can be carried on so far *mechanically* that an average quantum only of health, spirits, and intellectual exertion are requisite to its faithful

⁵⁰² Samuel Whitbread (1758–1815), heir to a brewing fortune, philanthropist, radical MP and for a time leader of the opposition in the Commons. He hoped for Napoleonic reforms in England, and was convinced the French would triumph in the continental war. When Napoleon abdicated he became depressed, eventually committing suicide. Coleridge knew him as, during his last years, he was involved in the running of the Drury Lane Theatre.

⁵⁰³ William Whitehead (1715–85) became Poet Laureate in 1757 following Colly Cibber. His pamphlet-length poem, *A Charge to the Poets* (1762), contains the following advice:

You, who as yet, unsullied by the Press,
Hang o'er your labours in their virgin dress;
And You, who late the public taste have hit,
And still enjoy the honey-moon of wit,
Attentive hear me: grace may still abound,
Whoever preaches, if the doctrine's sound.
If Nature prompts you, or if friends persuade,
Why write; but ne'er pursue it as a trade. (lines 79–86)

discharge. Three hours of leisure, unannoyed by any alien anxiety, and looked forward to with delight as a change and recreation, will suffice to realize in literature a larger product of what is truly *genial*, than weeks of compulsion. Money, and immediate reputation form only an arbitrary and accidental end of literary labor. The *hope* of increasing them by any given exertion will often prove a stimulant to industry; but the *necessity* of acquiring them will in all works of genius convert the stimulant into a *narcotic*. Motives by excess reverse their very nature, and instead of exciting, stun and stupify the mind. For it is one contradistinction of genius from talent, that its predominant end is always comprized in the means; and this is one of the many points, which establish an analogy between genius and virtue. Now though talents may exist without genius, yet as genius cannot exist, certainly not manifest itself, without talents, I would advise every scholar, who feels the genial power working within him, so far to make a division between the two, as that he should devote his *talents* to the acquirement of competence in some known trade or profession, and his genius to objects of his tranquil and unbiassed choice; while the consciousness of being actuated in both alike by the sincere desire to perform his duty, will alike ennoble both. My dear young friend (I would say) “suppose yourself established in any honourable occupation. From the manufactory or counting-house, from the law-court, or from having visited your last patient, you return at evening,

Dear tranquil time, when the sweet sense of home
Is sweetest——⁵⁰⁴

to your family, prepared for its social enjoyments, with the very countenances of your wife and children brightened, and their voice of welcome made doubly welcome, by the knowledge that, as far as *they* are concerned, you have satisfied the demands of the day by the labor of the day. Then, when you retire into your study, in the books on your shelves you revisit so many venerable friends with whom you can converse. Your own spirit scarcely less free from personal anxieties than the great minds, that in those books are still living for you! Even your writing desk with its blank paper and all its other implements will appear as a chain of flowers, capable of linking your feelings as well as thoughts to events and characters past or to come; not a chain of iron, which binds you down to think of the future and the remote by recalling the claims and feelings of the peremptory present. But why should I say *retire*? The habits of active life and

⁵⁰⁴ Coleridge, ‘To William Wordsworth’, lines 92–3.

daily intercourse with the stir of the world will tend to give you such self-command, that the presence of your family will be no interruption. Nay, the social silence, or undisturbing voices of a wife or sister will be like a restorative atmosphere, or soft music which moulds a dream without becoming its object. If facts are required to prove the possibility of combining weighty performances in literature with full and independent employment, the works of Cicero and Xenophon among the ancients; of Sir Thomas Moore, Bacon, Baxter, or to refer at once to later and cotemporary instances, DARWIN and ROSCOE, are at once decisive of the question.⁵⁰⁵

But all men may not dare promise themselves a sufficiency of self-controul for the imitation of those examples: though strict scrutiny should always be made, whether indolence, restlessness, or a vanity impatient for immediate gratification, have not tampered with the judgement and assumed the vizard of humility for the purposes of self-delusion. Still the church presents to every man of learning and genius a profession, in which he may cherish a rational hope of being able to unite the widest schemes of literary utility with the strictest performance of professional duties. Among the numerous blessings of christianity, the introduction of an established church makes an especial claim on the gratitude of scholars and philosophers; in England, at least, where the principles of Protestantism have conspired with the freedom of the government to double all its salutary powers by the removal of its abuses.

That not only the maxims, but the grounds of a pure morality, the mere fragments of which

—the lofty grave tragedians taught
 In chorus or iambic, teachers best
 Of moral prudence, with delight received
 In brief sententious precepts;

PARADISE REGAINED⁵⁰⁶

and that the sublime truths of the divine unity and attributes, which a Plato found most hard to learn and deemed it still more difficult to reveal; that these should have become the almost hereditary property of childhood and poverty, of the hovel and the workshop; that

⁵⁰⁵ Erasmus Darwin (1731–1802) worked as a doctor, and spent a good deal of time accumulating observational and scientific data; he also wrote a large amount of prose and poetry. William Roscoe (1753–1831) worked variously as a lawyer, banker and founder of the Liverpool Botanic Garden, as well as composing various historical and poetic works.

⁵⁰⁶ Book 4, lines 261–4.

even to the unlettered they sound as *common place*, is a phenomenon, which must withhold all but minds of the most vulgar cast from undervaluing the services even of the pulpit and the reading desk. Yet those, who confine the efficiency of an established church to its *public* offices, can hardly be placed in a much higher rank of intellect. That to every parish throughout the kingdom there is transplanted a germ of civilization; that in the remotest villages there is a nucleus, round which the capabilities of the place may crystallize and brighten; a model sufficiently superior to excite, yet sufficiently near to encourage and facilitate, imitation; *this*, the inobtrusive, continuous agency of a protestant church establishment, *this* it is, which the patriot, and the philanthropist, who would fain unite the love of peace with the faith in the progressive amelioration of mankind, cannot estimate at too high a price. "It cannot be valued with the gold of Ophir, with the precious onyx, or the sapphire. No mention shall be made of coral or of pearls: for the price of wisdom is above rubies."⁵⁰⁷ The clergyman is with his parishioners and among them; he is neither in the cloistered cell, or in the wilderness, but a neighbour and a family-man, whose education and rank admit him to the mansion of the rich landholder, while his duties make him the frequent visitor of the farm-house and the cottage. He is, or he may become, connected with the families of his parish or its vicinity by marriage. And among the instances of the blindness, or at best of the short-sightedness, which it is the nature of cupidity to inflict, I know few more striking, than the clamors of the farmers against church property. Whatever was not paid to the clergyman would inevitably at the next lease be paid to the landholder, while, as the case at present stands, the revenues of the church are in some sort the reversionary property of every family, that may have a member educated for the church, or a daughter that may marry a clergyman. Instead of being *foreclosed* and immovable, it is in fact the only species of landed property, that is essentially moving and circulative. That there exist no inconveniences, who will pretend to assert? But I have yet to expect the proof, that the inconveniences are greater in this than in any other species; or that either the farmers or the clergy would be benefited by forcing the latter to become either *Trullibers*,⁵⁰⁸ or salaried *placemen*. Nay, I do not hesitate to declare my firm persuasion, that whatever *reason* of discontent the farmers may assign, the true *cause* is this; that they may cheat the *parson*, but cannot cheat the

⁵⁰⁷ Job 28:16–18.

⁵⁰⁸ The worldly, boorish parson in Fielding's *Joseph Andrews* (1742), who is more interested in breeding pigs than the well-being of his parishioners.

steward; and that they are disappointed, if they should have been able to withhold only two pounds less than the legal claim, having expected to withhold five. At all events, considered relatively to the encouragement of learning and genius, the establishment presents a patronage at once so effective and unburthensome, that it would be impossible to afford the like or equal in any but a christian and protestant country. There is scarce a department of human knowledge without some bearing on the various critical, historical, philosophical and moral truths, in which the scholar must be interested as a clergyman; no one pursuit worthy of a man of genius, which may not be followed without incongruity. To give the history of the bible as a *book*, would be little less than to relate the origin or first excitement of all the literature and science, that we now possess. The very decorum, which the profession imposes, is favorable to the best purposes of genius, and tends to counteract its most frequent defects. Finally, that man must be deficient in sensibility, who would not find an incentive to emulation in the great and burning lights, which in a long series have illustrated the church of England; who would not hear from within an echo to the voice from their sacred shrines,

Et Pater Æneas et avunculus excitat Hector.⁵⁰⁹

But whatever be the profession or trade chosen, the advantages are many and important, compared with the state of a *mere* literary man, who in any degree depends on the sale of his works for the necessaries and comforts of life. In the former a man lives in sympathy with the world, in which he lives. At least he acquires a better and quicker tact for the knowledge of that, with which men in general can sympathize. He learns to manage his genius more prudently and efficaciously. His powers and acquirements gain him likewise more real admiration; for they surpass the legitimate expectations of others. He is something besides an author, and is not therefore considered merely as an author. The hearts of men are open to him, as to one of their own class; and whether he exerts himself or not in the conversational circles of his acquaintance, his silence is not attributed to pride, nor his communicativeness to vanity. To these advantages I will venture to add a superior chance of happiness in domestic life, were it only that it is as natural for the man to be out of the circle of his household

⁵⁰⁹ Vergil, *Aeneid* 3:343. As quoted, this line means 'Father Aeneas and uncle Hector excite him' or '... rouse him up'. The original makes its point over two lines: 'ecquid in antiquam virtutem animosque virilise / et Pater Aeneas et avunculus excitat Hector?' ['Do his father Aeneas and uncle Hector excite in him the heroic spirit, the courage he practised of old?']

during the day, as it is meritorious for the woman to remain for the most part within it. But this subject involves points of consideration so numerous and so delicate, and would not only permit, but require such ample documents from the biography of literary men, that I now merely allude to it *in transitu*.⁵¹⁰ When the same circumstance has occurred at very different times to very different persons, all of whom have some one thing in common; there is reason to suppose that such circumstance is not merely attributable to the *persons* concerned, but is in some measure occasioned by the one point in common to them all. Instead of the vehement and almost slanderous dehortation from marriage, which the *Misogyne*, Boccaccio (*Vita e Costumi di Dante*, p.12, 16)⁵¹¹ addresses to literary men, I would substitute the simple advice: be not *merely* a man of letters! Let literature be an honourable *augmentation* to your arms; but not constitute the coat, or fill the escutcheon!

To objections from conscience I can of course answer in no other way, than by requesting the youthful objector (as I have already done on a former occasion) to ascertain with strict self-examination, whether other influences may not be at work; whether spirits, “*not of health*,” and with whispers “*not from heaven*,” may not be walking in the *twilight* of his consciousness.⁵¹² Let him catalogue his scruples, and reduce them to a distinct intelligible form; let him be certain, that he has read with a docile mind and favorable dispositions the best and most fundamental works on the subject; that he has had both mind and heart opened to the great and illustrious qualities of the many renowned characters, who had doubted like himself, and whose researches had ended in the clear conviction, that their doubts had been groundless, or at least in no proportion to the counter-weight. Happy will it be for such a man, if among his contemporaries elder than himself he should meet with one, who with similar powers, and feelings as acute as his own, had entertained the same scruples; had acted upon them; and who by after-research (when the step was, alas! irretrievable, but for that very reason his research undeniably

⁵¹⁰ ‘In passing’.

⁵¹¹ Coleridge owned and annotated a complete works of Boccaccio (6 vols, 1723–4); he even proposed to John Murray that he publish his own translation of this work, although that plan came to nothing. Boccaccio’s *Origine, Vita, studi e costume del chiarissimo Dante Aligheri* [‘The origins, life, studies and clothes of the famous Dante’] includes a lengthy attack on marriage from the man’s point of view (‘oh, weariness not to be reckoned, that of having to live, converse, and finally to grow old, and die with such a suspicious animal!’). For this reason Coleridge calls him ‘misogyne’, a misogynist.

⁵¹² Coleridge is riffing on Hamlet’s address to the ghost: ‘Be thou a spirit of health or goblin damned, / Bring with thee airs from heaven or blasts from hell . . .’ (*Hamlet*, 1.4.40–1).

disinterested) had discovered himself to have quarrelled with received opinions only to embrace errors, to have left the direction tracked out for him on the high road of honorable exertion, only to deviate into a labyrinth, where when he had wandered, till his head was giddy, his best good fortune was finally to have found his way out again, too late for prudence though not too late for conscience or for truth! Time spent in such delay is time won: for manhood in the mean time is advancing, and with it increase of knowledge, strength of judgement, and above all, temperance of feelings. And even if these should effect no change, yet the delay will at least prevent the final approval of the decision from being alloyed by the inward censure of the rashness and vanity, by which it had been precipitated. It would be a sort of irreligion, and scarcely less than a libel on human nature to believe, that there is any established and reputable profession or employment, in which a man may not continue to act with honesty and honor; and doubtless there is likewise none, which may not at times present temptations to the contrary. But woefully will that man find himself mistaken, who imagines that the profession of literature, or (to speak more plainly) the *trade* of authorship, besets its members with fewer or with less insidious temptations, than the church, the law, or the different branches of commerce. But I have treated sufficiently on this unpleasant subject in an early chapter of this volume. I will conclude the present therefore with a short extract from HERDER,⁵¹³ whose name I might have added to the illustrious list of those, who have combined the successful pursuit of the muses, not only with the faithful discharge, but with the highest honors and honorable emoluments of an established profession. The translation the reader will find in a note below.* “Am sorgfältigsten, meiden sie die Autorschaft. Zu früh oder unmässig gebraucht, macht sie den Kopf wüste und das Herz leer; wenn sie auch sonst keine uble Folgen gäbe. Ein Mensch, der

* TRANSLATION. “With the greatest possible solicitude avoid authorship. Too early or immoderately employed, it makes the head *waste* and the heart empty; even were there no other worse consequences. A person, who reads only to print, in all probability reads amiss; and he, who sends away through the pen and the press every thought, the moment it occurs to him, will in a short time have sent all away, and will become a mere journeyman of the printing-office, a *compositor*.”

To which I may add from myself, that what medical physiologists affirm of certain secretions, applies equally to our thoughts; they too must be taken up again into the circulation, and be again and again re-secreted to order to ensure a healthful vigor, both to the mind and to its intellectual offspring.

⁵¹³ Johann Gottfried von Herder (1744–1803) worked as both a Lutheran preacher and General Superintendent of Educational and Religious Affairs at Weimar. He also wrote many works of prose criticism and of poetry.

nur lieset um zu drücken, lieset wahrscheinlich übel; und wer jeden Gedanken, der ihm aufstosst, durch Feder und Presse versendet, hat sie in kurzer Zeit alle versandt, und wird bald ein blosser Diener der Druckerey, ein Buchstabensetzer werden. HERDER.

CHAPTER 12

A Chapter of requests and premonitions concerning the perusal or omission of the chapter that follows.

In the perusal of philosophical works I have been greatly benefited by a resolve, which, in the antithetic form and with the allowed quaintness of an adage or maxim, I have been accustomed to word thus: “*until you understand a writer’s ignorance, presume yourself ignorant of his understanding.*” This *golden rule* of mine does, I own, resemble those of Pythagoras in its obscurity rather than in its depth. If however the reader will permit me to be my own Hierocles,⁵¹⁴ I trust, that he will find its meaning fully explained by the following instances. I have now before me a treatise of a religious fanatic, full of dreams and supernatural *experiences*.⁵¹⁵ I see clearly the writer’s grounds, and their hollowness. I have a complete insight into the causes, which through the medium of his body has acted on his mind; and by application of received and ascertained laws I can satisfactorily explain to my own reason all the strange incidents, which the writer records of himself. And this I can do without suspecting him of any intentional falsehood. As when in broad day-light a man tracks the steps of a traveller, who had lost his way in a fog or by a treacherous moonshine, even so, and with the same tranquil sense of certainty, can I follow the traces of this bewildered visionary. I UNDERSTAND HIS IGNORANCE.

⁵¹⁴ A fifth-century AD Alexandrian philosopher, best known as the author of a commentary and explication of Pythagoras.

⁵¹⁵ Engell and Bate (*Biographia Literaria*, 1:232) think this may be a reference to Emanuel Swedenborg’s account of his spiritual visions, *De coelo et ejus mirabilibus et de inferno* (1758), which we know Coleridge read and annotated. And so it might well be, although it is worth noting (a) that the *De coelo et . . . inferno* does not describe any dreams (Swedenborg’s *Drömboken*, or *Journal of Dreams*, was not published until 1859); and (b) that calling Swedenborg ‘a religious fanatic’ seems overly disparaging in the light of Coleridge’s other statements about him. Just as, or more, likely is that Coleridge is referring here to one of the many books of popular English religious enthusiasm published at this time – for instance, Samuel Scott’s *A Diary of Some of the Religious Exercises and Experience* (1809), which details both the dreams and the visions of a rather over-devout, ordinary Hertfordshireman; or Lewis Mayer’s *A Hint to England; or, A Prophetic Mirror containing an explanation of prophecy that relates to the French nation, and the threatened invasion; proving Bonaparte to be the Beast that arose out of the Earth, with Two Horns like a Lamb, and spake as a Dragon, whose Number is 666* (1803).

On the other hand, I have been re-perusing with the best energies of my mind the *Timæus* of PLATO.⁵¹⁶ Whatever I comprehend, impresses me with a reverential sense of the author's genius; but there is a considerable portion of the work, to which I can attach no consistent meaning. In other treatises of the same philosopher intended for the average comprehensions of men, I have been delighted with the masterly good sense, with the perspicuity of the language, and the aptness of the inductions. I recollect likewise, that numerous passages in this author, which I thoroughly comprehend, were formerly no less unintelligible to me, than the passages now in question. It would, I am aware, be quite *fashionable* to dismiss them at once as Platonic Jargon.⁵¹⁷ But this I cannot do with satisfaction to my own mind, because I have sought in vain for causes adequate to the solution of the assumed inconsistency. I have no insight into the possibility of a man so eminently wise, using words with such half-meanings to himself, as must perforce pass into no-meaning to his readers. When in addition to the motives thus suggested by my own reason, I bring into distinct remembrance the number and the series of great men, who, after long and zealous study of these works had joined in honoring the name of PLATO with epithets, that almost transcend humanity, I feel, that a contemptuous verdict on my part might argue want of modesty, but would hardly be received by the judicious, as evidence of superior penetration. Therefore, utterly baffled in all my attempts to understand the ignorance of Plato, I CONCLUDE MYSELF IGNORANT OF HIS UNDERSTANDING.

In lieu of the various requests which the anxiety of authorship addresses to the unknown reader, I advance but this one; that he will either pass over the following chapter altogether, or read the whole connectedly. The fairest part of the most beautiful body will appear deformed and monstrous, if dissevered from its place in the organic Whole. Nay, on delicate subjects, where a seemingly trifling difference of more or less may constitute a difference in *kind*, even a *faithful* display of the main and supporting ideas, if yet they are separated

⁵¹⁶ Plato's Socratic dialogue *Timæus* was written c.360 BC.

⁵¹⁷ This records Coleridge's sense that there had been a popular reaction against Platonism in England recently. Here, for instance, is Coleridge's friend Thomas Holcroft, November 1798: 'Dined on Monday with Platonist Taylor, and D— present. Taylor, intolerant and abusive to all who do not pretend to understand and put faith in his Platonic jargon.' (William Hazlitt (ed.), *Memoirs of the Late Thomas Holcroft* (3 vols, 1816), 3:64. A few years earlier in the century, ecclesiastical historian and theologian John Jortin had dismissed what he called 'the hyper-Platonic jargon of Bishop Synesius' (Jortin, *Tracts, Philological, Critical and Miscellaneous* (2 vols, 1790), 2:514)

from the forms by which they are at once cloathed and modified, may perchance present a skeleton indeed; but a skeleton to alarm and deter. Though I might find numerous precedents, I shall not desire the reader to strip his mind of all prejudices, nor to keep all prior systems out of view during his examination of the present. For in truth, such requests appear to me not much unlike the advice given to hypochondriacal patients in Dr. Buchan's domestic medicine; videlicet, to preserve themselves uniformly tranquil and in good spirits.⁵¹⁸ Till I had discovered the art of destroying the memory *a parte post*,⁵¹⁹ without injury to its future operations, and without detriment to the judgement, I should suppress the request as premature; and therefore, however much I may *wish* to be read with an unprejudiced mind, I do not presume to state it as a necessary condition.

The extent of my daring is to suggest one criterion, by which it may be rationally conjectured before-hand, whether or no a reader would lose his time, and perhaps his temper, in the perusal of this, or any other treatise constructed on similar principles. But it would be cruelly misinterpreted, as implying the least disrespect either for the moral or intellectual qualities of the individuals thereby precluded. The criterion is this: if a man receives as fundamental facts, and therefore of course indemonstrable and incapable of further analysis, the general notions of matter, spirit, soul, body, action, passiveness, time, space, cause and effect, consciousness, perception, memory and habit; if he feels his mind completely at rest concerning all these, and is satisfied, if only he can analyse all other notions into some one or more of these supposed elements with plausible subordination and apt arrangement: to such a mind I would as courteously as possible convey the hint, that for him the chapter was not written.

Vir bonus es, doctus, prudens; ast *haud tibi spiro*.⁵²⁰

⁵¹⁸ William Buchan (1729–1805) wrote a medical textbook for family use called *Dr Buchan's Domestic Medicine; or a Treatise on the Prevention and Cure of Diseases by Regimen and Simple Medicine* (1769); it was widely reprinted into the nineteenth century.

⁵¹⁹ 'In the later part' or 'afterwards'. Engell and Bate (*Biographia Literaria*, 1:234) think this a slip for 'a parte prius' ['the first part'], which would make more sense in this context. But it may be that Coleridge is deliberately articulating a paradox here, the point being the impossibility of maintaining future memory while also obliterating it *a parte post*.

⁵²⁰ The Latin means: 'you are a good man, well schooled, prudent, but *it's not for you that I breathe* [i.e. *speak*]'. The first part of this is quoted from Johannes Trithemius, *Annales Hirsaugienses: Opus nunquam hactenus editum, & ab Eruditis* (1590), in which Holy Roman Emperor Charles IV is described as 'vir bonus, magnificus, prudens & doctus' (2:215). The second part is proverbial. The plant's words to the pig are 'go away, pig: I do not blow [or 'bloom'] for you'. The earliest printed example of this is Joachim Camerarius's *Symbolorum et Emblematum* (1590).

For these terms do in truth *include* all the difficulties, which the human mind can propose for solution. Taking them therefore in mass, and unexamined, it requires only a decent apprenticeship in logic, to draw forth their contents in all forms and colours, as the professors of legerdemain at our village fairs pull out ribbon after ribbon from their mouths. And not more difficult is it to reduce them back again to their different genera. But though this analysis is highly useful in rendering our knowledge more distinct, it does not really add to it. It does not increase, though it gives us a greater mastery over, the wealth which we before possessed. For forensic purposes, for all the established professions of society, this is sufficient. But for philosophy in its highest sense, as the science of ultimate truths, and therefore *scientia scientiarum*,⁵²¹ this mere analysis of terms is preparative only, though as a preparative discipline indispensable.

Still less dare a favorable perusal be anticipated from the proselytes of that compendious philosophy, which talking of mind but thinking of brick and mortar, or other images equally abstracted from body, contrives a theory of spirit by nicknaming matter, and in a few hours can qualify its dullest disciples to explain the *omne scibile*⁵²² by reducing all things to impressions, ideas, and sensations.

But it is time to tell the truth; though it requires some courage to avow it in an age and country, in which disquisitions on all subjects, not privileged to adopt technical terms or scientific symbols, must be addressed to the PUBLIC. I say then, that it is neither possible nor necessary for all men, or for many, to be PHILOSOPHERS. There is a *philosophic* (and inasmuch as it is actualized by an effort of freedom, an *artificial*) *consciousness*, which lies beneath or (as it were) *behind* the spontaneous consciousness natural to all reflecting beings. As the elder Romans distinguished their northern provinces into Cis-Alpine and Trans-Alpine, so may we divide all the objects of human knowledge into those on this side, and those on the other side of the spontaneous consciousness; *citra et trans conscientiam communem*.⁵²³ The latter is exclusively the domain of PURE philosophy, which is therefore properly entitled *transcendental*, in order to discriminate it at once, both from mere reflection and *re*-presentation on the one hand, and on the other from those flights of lawless speculation which, abandoned by *all* distinct consciousness, because transgressing the bounds and purposes of our intellectual faculties, are justly

⁵²¹ 'The science of all sciences'.

⁵²² 'Everything that can be known'.

⁵²³ 'Across and beyond common consciousness'.

condemned, as* *transcendent*. The first range of hills, that encircles the scanty vale of human life, is the horizon for the majority of its inhabitants. On *its* ridges the common sun is born and departs. From *them* the stars rise, and touching *them* they vanish. By the many, even this range, the natural limit and bulwark of the vale, is but imperfectly known. Its higher ascents are too often hidden by mists and clouds

* This distinction between transcendental and transcendent is observed by our elder divines and philosophers, whenever they express themselves *scholastically*. Dr. Johnson indeed has confounded the two words;⁵²⁴ but his own authorities do not bear him out. Of this celebrated dictionary I will venture to remark once for all, that I should suspect the man of a morose disposition who should speak of it without respect and gratitude as a most instructive and entertaining *book*, and hitherto, unfortunately, an indispensable book; but I confess, that I should be surprized at hearing from a philosophic and thorough scholar any but very qualified praises of it, as a *dictionary*. I am not now alluding to the number of genuine words omitted; for this is (and perhaps to a greater extent) true, as Mr. Wakefield has noticed, of our best Greek Lexicons, and this too after the successive labors of so many giants in learning. I refer at present both to omissions and commissions of a more important nature. What these are, me saltem judice, will be stated at full in THE FRIEND, re-published and completed.⁵²⁵ I had never heard of the correspondence between Wakefield and Fox till I saw the account of it this morning (16th September 1815) in the Monthly Review.⁵²⁶ I was not a little gratified at finding, that Mr. Wakefield had proposed to himself nearly the same plan for a Greek and English Dictionary, which I had formed, and began to execute, now ten years ago. But far, far more grieved am I, that he did not live to compleat it. I cannot but think it a subject of most serious regret, that the same heavy expenditure, which is now employing in the *republication* of STEPHANUS augmented,⁵²⁷ had not been applied to a new Lexicon on a more philosophical plan, with the English, German, and French Synonimes as well as the Latin. In almost every instance the precise *individual* meaning might be given in an English or German word; whereas in Latin we must too often be contented with a mere general and *inclusive* term. How indeed can it be otherwise, when we attempt to render the most copious language of the world, the most admirable for the fineness of its distinctions, into one of the poorest and most vague languages? Especially, when we reflect on the comparative number of the works, still extant, written, while the Greek and Latin were living languages. Were I asked, what I deemed the greatest and most unmixt benefit, which a wealthy individual, or an association of wealthy individuals could bestow on their country and on mankind, I

⁵²⁴ In his *Dictionary* (1755), Johnson defines ‘transcendental’ as ‘pervading many particulars, supereminent, passing others’, and ‘transcendent’ as ‘supremely excellent’.

⁵²⁵ ‘Me saltem judice’ means ‘at least as I judge the matter’. Coleridge didn’t, in the event, include this promised critique of Johnson’s *Dictionary* in his 1818 reissue of the *Friend*.

⁵²⁶ Gilbert Wakefield (1756–1801), a classical scholar and editor who planned a new Greek-English dictionary but died before he could begin it. The ‘correspondence between Wakefield and Fox’ is a reference to *Correspondence of the Late Gilbert Wakefield B.A., with the Late Rt Hon Charles James Fox, chiefly on Subjects of Classical Literature* (1813). The ‘account of it this morning (16th September 1815) in the Monthly Review’ – a datum which incidentally gives Coleridge scholars a clue as to the dates of composition of the *Biographia* – is *Monthly Review* 77 (1815), 381–91. It is likely that this date marks only the addition to the footnote, the chapter itself probably having been written a while earlier.

⁵²⁷ A reference to Henricus Stephanus’s *Thesaurus graecae linguae* (1572), which was being re-edited and expanded by Abraham Valpy and E. H. Barker as Coleridge wrote, and which was reissued in twelve volumes from 1816 to 1828. There was no Greek-to-English lexicon until the publication of Liddell and Scott’s (still standard) reference work in 1843.

from uncultivated swamps, which few have courage or curiosity to penetrate. To the multitude below these vapors appear, now as the dark haunts of terrific agents, on which none may intrude with impunity; and now all *a-glow*, with colors not their own, they are gazed at, as the splendid palaces of happiness and power. But in all ages there have been a few, who measuring and sounding the rivers of the vale at the feet of their furthest inaccessible falls have learnt, that the sources must be far higher and far inward; a few, who even in the level streams have detected elements, which neither the vale itself or the surrounding mountains contained or could supply.⁵²⁸ How and whence to these thoughts, these strong probabilities, the ascertaining vision, the intuitive knowledge may finally supervene, can be learnt only by the fact. I might oppose to the question the words with which* Plotinus supposes NATURE to answer a similar difficulty.

should not hesitate to answer, “a philosophical English dictionary; with the Greek, Latin, German, French, Spanish, and Italian synonymes, and with correspondent indexes.” That the learned languages might thereby be acquired, better, in half the time, is but a part, and not the most important part, of the advantages which would accrue from such a work. O! if it should be permitted by providence, that without detriment to freedom and independence our government might be enabled to become more than a committee for war and revenue! There was a time, when every thing was to be done by government. Have we not flown off to the contrary extreme?

* *Ennead*, iii. 8. c.3. The force of the Greek *συνιέναι* is imperfectly expressed by ‘understand;’ our own idiomatic phrase “*to go along with me*” comes nearest to it. The passage, that follows, full of profound sense, appears to me evidently corrupt; and in fact no writer more wants, better deserves, or is less likely to obtain, a new and more correct edition. τί οὖν συνιέναι; ὅτι τὸ γινόμενον ἐστὶ θέαμα ἐμὸν, σιώπησις (*mallet*,⁵²⁹ θέαμα ἐμοῦ, σιωπώσης,) καὶ φύσει γινόμενον θεώρημα καὶ μοι γενομένη ἐκ θεωρίας τῆς ὧδι φύσιν ἔχειν φιλοθεάμονα υπαρχει (*mallet*, καὶ μοι ἢε γενομένη ἐκ θεωρίας αὐτῆς ὧδις). “what then are we to understand? That whatever is produced is an intuition, I silent; and that, which is thus generated, is by its nature a theorem, or form of contemplation; and the birth, which results to me from this contemplation, attains to have a contemplative nature.” So Synesius: Ὡδὶς ἰρα, Ἀρρητε Γονδ.⁵³⁰ The after comparison of the process of the *natura naturans*⁵³¹ with that of the geometrician is drawn from the very heart of philosophy.

⁵²⁸ The 1847 edition of the *Biographia* prints a footnote here, presumably recording Coleridge’s own marginalium in his copy of the 1817 edition: ‘April 1825. If I did not see it with my own eyes, I should not believe that I had been guilty of so many hydrostatic *Bulls* as bellow in this unhappy allegory or string of metaphors! How a river was to travel *up* hill from a vale far *inward* over the intervening mountains, Morpheus, the Dream-weaver, can alone unriddle. I am ashamed and humbled. S T. Coleridge.’

⁵²⁹ ‘I should prefer’.

⁵³⁰ ‘Sacred labour, ineffable generation’. Synesius (c.373–414) was Bishop of Ptolemais in modern-day Libya, and a noted poet. Coleridge quotes from his *Hymn III*, lines 226–7. There are a couple of clumsy errors in the Greek here, perhaps caused by transcribing Coleridge’s difficult handwriting, or else Morgan’s ignorance: 1847 has the correct text, with proper breathings and accents: “Ὡδὶς ἰερά, Ἄρρητε Γονά’.

⁵³¹ ‘Natural creativity of nature’. Synesius’s hymn goes on to discuss (the ‘after

“Should any one interrogate her, how she works, if graciously she vouchsafe to listen and speak, she will reply, it behoves thee not to disquiet me with interrogatories, but to understand in silence, even as I am silent, and work without words.”⁵³²

Likewise in the fifth book of the fifth Ennead, speaking of the highest and intuitive knowledge as distinguished from the discursive, or in the language of Wordsworth,

The vision and the faculty divine,⁵³³

he says: “it is not lawful to enquire from whence it sprang, as if it were a thing subject to place and motion, for it neither approached hither, nor again departs from hence to some other place; but it either appears to us or it does not appear. So that we ought not to pursue it with a view of detecting its secret source, but to watch in quiet till it suddenly shines upon us; preparing ourselves for the blessed spectacle as the eye waits patiently for the rising sun.”⁵³⁴ They and they only can acquire the philosophic imagination, the sacred power of self-intuition, who within themselves can interpret and understand the symbol, that the wings of the air-sylph are forming within the skin of the caterpillar; those only, who feel in their own spirits the same instinct, which impels the chrysalis of the horned fly to leave room in its involucre for antennæ yet to come. They know and feel, that the *potential* works *in* them, even as the *actual* works *on* them! In short, all the organs of sense are framed for a corresponding world of sense; and we have it. All the organs of spirit are framed for a correspondent world of spirit; tho’ the latter organs are not developed in all alike. But they exist in all, and their first appearance discloses itself in the *moral* being. How else could it be, that even worldlings, not wholly debased, will contemplate the man of simple and disinterested goodness with contradictory feelings of pity and respect? “Poor man! he is not made for *this* world.” Oh! herein they utter a prophecy of universal fulfilment; for man *must* either rise or sink.

It is the essential mark of the true philosopher to rest satisfied with no imperfect light, as long as the impossibility of attaining a fuller knowledge has not been demonstrated. That the common

comparison’ Coleridge mentions) the active power of nature to generate new life, something Coleridge describes as the ‘*natura naturans*’, in opposition to – following the way the terms were used by Bruno, Spinoza and Schelling – the ‘*natura naturata*’, the passive ‘*natural nature*’ as given.

⁵³² Coleridge’s own translation of Plotinus, *Enneads*, 3.8.4.

⁵³³ Wordsworth, *Excursion*, 1:79.

⁵³⁴ Plotinus, *Enneads*, 5.5.8.

consciousness itself will furnish proofs by its own direction, that it is connected with master-currents below the surface, I shall merely assume as a postulate pro tempore.⁵³⁵ This having been granted, though but in expectation of the argument, I can safely deduce from it the equal truth of my former assertion, that philosophy cannot be intelligible to all, even of the most learned and cultivated classes. A system, the first principle of which it is to render the mind intuitive of the *spiritual* in man (i.e. of that which lies *on the other side* of our natural consciousness) must needs have a great obscurity for those, who have never disciplined and strengthened this ulterior consciousness. It must in truth be a land of darkness, a perfect *Anti-Goshen*,⁵³⁶ for men to whom the noblest treasures of their own being are reported only through the imperfect translation of lifeless and sightless *notions*. Perhaps, in great part, through words which are but the shadows of notions; even as the notional understanding itself is but the shadowy abstraction of living and actual truth. On the IMMEDIATE, which dwells in every man, and on the original intuition, or absolute affirmation of it, (which is likewise in every man, but does not in every man rise into consciousness) all the *certainty* of our knowledge depends; and this becomes intelligible to no man by the ministry of mere words from without. The medium, by which spirits understand each other, is not the surrounding air; but the *freedom* which they possess in common, as the common ethereal element of their being, the tremulous reciprocations of which propagate themselves even to the inmost of the soul. Where the spirit of a man is not *filled* with the consciousness of freedom (were it only from its restlessness, as of one still struggling in bondage) all spiritual intercourse is interrupted, not only with others, but even with himself. No wonder then, that he remains incomprehensible to himself as well as to others. No wonder, that, in the fearful desert of his consciousness, he wearies himself out with empty words,⁵³⁷ to which no friendly echo answers, either from his own heart, or the heart of a fellow being; or bewilders himself in the pursuit of *notional* phantoms, the mere refractions from unseen and distant truths through the distorting medium of his own unenlivened

⁵³⁵ 'For the time being'.

⁵³⁶ Goshen was the portion of Egypt given to the Hebrews by the Pharaoh in the time of Joseph (Genesis 45:9–10), where they laboured and from whence they later departed to trek to the holy land. Most of this long paragraph is lifted from Schelling's *Abhandlungen zur Erläuterung des Idealismus der Wissenschaftslehre* ['Essays in Explanation of the Idealism of the Doctrine of Science'] (1796–7), (Manfred Schröter (ed.), *Schellings Werke: Jugendschriften 1793–98* (1979), 442–3).

⁵³⁷ This image is from Schelling: 'In seiner süchterlichen Einöde nur mit eiteln Worten sich ermüdet' (Schelling, *Abhandlungen*, 443).

and stagnant understanding! To remain unintelligible to such a mind, exclaims Schelling on a like occasion, is honor and a good name before God and man.⁵³⁸

The history of philosophy (the same writer observes)⁵³⁹ contains instances of systems, which for successive generations have remained enigmatic. Such he deems the system of Leibnitz, whom another writer (rashly I think, and invidiously) extols as the *only* philosopher, who was himself deeply convinced of his own doctrines.⁵⁴⁰ As hitherto interpreted, however, they have not produced the effect, which Leibnitz himself, in a most instructive passage, describes as the criterion of a true philosophy; namely, that it would at once explain and collect the fragments of truth scattered through systems apparently the most incongruous. The truth,⁵⁴¹ says he, is diffused more widely than is commonly believed; but it is often painted, yet oftener masked, and is sometimes mutilated and sometimes, alas! in close alliance with mischievous errors. The deeper, however, we penetrate into the ground of things, the more truth we discover in the doctrines of the greater number of the philosophical sects. The want of *substantial* reality in the objects of the senses, according to the sceptics; the harmonies or numbers, the prototypes and ideas, to which the Pythagoreans and Platonists reduced all things: the ONE and ALL of Parmenides and Plotinus, without* Spinozism; the necessary

* This is happily effected in three lines by SYNESIUS, in his Fourth Hymn:

Εὐ καὶ Πάντα—(taken by itself) is *Spinosism*.
 Εὐ δ' Ἀπάντων—a mere *anima Mundi*.
 Εὐ τε πρό ποντων—is mechanical Theism.

⁵³⁸ 'Einem solchen unverständlich zu bleiben ist Ruhm und Ehre vor Gott und Menschen' (Schelling, *Abhandlungen*, 443).

⁵³⁹ Schelling: 'Die Geschichte der Philosophie enthält Beispiele von Systemen die mehrere Zeitalter hindurch räthselhaft geblieben sind' (*Abhandlungen*, 443).

⁵⁴⁰ Coleridge found this reference to an (unnamed) 'other writer' in the same Schelling passage: 'Ein Philosoph, dessen Principien alle diese Räthsel auflösen werden, urtheilt noch neuerdings von *Leibniz*, er sey wahrscheinlich der einzige Überzeugte in der Geschichte der Philosophie, der Einzige also, der im *Grunde* recht hatt.' ['A philosopher who has set out to resolve all these riddles from first principles, has lately declared of Leibniz that he is probably the only man in the whole history of philosophy deeply to hold his own convictions, and therefore the only one who is right from the bottom up.'] In fact the individual to whom Schelling refers is Siegmund Jakob Baumgarten (1706–57; in his *Samlung von Erleuterungsschriften* (1750), 3:51), although it is unlikely that Coleridge knew this latter fact.

⁵⁴¹ From here to the end of this paragraph, Coleridge translates from Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi (1743–1819), and specifically his *Über die Lehre des Spinoza* (1785; Coleridge possessed the expanded second edition from 1789). It is Jacobi who quotes the French text from Leibniz's *Trois Lettres à M. Raymond de Montmort* (1714) that Coleridge calls 'a most instructive passage' and also quotes.

But unite all three, and the result is the Theism of Saint Paul and Christianity.

Synesius was censured for his doctrine of the Pre-existence of the Soul; but never, that I can find, arraigned or deemed heretical for his Pantheism, tho' neither Giordano Bruno, nor Jacob Behmen ever avowed it more broadly.

Μύσας δέ Νόος
 Τά τ και τά λέγει,
 Βυθὸν ἄρρητον
 Ἀμφιχορέων.
 Σὺ τὸ τίκτον ἔφυς,
 Σὺ τὸ τίκτόμενον,
 Σὺ τὸ φωτίζιον,
 Σὺ τὸ λαμπόμενον,
 Σὺ τὸ φαινόμενον,
 Σὺ τὸ κρυπτόμενον,
 Ἰδίαις ἀγχαῖς.
 Ἐν και πάντα,
 Ἐν καθ' ἑαυτο,
 Και διὰ πάντων.

Pantheism is therefore not necessarily irreligious or heretical; tho' it may be taught atheistically. Thus Spinoza would agree with Synesius in calling God Φυσις εν Νοεροις, the *Nature* in Intelligences; but he could not subscribe to the preceding Νδὺς και Νοερος, i.e. Himself Intelligence and intelligent.

In this biographical sketch of my literary life I may be excused, if I mention here, that I had translated the eight Hymns of Synesius from the Greek into English Anacreontics before my 15th year.⁵⁴²

⁵⁴² Synesius (c.373–414) was a Christian churchman of Greek descent who was bishop of Ptolemais in Libya from 410. He wrote a great deal, but is most famous for ten lengthy neoplatonic hymns to God. The first three Greek lines Coleridge quotes and glosses here are lines 180–2 from Synesius's third (*not* fourth) hymn. They mean, respectively: 'one and everything'; 'one of everything'; and, reading Πάντων for παντων, 'one before everything'. The longer quoted passage of Synesius's poetry is from the same hymn, lines 187–200. The Greek means:

Music of the mind, [*Synesius actually wrote* 'Μύστας', 'mysteries']
 speak of this thing and that,
 your inexpressible depths
 are what we dance around.
 You are the Maker,
 you the Made,
 you the Light,
 you the Illuminated,
 you the Revelation,
 you the Hidden
 in your own gleam.
 One and Everything,
 one and Himself
 and throughout everything.

Synesius calls God Φυσις εν Νοεροις (more properly Φύσις ἐν Νοεροῖς) at *Hymns*, 3:185; and Νδὺς και Νοερος at *Hymns*, 3:177. Of Coleridge's supposed translation of all of Synesius's hymns (a huge undertaking, it should be noted, for an individual of any age, let alone a teenager) nothing more is known than this reference here. Several decades later Alan Stevenson translated the Synesian hymns, and remarked in his preface 'how deeply we must deplore that this translation by "the marvellous-eyed one" should

connection of things according to the Stoics, reconcilable with the spontaneity of the other schools; the vital-philosophy of the Cabalists and Hermetists, who assumed the universality of sensation; the substantial forms and entelechies of Aristotle and the schoolmen, together with the mechanical solution of all particular phenomena according to Democritus and the recent philosophers—all these we shall find united in one perspective central point, which shows regularity and a coincidence of all the parts in the very object, which from every other point of view must appear confused and distorted. The spirit of sectarianism has been hitherto our fault, and the cause of our failures. We have imprisoned our own conceptions by the lines, which we have drawn, in order to exclude the conceptions of others. J'ai trouvé que la plupart des sectes ont raison dans une bonne partie de ce qu'elles avancent, mais non pas tant en ce qu'elles nient.⁵⁴³

A system, which aims to deduce the memory with all the other functions of intelligence, must of course place its first position from beyond the memory, and anterior to it, otherwise the principle of solution would be itself a part of the problem to be solved. Such a position therefore must, in the first instance be demanded, and the first question will be, by what right is it demanded? On this account I think it expedient to make some preliminary remarks on the introduction of POSTULATES in philosophy. The word postulate is borrowed from the science of mathematics. (See Schell. abhandl. zur Erläuter. des id. der Wissenschaftslehre.)⁵⁴⁴ In geometry the primary construction is not demonstrated, but postulated. This first and most simple construction in space is the point in motion, or the line. Whether the point is moved in one and the same direction, or whether its direction is continually changed, remains as yet undetermined. But if the direction of the point have been determined, it is either by a point without it, and then there arises the strait line which incloses no space; or the direction of the point is not determined by a point without it, and then it must flow back again on itself, that is, there arises a cyclical line, which does inclose a space. If the strait line be assumed as the positive, the cyclical is then the negation of the strait. It is a line, which

never have been published. I have made diligent inquiries as to its fate; but can learn nothing of it.' (Stevenson, *The Ten Hymns of Synesius in English Verse* (1865), xi)

⁵⁴³ 'I have found that most of these Sects are correct in a good part of what they argue, but not in that which they deny.' This is Leibniz's original French. 1847 and subsequent editions correct the typo 'J'ai' to 'J'ai'.

⁵⁴⁴ This paragraph and the two that follow are closely adapted from Schelling's *Abhandlungen zur Erläuterung des Idealismus der Wissenschaftslehre* ['Essays in Explanation of the Idealism of the Doctrine of Science'] (1796–7), which title is abbreviated here.

at no point strikes out into the strait, but changes its direction continuously. But if the primary line be conceived as undetermined, and the strait line as determined throughout, then the cyclical is the third compounded of both. It is at once undetermined and determined; undetermined through any point without, and determined through itself. Geometry therefore supplies philosophy with the example of a primary intuition, from which every science that lays claim to *evidence* must take its commencement. The mathematician does not begin with a demonstrable proposition, but with an intuition, a practical idea.

But here an important distinction presents itself. Philosophy is employed on objects of the INNER SENSE, and cannot, like geometry appropriate to every construction a correspondent *outward* intuition. Nevertheless philosophy, if it is to arrive at evidence, must proceed from the most original construction, and the question then is, what is the most original construction or first productive act for the INNER SENSE. The answer to this question depends on the direction which is given to the INNER SENSE. But in philosophy the inner sense cannot have its direction determined by an outward object. To the original construction of the line, I can be compelled by a line drawn before me on the slate or on sand. The stroke thus drawn is indeed not the line itself, but only the image or picture of the line. It is not from it, that we first learn to know the line; but, on the contrary, we bring this stroke to the original line generated by the act of the imagination; otherwise we could not define it as without breadth or thickness. Still however this stroke is the sensuous image of the original or ideal line, and an efficient mean to excite *every* imagination to the intuition of it.

It is demanded then, whether there be found any means in philosophy to determine the direction of the INNER SENSE, as in mathematics it is determinable by its specific image or outward picture. Now the inner sense has its direction determined for the greater part only by an act of freedom. One man's consciousness extends only to the pleasant or unpleasant sensations caused in him by external impressions; another enlarges his inner sense to a consciousness of forms and quantity; a third in addition to the image is conscious of the conception or notion of the thing; a fourth attains to a notion of his notions—he reflects on his own reflections; and thus we may say without impropriety, that the one possesses more or less inner sense, than the other. This more or less betrays already, that philosophy in its first principles must have a practical or moral, as well as a theoretical or speculative side. This difference in degree does not exist in the mathematics. Socrates in Plato shows, that an ignorant slave may

be brought to understand and of himself to solve the most difficult geometrical problem. Socrates drew the figures for the slave in the sand.⁵⁴⁵ The disciples of the critical philosophy could likewise (as was indeed actually done by La Forge⁵⁴⁶ and some other followers of Des Cartes) represent the origin of our representations in copperplates; but no one has yet attempted it, and it would be utterly useless. To an Esquimaux or New Zealander our most popular philosophy would be wholly unintelligible. The sense, the inward organ, for it is not yet born in him. So is there many a one among us, yes, and some who think themselves philosophers too, to whom the philosophic organ is entirely wanting. To such a man, philosophy is a mere play of words and notions, like a theory of music to the deaf, or like the geometry of light to the blind. The connection of the parts and their logical dependencies may be seen and remembered; but the whole is groundless and hollow, unsustained by living contact, unaccompanied with any realizing intuition which exists by and in the act that affirms its existence, which is known, because it is, and is, because it is known. The words of Plotinus, in the assumed person of nature, hold true of the philosophic energy. τὸ θεωροῦν μου θεώρημα ποιεῖ, ὡσπερ οἱ Γεωμετραι θεωροῦντες γράφουσιν· ἀλλ' ἐμοῦ μὴ γραφούσης, θεωρούσης δέ, ὑφίστανται αἱ τῶν σωμάτων γράμμαι.⁵⁴⁷ With me the act of contemplation makes the thing contemplated, as the geometers contemplating describe lines correspondent; but I not describing lines, but simply contemplating, the representative forms of things rise up into existence.

The postulate of philosophy and at the same time the test of philosophic capacity, is no other than the heaven-descended KNOW THYSELF! (*E caelo descendit, Γνωθι σεαυτον*).⁵⁴⁸ And this at once practically and speculatively. For as philosophy is neither a science of the reason or understanding only, nor merely a science of morals, but the science of BEING altogether, its primary ground can be neither merely speculative or merely practical, but both in one. All knowledge rests on the coincidence of an object with a subject.⁵⁴⁹ (My readers have

⁵⁴⁵ This happens in Plato's *Meno*.

⁵⁴⁶ Louis de la Forge, physician and friend of Descartes. The dates of his birth and death are not certainly known, but he flourished in the second half of the seventeenth century. Coleridge refers to him in Chapter 5 of the *Biographia*, above.

⁵⁴⁷ Plotinus, *Enneads*, 3.8.4. The following sentence is Coleridge's translation of the Greek.

⁵⁴⁸ 'It came down from heaven, *know thyself*' (Juvenal, *Satires*, 11.27).

⁵⁴⁹ From here through to almost the end of the fourth paragraph below that ends '... skirts of his divinity', Coleridge is translating and adapting Schelling. Indeed, much of what follows here, through the theses, is drawn to one degree or another from the same source. A detailed tabulation of Coleridge's borrowings, or plagiarisms, can be found in Engell and Bate, *Biographia Literaria*.

been warned in a former chapter that for their convenience as well as the writer's, the term, subject is used by me in its scholastic sense as equivalent to mind or sentient being, and as the necessary correlative of object or *quicquid objicitur menti*.⁵⁵⁰ For we can *know* that only which is true: and the truth is universally placed in the coincidence of the thought with the thing, of the representation with the object represented.

Now the sum of all that is merely OBJECTIVE, we will henceforth call NATURE, confining the term to its passive and material sense, as comprising all the phenomena by which its existence is made known to us. On the other hand the sum of all that is SUBJECTIVE, we may comprehend in the name of the SELF or INTELLIGENCE. Both conceptions are in necessary antithesis. Intelligence is conceived of as exclusively representative, nature as exclusively represented; the one as conscious, the other as without consciousness. Now in all acts of positive knowledge there is required a reciprocal concurrence of both, namely of the conscious being, and of that which is in itself unconscious. Our problem is to explain this concurrence, its possibility and its necessity.

During the act of knowledge itself, the objective and subjective are so instantly united, that we cannot determine to which of the two the priority belongs. There is here no first, and no second; both are coinstantaneous and one. While I am attempting to explain this intimate coalition, I must suppose it dissolved. I must necessarily set out from the one, to which therefore I give hypothetical antecedence, in order to arrive at the other. But as there are but two factors or elements in the problem, subject and object, and as it is left indeterminate from which of them I should commence, there are two cases equally possible.

1. EITHER THE OBJECTIVE IS TAKEN AS THE FIRST, AND THEN WE HAVE TO ACCOUNT FOR THE SUPERVENTION OF THE SUBJECTIVE, WHICH COALESCES WITH IT.

The notion of the subjective is not contained in the notion of the objective. On the contrary they mutually exclude each other. The subjective therefore must supervene to the objective. The conception of nature does not apparently involve the co-presence of an intelligence making an ideal duplicate of it, i.e representing it. This desk for

⁵⁵⁰ 'That which is an object to the mind'. This Latin is not in Schelling; rather, Coleridge seems to be quoting Pierre Godard's *Lexicon philosophicum* (1675), 140, where 'Subjectivity' ('SUBIECTIUUM, seu quaevis forma recepta in mente tanquam in subiecto, e. g. intellectio, verbum, vel habitus mentis') is distinguished from 'Objectivity' ('OBIECTIUUM, sive quicquid objicitur menti').

instance would (according to our natural notions) be, though there should exist no sentient being to look at it. This then is the problem of natural philosophy. It assumes the objective or unconscious nature as the first, and has therefore to explain how intelligence can supervene to it, or how itself can grow into intelligence. If it should appear, that all enlightened naturalists, without having distinctly proposed the problem to themselves have yet constantly moved in the line of its solution, it must afford a strong presumption that the problem itself is founded in nature. For if all knowledge has as it were two poles reciprocally required and presupposed, all sciences must proceed from the one or the other, and must tend toward the opposite as far as the equatorial point in which both are reconciled and become identical. The necessary tendence therefore of all natural philosophy is from nature to intelligence; and this, and no other is the true ground and occasion of the instinctive striving to introduce theory into our views of natural phænomena. The highest perfection of natural philosophy would consist in the perfect spiritualization of all the laws of nature into laws of intuition and intellect. The phænomena (*the material*) must wholly disappear, and the laws alone (*the formal*) must remain. Thence it comes, that in nature itself the more the principle of law breaks forth, the more does the *husk* drop off, the phænomena themselves become more spiritual and at length cease altogether in our consciousness. The optical phænomena are but a geometry, the lines of which are drawn by light, and the materiality of this light itself has already become matter of doubt. In the appearances of magnetism all trace of matter is lost, and of the phænomena of gravitation, which not a few among the most illustrious Newtonians have declared no otherwise comprehensible than as an immediate spiritual influence, there remains nothing but its law, the execution of which on a vast scale is the mechanism of the heavenly motions. The theory of natural philosophy would then be completed, when all nature was demonstrated to be identical in essence with that, which in its highest known power exists in man as intelligence and self-consciousness; when the heavens and the earth shall declare not only the power of their maker, but the glory and the presence of their God, even as he appeared to the great prophet during the vision of the mount in the skirts of his divinity.⁵⁵¹

This may suffice to show, that even natural science, which commences with the material phænomenon as the reality and substance of things existing, does yet by the necessity of theorizing unconsciously, and as it were instinctively, end in nature as an intelligence;

⁵⁵¹ Two Biblical references here: Psalms 19:1 and Exodus 24:12–18.

and by this tendency the science of nature becomes finally natural philosophy, the one of the two poles of fundamental science.

2. OR THE SUBJECTIVE IS TAKEN AS THE FIRST, AND THE PROBLEM THEN IS, HOW THERE SUPERVENES TO IT A COINCIDENT OBJECTIVE.

In the pursuit of these sciences, our success in each, depends on an austere and faithful adherence to its own principles with a careful separation and exclusion of those, which appertain to the opposite science. As the natural philosopher, who directs his views to the objective, avoids above all things the intermixture of the subjective in his knowledge, as for instance, arbitrary suppositions or rather suffictions, occult qualities, spiritual agents, and the substitution of final for efficient causes; so on the other hand, the transcendental or intelligential philosopher is equally anxious to preclude all interpolation of the objective into the subjective principles of his science, as for instance the assumption of impresses or configurations in the brain, correspondent to miniature pictures on the retina painted by rays of light from supposed originals, which are not the immediate and real objects of vision, but deductions from it for the purposes of explanation. This purification of the mind is effected by an absolute and scientific scepticism to which the mind voluntarily determines itself for the specific purpose of future certainty. Des Cartes who (in his meditations) himself first, at least of the moderns, gave a beautiful example of this voluntary doubt, this self-determined indetermination, happily expresses its utter difference from the scepticism of vanity or irreligion: *Nec tamen in eo scepticos imitabar, qui dubitant tantum ut dubitent, et preter incertitudinem ipsam nihil quærunt. Nam contra totus in eo eram ut aliquid certi reperirem.* DES CARTES, *de Methodo*.⁵⁵² Nor is it less distinct in its motives and final aim, than in its proper objects, which are not as in ordinary scepticism the prejudices of education and circumstance, but those original and innate prejudices which nature herself has planted in all men, and which to all but the philosopher are the first principles of knowledge, and the final test of truth.

Now⁵⁵³ these essential prejudices are all reducible to the one fundamental presumption, THAT THERE EXIST THINGS WITHOUT US. As this on the one hand originates, neither in grounds nor arguments, and yet on the other hand remains proof against all attempts to

⁵⁵² 'Nor, however, was I imitating the skeptics, who doubt only that they may doubt, and seek nothing beyond uncertainty itself. For on the contrary my whole aim was to find something that was certain.' (Descartes, *De Methodo* 3:18)

⁵⁵³ This paragraph and the next one are Englished from Schelling's *System des transcendentalen Idealismus* (1800), 8–10.

remove it by grounds or arguments (*naturam furca expellas tamen usque redibit*);⁵⁵⁴ on the one hand lays claim to IMMEDIATE certainty as a position at once indemonstrable and irresistible, and yet on the other hand, inasmuch as it refers to something essentially different from ourselves, nay even in opposition to ourselves, leaves it inconceivable how it could possibly become a part of our immediate consciousness; (in other words how that, which ex hypothesi is and continues to be extrinsic and alien to our being, should become a modification of our being) the philosopher therefore compels himself to treat this faith as nothing more than a prejudice, innate indeed and connatural, but still a prejudice.

The other position, which not only claims but necessitates the admission of its immediate certainty, equally for the scientific reason of the philosopher as for the common sense of mankind at large, namely, I AM, cannot so properly be intitled a prejudice. It is groundless indeed; but then in the very idea it precludes all ground, and separated from the immediate consciousness loses its whole sense and import. It is groundless; but only because it is itself the ground of all other certainty. Now the apparent contradiction, that the former position, namely, the existence of things without us, which from its nature cannot be immediately certain should be received as blindly and as independently of all grounds as the existence of our own being, the transcendental philosopher can solve only by the supposition, that the former is unconsciously involved in the latter; that it is not only coherent but identical, and one and the same thing with our own immediate self consciousness. To demonstrate this identity is the office and object of his philosophy.

If it be said,⁵⁵⁵ that this is Idealism, let it be remembered that it is only so far idealism, as it is at the same time, and on that very account, the truest and most binding realism. For wherein does the realism of mankind properly consist? In the assertion that there exists a something without them, what, or how, or where they know not, which occasions the objects of their perception? Oh no! This is neither connatural nor universal. It is what a few have taught and learnt in the schools, and which the many repeat without asking themselves concerning their own meaning. The realism common to all mankind is far elder and lies infinitely deeper than this hypothetical explanation of the origin of our perceptions, an explanation skimmed from the mere

⁵⁵⁴ 'Drive nature out with a pitch-fork, and she will only return' (Horace *Epistles*, 1.10.24).

⁵⁵⁵ Coleridge takes the first half of this paragraph (down to '... mechanical philosophy') from Schelling's *Abhandlungen zur Erläuterung des Idealismus der Wissenschaftslehre*, 273–4.

surface of mechanical philosophy. It is the table itself, which the man of common sense believes himself to see, not the phantom of a table, from which he may argumentatively deduce the reality of a table, which he does not see. If to destroy the reality of all, that we actually behold, be idealism, what can be more egregiously so, than the system of modern metaphysics, which banishes us to a land of shadows, surrounds us with apparitions, and distinguishes truth from illusion only by the majority of those who dream the same dream? “I asserted that the world was mad,” exclaimed poor Lee, “and the world said, that I was mad, and confound them, they outvoted me.”⁵⁵⁶

It⁵⁵⁷ is to the true and original realism, that I would direct the attention. This believes and requires neither more nor less, than the object which it beholds or presents to itself, is the real and very object. In this sense, however much we may strive against it, we are all collectively born idealists, and therefore and only therefore are we at the same time realists. But of this the philosophers of the schools know nothing, or despise the faith as the prejudice of the ignorant vulgar, because they live and move in a crowd of phrases and notions from which human nature has long ago vanished. Oh, ye that reverence yourselves, and walk humbly with the divinity in your own hearts,⁵⁵⁸ ye are worthy of a better philosophy! Let the dead bury the dead,⁵⁵⁹ but do you preserve your human nature, the depth of which was never yet fathomed by a philosophy made up of notions and mere logical entities.

In the third treatise of my *Logosophia*, announced at the end of this volume, I shall give (deo volente)⁵⁶⁰ the demonstrations and constructions of the Dynamic Philosophy scientifically arranged. It is, according to my conviction, no other than the system of Pythagoras and of Plato revived and purified from impure mixtures. *Doctrina per tot manus tradita tandem in VAPPAM desiit!*⁵⁶¹ The science of arithmetic

⁵⁵⁶ Nathaniel Lee (1653–92) was a dramatist who was confined to Bedlam in the 1680s. Visitors recorded his comments and they appear in a number of contemporary sources. Coleridge found this anecdote in Priestley: ‘When Lee the tragedian was in a mad-house, and was asked by a stranger how he came there, he said he was outvoted. Being desired to explain himself, he replied, “I said the world was mad, and the world said I was mad, and they outvoted me.”’ (John Towill Rutt (ed.), *The Theological and Miscellaneous Works of Joseph Priestley* (25 vols, 1797), 17:321)

⁵⁵⁷ This paragraph (including its Biblical quotations) is again from from Schelling’s *Abhandlungen*, 274.

⁵⁵⁸ Michas 6:8.

⁵⁵⁹ Matthew 8:12.

⁵⁶⁰ ‘God willing’. The announcement promised here was never made.

⁵⁶¹ ‘A doctrine passed through so many hands ends up as VAPID wine!’ This is quoted from Thomas Burnet’s *Archaeologiae Philosophicae, sive Doctrina Antiqua de Rerum Originibus*

furnishes instances, that a rule may be useful in practical application, and for the particular purpose may be sufficiently authenticated by the result, before it has itself been fully demonstrated. It is enough, if only it be rendered intelligible. This will, I trust, have been effected in the following Theses for those of my readers, who are willing to accompany me through the following Chapter, in which the results will be applied to the deduction of the imagination, and with it the principles of production and of genial criticism in the fine arts.

THESIS I

Truth is correlative to being. Knowledge without a correspondent reality is no knowledge;⁵⁶² if we know, there must be somewhat known by us. To know is in its very essence a verb active.

THESIS II

All truth is either mediate, that is, derived from some other truth or truths; or immediate and original. The latter is absolute, and its formula A. A.; the former is of dependent or conditional certainty, and represented in the formula B. A. The certainty, which adheres in A, is attributable to B.⁵⁶³

SCHOLIUM. A chain without a staple, from which all the links derived their stability, or a series without a first, has been not inaptly allegorized, as a string of blind men, each holding the skirt of the man before him, reaching far out of sight, but all moving without the least deviation in one strait line. It would be naturally taken for granted, that there was a guide at the head of the file: what if it were answered, No! Sir, the men are without number, and infinite blindness supplies the place of sight?⁵⁶⁴

(1692), Ch. 7: 'doctrina illa, per tot manus tradita, & per tot saecula, tanquam vinum saepius transfundum, tandem in vappam desiit'. ['That doctrine, having been handed down through so many hands, and over so many centuries, is like wine that has been transfused over and over, and at last been left merely flat'.] Schelling uses this phrase to describe Leibniz.

⁵⁶² 'War etwas wissen will, will zugleich, dass sein Wissen Realität habe. Ein Wissen ohne Realität ist kein Wissen.' ['He who would know something would know the correspondent reality; knowledge without reality is no knowledge.'] (Schelling, *Vom Ich als Prinzip der Philosophie* ['On Self as principle of philosophy'] (1795), 1)

⁵⁶³ Schelling's *System des transcendentalen Idealismus*, 24f. contains a discussion of mediated and unmediated truths that deploys the shorthand 'A=B' and 'A=A' respectively, and which Coleridge summarises here.

⁵⁶⁴ This is from William Wollaston's *The Religion of Nature Delineated*, 2nd edn (1724), 67. Discussing whether the universe must have a divine first cause, or whether it might not

Equally *inconceivable* is a cycle of equal truths without a common and central principle, which prescribes to each its proper sphere in the system of science. That the absurdity does not so immediately strike us, that it does not seem equally *unimaginable*, is owing to a surreptitious act of the imagination, which, instinctively and without our noticing the same, not only fills at the intervening spaces, and contemplates the *cycle* (of B. C. D. E. F. &c.) as a continuous *circle* (A.) giving to all collectively the unity of their common orbit; but likewise supplies, by a sort of *subintelligitur* the one central power, which renders the movement harmonious and cyclical.

THESIS III

We are to seek therefore for some absolute truth capable of communicating to other positions a certainty, which it has not itself borrowed; a truth self-grounded, unconditional and known by its own light. In short, we have to find a somewhat which *is*, simply because it *is*. In order to be such, it must be one which is its own predicate, so far at least that all other nominal predicates must be modes and repetitions of itself. Its existence too must be such, as to preclude the possibility of requiring a cause or antecedent without an absurdity.

be a series that extends infinitely, Wollaston says: 'suppose a chain, hung down out of the heavens from an *unknown* height, and tho every link of it gravitated toward the earth, and what it hung upon was not visible, yet it did not descend, but kept its situation; and upon this a question should arise, *What supported or kept up this chain*: would it be a sufficient answer to say, that the *first* (or lowest) link hung upon the second (or that next above it), the second or rather *the first and second together* upon the third, and so on *ad infinitum*? For what holds up the whole? A chain of ten links would fall down, unless something able to bear it hindered: one of twenty, is not staid by something of a yet greater strength, in proportion to the increase of weight: and therefore one of infinite links certainly, if not sustained by something infinitely strong, and capable to bear up an infinite weight.' In a footnote to this passage, he goes on: 'This matter might be illustrated by other similitudes . . . but I shall set down but one more: and in that indeed the motion is inverted, but the thing is the same taken either way . . . Suppose a row of blind men, of which the last laid his hand upon the shoulder of the man next before him, he on the shoulder of the next before him, and so on till the foremost grew to be quite out of sight; and some body asking, what guide this string of blind men had at the head of them, it should be answerd, that they had no guide, nor any head, but one held by another, and so went on, *ad infm.* would any rational creature accept this for a just answer? Is it not to say, that infinite blindness (or blindness, if it be infinite) supplies the place of sight, or of a guide?'

THESIS IV

That there can be but one such principle, may be proved a priori; for were there two or more, each must refer to some other, by which its equality is affirmed; consequently neither would be self-established, as the hypothesis demands. And a posteriori, it will be proved by the principle itself when it is discovered, as involving universal antecedence in its very conception.

SCHOLIUM. If we affirm of a board that it is blue, the predicate (blue) is accidental, and not implied in the subject, board. If we affirm of a circle that it is equi-radial, the predicate indeed is implied in the definition of the subject; but the existence of the subject itself is contingent, and supposes both a cause and a percipient. The same reasoning will apply to the indefinite number of supposed indemonstrable truths exempted from the prophane approach of philosophic investigation by the amiable Beattie,⁵⁶⁵ and other less eloquent and not more profound inaugurators of common sense on the throne of philosophy; a fruitless attempt, were it only that it is the two-fold function of philosophy to reconcile reason with common sense, and to elevate common sense into reason.

THESIS V

Such a principle cannot be any THING or OBJECT. Each thing is what it is in consequence of some other thing. An infinite, independent* thing, is no less a contradiction, than an infinite circle or a sideless triangle. Besides a thing is that, which is capable of being an object of

* The impossibility of an absolute thing (*substantia unica*)⁵⁶⁶ as neither genus, species, nor individuum: as well as its utter unfitness for the fundamental position of a philosophic system will be demonstrated in the critique on Spinozism in the fifth treatise of my *Logosophia*.

⁵⁶⁵ James Beattie (1735–1803), poet and philosopher, whose *An Essay on the Nature and Immutability of Truth, in Opposition to Sophistry and Scepticism* (1770) argues for an absolutist, intuitive conception of truth as something fundamentally beyond the powers of reason to establish – his second chapter is entitled ‘All reasoning terminates in first principles. All evidence ultimately intuitive. Common Sense the standard of Truth to man.’

⁵⁶⁶ ‘Unique substance’. This is from Spinoza’s *Ethics* (1, prop 8): ‘*Substantia unius attributi non, nisi unica, existit.*’ [‘A substance of one attribute cannot exist unless it is unique.’] Coleridge critiqued this position in his (unfinished at his death) *Opus Maximum*: ‘we have the *unica substantia* of Spinoza, that mysterious nothing which alone is, and, as well beseems this Phantom set up in lieu of God, [is] invested with the one attribute contrary to creation while it is affirmed to reduce the whole finite creation to a nothing’ (Thomas McFarland (ed.), *Coleridge: Opus Maxima* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2002), 112).

which itself is not the sole percipient. But an object is inconceivable without a subject as its antithesis. *Omne perceptum percipientem supponit.*⁵⁶⁷

But neither can the principle be found in a subject as a subject, contra-distinguished from an object: for *unicuique percipienti aliquid objicitur perceptum.*⁵⁶⁸ It is to be found therefore neither in object or subject taken separately, and consequently, as no other third is conceivable, it must be found in that which is neither subject nor object exclusively, but which is the identity of both.

THESIS VI

This principle, and so characterised manifests itself in the *SUM* or *I AM*; which I shall hereafter indiscriminately express by the words spirit, self, and self-consciousness. In this, and in this alone, object and subject, being and knowing, are identical, each involving and supposing the other. In other words, it is a subject which becomes a subject by the act of constructing itself objectively to itself; but which never is an object except for itself, and only so far as by the very same act it becomes a subject. It may be described therefore as a perpetual self-duplication of one and the same power into object and subject, which presuppose each other, and can exist only as antitheses.

SCHOLIUM. If a man be asked how he *knows* that he is? he can only answer, *sum quia sum.*⁵⁶⁹ But if (the absoluteness of this certainty having been admitted) he be again asked, how he, the individual person, came to be, then in relation to the ground of his *existence*, not to the ground of his *knowledge* of that existence, he might reply, *sum quia deus est,*⁵⁷⁰ or still more philosophically, *sum quia in deo sum.*⁵⁷¹

But if we elevate our conception to the absolute self, the great eternal *I AM*, then the principle of being, and of knowledge, of idea, and of reality; the ground of existence, and the ground of the knowledge of existence, are absolutely identical, *Sum quia sum;** *I am, because I affirm myself to be; I affirm myself to be, because I am.*

* It is most worthy of notice, that in the first revelation of himself, not confined to individuals; indeed in the very first revelation of his absolute being, Jehovah at the same time revealed the fundamental truth of all philosophy, which must either commence with

⁵⁶⁷ 'Everything that is perceived supposes a perceiver'.

⁵⁶⁸ 'For every perceiver there is an object of perception'.

⁵⁶⁹ 'I am that I am'; or 'I am because I am'.

⁵⁷⁰ 'I am because God is'.

⁵⁷¹ 'I am in that the Divine I am', i.e. 'I am insofar as there is such a thing as the Divine I am'.

THESIS VII

If then I know myself only through myself, it is contradictory to require any other predicate of self, but that of self-consciousness. Only in the self-consciousness of a spirit is there the required identity of object and of representation; for herein consists the essence of a spirit, that it is self-representative. If therefore this be the one only immediate truth, in the certainty of which the reality of our collective knowledge is grounded, it must follow that the spirit in all the objects which it views, views only itself. If this could be proved, the immediate reality of all intuitive knowledge would be assured. It has been shown, that a spirit is that, which is its own object, yet not originally

the absolute, or have no fixed commencement; i.e. cease to be philosophy. I cannot but express my regret, that in the equivocal use of the word *that*, for *in that*, or *because*, our admirable version⁵⁷² has rendered the passage susceptible of a degraded interpretation in the mind of common readers or hearers, as if it were a mere reproof to an impertinent question, I am what I am, which might be equally affirmed of himself by any existent being.

The Cartesian Cogito, ergo sum⁵⁷³ is objectionable, because either the Cogito is used extra Gradum,⁵⁷⁴ and then it is involved to the sum and is tautological; or it is taken as a particular mode or dignity, and then it is subordinated to the sum as the species to the genus, or rather as a particular modification to the subject modified; and not pre-ordinated as the arguments seem to require. For Cogito is Sum Cogitans.⁵⁷⁵ This is clear by the invidence of the converse. Cogitat, ergo est⁵⁷⁶ is true, because it is a mere application of the logical rule: Quicquid in genere est, est et in specie.⁵⁷⁷ Est (cogitans), ergo est.⁵⁷⁸ It is a cherry tree; therefore it is a tree. But, est ergo cogitat,⁵⁷⁹ is illogical: for quod est in specie, non *necessario* in genere est.⁵⁸⁰ It may be true. I hold it to be true, that quicquid vere est, est per veram sui affirmationem,⁵⁸¹ but it is a derivative, not an immediate truth. Here then we have, by anticipation the distinction between the conditional finite I (which as known in distinct consciousness by occasion of experience, is called by Kant's followers the empirical I) and the absolute I AM, and likewise the dependence or rather the inherence of the former in the latter: in whom "we live, and move, and have our being," as St. Paul divinely asserts,⁵⁸² differing widely from the Theists of the mechanic school (as Sir J. Newton,⁵⁸³ Locke, &c.) who must say from *whom* we *had* our being, and with it life and the powers of life.

⁵⁷² The King James version of the Bible, which translates Exodus 3:14 (the passage to which Coleridge is here alluding) as 'I AM THAT I AM'.

⁵⁷³ Descartes's famous 'I think, therefore I am'; originally 'je pense, donc je suis' (Descartes, *Discours de la méthode* (1637), 4:7).

⁵⁷⁴ 'Outside of its own rank', i.e. used in a way the word is not usually used.

⁵⁷⁵ 'I am thinking' or 'it is I who is thinking'.

⁵⁷⁶ 'He/She/It thinks, therefore he/she/it is'.

⁵⁷⁷ 'Whatever is true of the general type is true of the specific example'.

⁵⁷⁸ 'It is (thinking), therefore it is'.

⁵⁷⁹ 'It is, therefore it thinks'.

⁵⁸⁰ 'What is in the specific example is not *necessarily* in the general type'.

⁵⁸¹ 'Whatever is true, is so via the affirmation of its truth'.

⁵⁸² Acts 17:28.

⁵⁸³ This typo (it should of course be 'I', for 'Isaac') went uncorrected in the 1847 edition.

an object, but an absolute subject for which all, itself included, may become an object. It must therefore be an ACT; for every object is, as an *object*, dead, fixed, incapable in itself of any action, and necessarily finite. Again, the spirit (originally the identity of object and subject) must in some sense dissolve this identity, in order to be conscious of it; fit alter et idem.⁵⁸⁴ But this implies an act, and it follows therefore that intelligence or self-consciousness is impossible, except by and in a will. The self-conscious spirit therefore is a will; and freedom must be assumed as a *ground* of philosophy, and can never be deduced from it.

THESIS VIII

Whatever in its origin is objective, is likewise as such necessarily finite. Therefore, since the spirit is not originally an object, and as the subject exists in antithesis to an object, the spirit cannot originally be finite. But neither can it be a subject without becoming an object, and as it is originally the identity of both, it can be conceived neither as infinite or finite exclusively, but as the most original union of both. In the existence, in the reconciling, and the recurrence of this contradiction consists the process and mystery of production and life.

THESIS IX

This principium commune essendi et cognoscendi,⁵⁸⁵ as subsisting in a WILL, or primary ACT of self-duplication, is the mediate or indirect principle of every science; but it is the immediate and direct principle of the ultimate science alone, i.e. of transcendental philosophy alone. For it must be remembered, that all these Theses refer solely to one of the two Polar Sciences, namely, to that which commences with and rigidly confines itself within the subjective, leaving the objective (as far as it is exclusively objective) to natural philosophy, which is its opposite pole. In its very idea therefore as a systematic knowledge of our collective KNOWING, (*scientia scientiæ*)⁵⁸⁶ it involves the necessity of some one highest principle of knowing, as at once the source and accompanying form in all particular acts of intellect and perception.

⁵⁸⁴ 'It is made as other and as the same'.

⁵⁸⁵ 'Common principle of being and knowing'. Coleridge found this Latin phrase in Schelling's *System des transcendentalen Idealismus*, from which (48 and 26) this whole paragraph is derived. The Latin originally comes from Girolamo Balduni's *Expositio in Libros Aliquot Physicorum Aristotelis et Averrois* (1573), 862: 'principium essendi tantu, & principium cognoscendi tantum . . . commune'.

⁵⁸⁶ 'Science of all sciences'. Coleridge Latinizes Schelling's 'der Wissenschaft alles Wissens'.

This, it has been shown, can be found only in the act and evolution of self-consciousness. We are not investigating an absolute principium essendi;⁵⁸⁷ for then, I admit, many valid objections might be started against our theory; but an absolute principium cognoscendi.⁵⁸⁸ The result of both the sciences, or their equatorial point, would be the principle of a total and undivided philosophy, as for prudential reasons, I have chosen to anticipate in the Scholium to Thesis VI and the note subjoined. In other words, philosophy would pass into religion, and religion become inclusive of philosophy. We begin with the I KNOW MYSELF, in order to end with the absolute I AM. We proceed from the SELF, in order to lose and find all self in GOD.

THESES X⁵⁸⁹

The transcendental philosopher does not enquire, what ultimate ground of our knowledge there may lie out of our knowing, but what is the last in our knowing itself, beyond which *we* cannot pass. The principle of our knowing is sought within the sphere of our knowing. It must be something therefore, which can itself be known. It is asserted only, that the act of self-consciousness is for *us* the source and principle of all *our* possible knowledge. Whether abstracted from us there exists any thing higher and beyond this primary self-knowing, which is for us the form of all our knowing, must be decided by the result.

That the self-consciousness is the fixt point, to which for *us* all is morticed and annexed, needs no further proof. But that the self-consciousness may be the modification of a higher form of being, perhaps of a higher consciousness, and this again of a yet higher, and so on in an infinite regressus; in short, that self-consciousness may be itself something explicable into something, which must lie beyond the possibility of our knowledge, because the whole synthesis of our intelligence is first formed in and through the self-consciousness, does not at all concern us as transcendental philosophers. For to us self-consciousness is not a kind of *being*, but a kind of *knowing*, and that too the highest and farthest that exists for *us*. It may however be shown, and has in part already been shown in pages 115–16⁵⁹⁰ that

⁵⁸⁷ 'Principle of being'.

⁵⁸⁸ 'Principle of knowing'.

⁵⁸⁹ Thesis X, up until the last two sentences of its second paragraph, is closely based on Schelling's *System des transcendentalen Idealismus*, 27–8.

⁵⁹⁰ Engell and Bate (*Biographia Literaria*, 285) follow 1847 in believing this reference to be to paragraph 17 of Chapter 12; although these page numbers (those of the first edition) actually take us back to the last paragraph of Chapter 6.

even when the Objective is assumed as the first, we yet can never pass beyond the principle of self-consciousness. Should we attempt it, we must be driven back from ground to ground, each of which would cease to be a Ground the moment we pressed on it. We must be whirl'd down the gulph⁵⁹¹ of an infinite series. But this would make our reason baffle the end and purpose of all reason, namely, unity and system. Or we must break off the series arbitrarily, and affirm an absolute something that is in and of itself at once cause and effect (*causa sui*),⁵⁹² subject and object, or rather the absolute identity of both. But as this is inconceivable, except in a self-consciousness, it follows, that even as natural philosophers we must arrive at the same principle from which as transcendental philosophers we set out; that is, in a self-consciousness in which the principium essendi does not stand to the principium cognoscendi in the relation of cause to effect, but both the one and the other are co-inherent and identical. Thus the true system of natural philosophy places the sole reality of things in an ABSOLUTE, which is at once *causa sui et effectus*, πατήρ αυτοπατωρ, Ὑἱος εαυτου⁵⁹³—in the absolute identity of subject and object, which it calls nature, and which in its highest power is nothing else than self-conscious will or intelligence. In this sense the position of Malbranche,⁵⁹⁴ that we see all things in God, is a strict philosophical truth; and equally true is the assertion of Hobbes, of Hartley, and of their masters in ancient Greece, that all real knowledge supposes a prior sensation. For sensation itself is but vision nascent, not the cause of intelligence, but intelligence itself revealed as an earlier power in the process of self-construction.

Μάκαρ, ἴλαθί μοι!
 Πάτερ, ἴλαθί μοι
 Εἰ παρὰ κόσμον,
 Εἰ παρὰ μοῖραν
 Τῶν σῶν ἔθιγον!⁵⁹⁵

⁵⁹¹ 'Whirl'd us down to Hell again; / O'erwhelm'd us in the Gulph beneath' (John Wesley, 'Psalm CXXIV', *A Collection of Psalms and Hymns* (1756), 109).

⁵⁹² 'Its own cause'.

⁵⁹³ The Latin means 'its own cause and effect'; the Greek, 'Father who is father-of-himself, and his own son' (Synesius, *Hymn 3*, line 146).

⁵⁹⁴ Nicolas Malebranche (1638–1715), French theologian and philosopher, who attempted to synthesise the thought of Descartes with that of Saint Augustine. Chapter 6 of the third part of Malebranche's *De la recherche de la vérité* (1674) is entitled 'Que nous voyons toutes choses en Dieu'.

⁵⁹⁵ 'Blessed one, be good to me! / Father, be good to me! / if beyond the order of things / if beyond what is my fate / I touch on what is yours!' (Synesius, *Hymn 3*, lines 113–17).

Bearing then this in mind, that intelligence is a self-developement, not a quality supervening to a substance, we may abstract from all *degree*, and for the purpose of philosophic construction reduce it to *kind*, under the idea of an indestructible power with two opposite and counteracting forces, which, by a metaphor borrowed from astronomy, we may call the centrifugal and centripetal forces.⁵⁹⁶ The intelligence in the one tends to *objectize* itself, and in the other to *know* itself in the object. It will be hereafter my business to construct by a series of intuitions the progressive schemes, that must follow from such a power with such forces, till I arrive at the fulness of the *human* intelligence. For my present purpose, I *assume* such a power as my principle, in order to deduce from it a faculty, the generation, agency, and application of which form the contents of the ensuing chapter.

In a preceding page I have justified the use of technical terms in philosophy, whenever they tend to preclude confusion of thought, and when they assist the memory by the exclusive singleness of their meaning more than they may, for a short time, bewilder the attention by their strangeness. I trust, that I have not extended this privilege beyond the grounds on which I have claimed it; namely, the conveniency of the scholastic phrase to distinguish the kind from all degrees, or rather to express the kind with the abstraction of degree, as for instance multeity instead of multitude; or secondly, for the sake of correspondence in sound in interdependent or antithetical terms, as subject and object; or lastly, to avoid the wearying recurrence of circumlocutions and definitions. Thus I shall venture to use *potence*, in order to express a specific degree of a power, in imitation of the Algebraists.⁵⁹⁷ I have even hazarded the new verb *potenziate* with its derivatives in order to express the combination or transfer of powers. It is with new or unusual terms, as with privileges in courts of justice or legislature; there can be no legitimate *privilege*, where there already exists a positive law adequate to the purpose; and when there is no

⁵⁹⁶ William Emerson's monograph on orbital mechanics, *The Laws of Centripetal and Centrifugal Force* (1759), begins: 'In the following Treatise, I have explained and demonstrated the Laws of Centripetal Forces; a doctrine upon which all Astronomy is grounded.'

⁵⁹⁷ By 'Algebraists', Coleridge means what we would nowadays call mathematicians, and the 'degrees of power' are squares, cubes and so on. 'The Square or Second Power; the Cube or Third Power; the Bi-Square or Fourth Power likewise . . . After the Forms of the Dimensions, or Powers, are thus Established, The Design of Algebra being to Find out the Unknown Quantities from the Known, which are Given, they are cast into the Model Annexed. From whence it is Manifest, that the chief Design of Algebraists must be to Exterminate, and Extricate themselves from, these Unknown Quantities' (Robert Greene, *The Principles of the Philosophy of the Expansive and Contractive Forces, or an Enquiry into the Principles of the Modern Philosophy* (1727), 827).

law in existence, the privilege is to be justified by its accordance with the end, or final cause, of all law. Unusual and new coined words are doubtless an evil; but vagueness, confusion, and imperfect conveyance of our thoughts, are a far greater. Every system, which is under the necessity of using terms not familiarized by the metaphysicks in fashion, will be described as written in an unintelligible style, and the author must expect the charge of having substituted learned jargon for clear conception; while, according to the creed of our modern philosophers, nothing is deemed a clear conception, but what is representable by a distinct image. Thus the *conceivable* is reduced within the bounds of the *picturable*. Hinc patet, quâ fiat ut, *cum irrepræsentabile et impossibile* vulgo ejusdem significatûs habeantur, conceptus tam *Continui*, quam *infiniti*, a plurimis rejiciantur, quippe quorum, *secundum leges cognitionis intuitivæ*, repræsentatio est impossibilis. Quanquam autem harum e non paucis scholis explosarum notionum, præsertim prioris, causam hic non gero, maximi tamen momenti erit monuisse: gravissimo illos errore labi, qui tam perversâ argumentandi ratione utuntur. Quicquid enim *repugnat* legibus intellectûs et rationis, utique est impossibile; quod autem, cum rationis puræ sit objectum, legibus cognitionis intuitivæ tantummodo *non subest*, non item. Nam hic dissensus inter facultatem *sensitivam* et *intellectualem*, (quarum indolem mox exponam) nihil indigitat, nisi, *quas mens ab intellectu accerptas fert ideas abstractas, illas in concreto exequi et in Intuitus commutare sæpenumero non posse*. Hæc autem reluctantia *subjectiva* mentitur, ut plurimum, repugnantiam aliquam *objectivam*, et incautos facile fallit, limitibus, quibus *mens humana* circumscribitur, pro iis habitis, quibus *ipsa rerum essentia* continetur.*—*Kant de Mundi Sensibilis et Intelligibilis forma et principiis*. 1770.

* TRANSLATION.

“Hence it is clear, from what cause many reject the notion of the continuous and the infinite. They take, namely, the words irrepresentable and impossible in one and the same meaning; and, according to the forms of sensuous evidence, the notion of the continuous and the infinite is doubtless impossible. I am not now pleading the cause of these laws, which not a few schools have thought proper to explode, especially the former (the law of continuity). But it is of the highest importance to admonish the reader, that those, who adopt so perverted a mode of reasoning, are under a grievous error. Whatever opposes the formal principles of the understanding and the reason is confessedly impossible; but not therefore that, which is therefore not amenable to the forms of *sensuous* evidence, because it is exclusively an object of pure intellect. For this non-coincidence of the sensuous and the intellectual (the nature of which I shall presently lay open) proves nothing more, but that the mind cannot always adequately represent in the concrete, and transform into distinct images, abstract notions derived from the pure intellect. But this contradiction, which is in itself merely subjective (i.e. an incapacity in the nature of man), too often passes for an incongruity or impossibility in the object (i.e. the notions themselves) and seduce the incautious to mistake the limitations of the human faculties for the limits of things, as they really exist.”

Critics,⁵⁹⁸ who are most ready to bring this charge of pedantry and unintelligibility, are the most apt to overlook the important fact, that besides the language of words, there is a language of spirits (sermo interior)⁵⁹⁹ and that the former is only the vehicle of the latter. Consequently their assurance, that they do not understand the philosophic writer, instead of proving any thing against the philosophy, may furnish an equal, and (cæteris paribus)⁶⁰⁰ even a stronger presumption against their own philosophic talent.

Great indeed are the obstacles which an English metaphysician has to encounter. Amongst his most respectable and intelligent judges, there will be many who have devoted their attention exclusively to the concerns and interests of human life, and who bring with them to the perusal of a philosophic system an habitual aversion to all speculations, the utility and application of which are not evident and immediate. To these I would in the first instance merely oppose an authority, which they themselves hold venerable, that of Lord Bacon: non inutiles scientiæ existimande sunt, quarum in se nullus est usus, si ingenia acuunt et ordinant.⁶⁰¹

There are others, whose prejudices are still more formidable, inasmuch as they are grounded in their moral feelings and religious principles, which had been alarmed and shocked by the impious and pernicious tenets defended by Hume, Priestley, and the French fatalists or necessitarians; some of whom had perverted metaphysical reasonings to the denial of the mysteries and indeed of all the peculiar doctrines of christianity; and others even to the subversion of all distinction between right and wrong. I would request such men to consider what an eminent and successful defender of the christian faith has observed,⁶⁰² that true metaphysics are nothing else but

I take this occasion to observe, that here and elsewhere Kant uses the term intuition, and the verb active (Intueri, *germanice* Anschauen) for which we have unfortunately no correspondent word, exclusively for that which can be represented in space and time. He therefore consistently and rightly denies the possibility of intellectual intuitions. But as I see no adequate reason for this exclusive sense of the term, I have reverted to its wider signification, authorized by our elder theologians and metaphysicians, according to whom the term comprehends all truths known to us without a medium.

⁵⁹⁸ This paragraph is modelled closely on Schelling's *Abhandlungen zur Erläuterung des Idealismus der Wissenschaftslehre*, 203.

⁵⁹⁹ 'Interior speech'.

⁶⁰⁰ 'Other things being equal'.

⁶⁰¹ This is from Bacon's *De augmentis scientiarum* (1623), 4:3. It means: 'Sciences which have no practical use in themselves ought not to be considered useless if they sharpen and structure our thoughts.'

⁶⁰² This 'defender' is English theologian Daniel Waterland (1683–1740), Master of Magdalene College, Cambridge and Archdeacon of Middlesex. 'I shall not be ashamed

true divinity, and that in fact the writers, who have given them such just offence, were sophists, who had taken advantage of the general neglect into which the science of logic has unhappily fallen, rather than metaphysicians, a name indeed which those writers were the first to explode as unmeaning. Secondly, I would remind them, that as long as there are men in the world to whom the Γνώθι σεαυτον⁶⁰³ is an instinct and a command from their own nature, so long will there be metaphysicians and metaphysical speculations; that false metaphysics can be effectually counteracted by true metaphysics alone; and that if the reasoning be clear, solid and pertinent, the truth deduced can never be the less valuable on account of the depth from which it may have been drawn.

A third class profess themselves friendly to metaphysics, and believe that they are themselves metaphysicians. They have no objection to system or terminology, provided it be the method and the nomenclature to which they have been familiarized in the writings of Locke, Hume, Hartley, Condiliac, or perhaps Dr. Reid, and Professor Stewart.⁶⁰⁴ To objections from this cause, it is a sufficient answer, that one main object of my attempt was to demonstrate the vagueness or insufficiency of the terms used in the metaphysical schools of France and Great Britain since the revolution, and that the errors which I propose to attack cannot subsist, except as they are concealed behind the mask of a plausible and indefinite nomenclature.

But the worst and widest impediment still remains. It is the predominance of a popular philosophy, at once the counterfeit and the mortal enemy of all true and manly metaphysical research. It is that corruption, introduced by certain immethodical aphorising Eclectics,⁶⁰⁵ who, dismissing not only all system, but all logical connection, pick

of making Use of true Metaphysicks to correct your Errors, and to establish the Son's Divinity, upon the same Foot whereon Scripture has fixed it . . . We should not, on This Account, be so unreasonable as to censure either Dr. Clarke, or his Friends, for procuring all the real Assistance They can from Metaphysicks; true Metaphysicks being nothing else but true Divinity: Let but your Reasonings be clear, solid, and pertinent, and we shall never find fault with them for being metaphysical.' (Daniel Waterland, *A Second Vindication of Christ's Divinity, Or, A Second Defense of some Querie relating to Dr. Clarke's Scheme of Holy Trinity* (1723), 3–5)

⁶⁰³ 'Know thyself'.

⁶⁰⁴ Thomas Reid (1710–96) was a Scottish theologian and philosopher, founder of the 'School of Common Sense', whose major works were *An Inquiry into the Human Mind on the Principles of Common Sense* (1764), *Essays on the Intellectual Powers of Man* (1785) and *Essays on the Active Powers of the Human Mind* (1788). Dugald Stewart (1753–1828) was Professor of Mathematics at the University of Edinburgh and author of a widely used textbook, *Outlines of Moral Philosophy* (1793), and the three-volume *Elements of the Philosophy of the Human Mind* (1792–1827).

⁶⁰⁵ Schelling attacks 'aphoristischer Eklektiker' in *Abhandlungen*, 204.

and choose whatever is most plausible and showy; who select, whatever words can have some semblance of sense attached to them without the least expenditure of thought; in short whatever may enable men to talk of what they do not understand, with a careful avoidance of every thing that might awaken them to a moment's suspicion of their ignorance. This alas! is an irremediable disease, for it brings with it, not so much an indisposition to any particular system, but an utter loss of taste and faculty for all system and for all philosophy. Like echoes that beget each other amongst the mountains, the praise or blame of such men rolls in volleys long after the report from the original blunderbuss. *Sequacitas est potius et coitio quam consensus: et tamen (quod pessimum est) pusillanimitas ista non sine arrogantia et fastidio se offert. Novum Organum.*⁶⁰⁶

I shall now proceed to the nature and genesis of the imagination; but I must first take leave to notice, that after a more accurate perusal of Mr. Wordsworth's remarks on the imagination, in his preface to the new edition of his poems, I find that my conclusions are not so consentient with his, as I confess, I had taken for granted. In an article contributed by me to Mr. Southey's *Omniana*,⁶⁰⁷ on the soul and its organs of sense, are the following sentences. "These (the human faculties) I would arrange under the different senses and powers: as the eye, the ear, the touch, &c.; the imitative power, voluntary and automatic; the imagination, or shaping and modifying power; the fancy, or the aggregative and associative power; the understanding, or the regulative, substantiating and realizing power; the speculative reason—*vis theoretica et scientifica*, or the power by which we produce or aim to produce unity, necessity, and universality in all our knowledge by means of principles* *a priori*; the will, or practical reason; the faculty of choice (*Germanice*, *Willkühr*) and (distinct both from the moral will and the choice,) the *sensation* of volition, which I have found reason to include under the head of single and double

* This phrase *a priori*, is in common, most grossly misunderstood, and an absurdity burdened on it, which it does not deserve! By knowledge, *a priori*, we do not mean, that we can know any thing previously to experience, which would be a contradiction in terms; but that having once known it by occasion of experience (i.e. something acting upon us from without) we then know, that it must have pre-existed, or the experience itself would have been impossible. By experience only I know, that I have eyes; but then my reason convinces me, that I must have had eyes in order to the experience.

⁶⁰⁶ 'This is a following-along and a going-after rather than a true consensus; and what is more (the worst part is) this same smallness of spirit is attended by arrogance and disdain' (Francis Bacon, *Novum Organum* (1620), aphorisms 77 and 88).

⁶⁰⁷ Southey's *Omniana*, or *Horæ Otiosiores* had been collected and issued in two volumes in 1812. The 'Soul and Its Organs of Sense' article is No. 174 (*Omniana*, 2:9–19).

touch.” To this, as far as it relates to the subject in question, namely the words (*the aggregative and associative power*) Mr. Wordsworth’s “only objection is that the definition is too general. To aggregate and to associate, to evoke and combine, belong as well to the imagination as to the fancy.”⁶⁰⁸ I reply, that if by the power of evoking and combining, Mr. W. means the same as, and no more than, I meant by the aggregative and associative, I continue to deny, that it belongs at all to the imagination; and I am disposed to conjecture, that he has mistaken the co-presence of fancy with imagination for the operation of the latter singly. A man may work with two very different tools at the same moment; each has its share in the work, but the work effected by each is distinct and different. But it will probably appear in the next Chapter, that deeming it necessary to go back much further than Mr. Wordsworth’s subject required or permitted, I have attached a meaning to both fancy and imagination, which he had not in view, at least while he was writing that preface. He will judge. Would to heaven, I might meet with many such readers. I will conclude with the words of Bishop Jeremy Taylor: he to whom all things are one, who draweth all things to one, and seeth all things in one, may enjoy true peace and rest of spirit. (*J. Taylor’s VIA PACIS.*)⁶⁰⁹

⁶⁰⁸ Wordsworth, Preface to *Poems* (1815). Coleridge here picks up the thread of the argument he has with Wordsworthian terminology that we last saw in Chapter 4.

⁶⁰⁹ Jeremy Taylor (1613–67), English religious writer and churchman. The words are quoted from his ‘Way of Peace’: *Via Pacis. A Short Method of Peace and Holiness* (1655).

CHAPTER 13

On the imagination, or esemplastic power.

O Adam! one Almighty is, from whom
All things proceed, and up to him return,
If not depraved from good, created all
Such to perfection, one first matter all,
Indued with various forms, various degrees
Of substance, and, in things that live, of life;
But more refin'd, more spiritous and pure,
As nearer to him plac'd, or nearer tending,
Each in their several active spheres assign'd,
Till body up to spirit work, in bounds
Proportion'd to each kind. So from the root
Springs lighter the green stalk: from thence the leaves
More airy: last, the bright consummate flower
Spirits odorous breathes. Flowers and their fruit,
Man's nourishment, by gradual scale sublim'd,
To *vital* spirits aspire: to *animal*:
To *intellectual*!—give both life and sense,
Fancy and understanding; whence the soul
REASON receives, and reason is her *being*,
Discursive or intuitive.

PAR. LOST b.v.⁶¹⁰

“Sane si res corporales nil nisi materiale continerent, verissime dicerentur in fluxu consistere neque habere substantiale quicquam, quemadmodum et Platonici olim recte agnovêre.—Hinc igitur, præter purè mathematica et phantasîæ subjecta, collegi quædam metaphysica solâque mente perceptibilia, esse admittenda: et massæ materiali *principium* quoddam superius et, ut sic dicam, *formale* addendum: quandoquidem omnes veritates rerum corporearum ex solis axiomatibus logisticis et geometricis, nempe de magno et parvo, toto et parte, figurâ et situ, colligi non possint; sed alia de causâ et effectu, *actioneque* et *passione*, accedere debeant, quibus ordinis rerum rationes salventur. Id principium

⁶¹⁰ Book 5, lines 469–88.

rerum, an ἐντελεχείαν an vim appellemus, non refert, modó meminimus, per solam *Virium* notionem intelligibiliter explicari.”

LEIBNITZ: *Op.* T. II. P. II. p. 53.—T. III. p. 321.⁶¹¹

Σέβομαι Νοερῶν

Κρυφίαν τάξιν

Χωρεῖ ΤΙ ΜΕΣΟΝ

Οὐ καταχυθέν

SYNESIUS, *Hymn III. l.* 231.⁶¹²

DES CARTES, speaking as a naturalist, and in imitation of Archimedes, said, give me matter and motion and I will construct you the universe.⁶¹³ We must of course understand him to have meant; I will render the construction of the universe intelligible. In the same sense the transcendental philosopher says; grant me a nature having two contrary forces, the one of which tends to expand infinitely, while the other strives to apprehend or *find* itself in this infinity, and I will cause the world of intelligences with the whole system of their representations to rise up before you. Every other science pre-supposes intelligence as already existing and complete: the philosopher contemplates it in its growth, and as it were represents its history to the mind from its birth to its maturity.

The venerable Sage of Koenigsberg has preceded the march of this master-thought as an effective pioneer in his essay on the introduc-

⁶¹¹ Coleridge puts together two quotations – separated by the long dash – from Leibniz’s *De ipsa natura* and his *Specimen dynamicum* (*Opera Omnia*, ed. Louis Dutens (6 vols, 1768), 2:2:53 and 3:321). The Latin means: ‘of course, if there were nothing contained in nature but physical material, corporeal things would consist only of flux, and would not contain anything substantial, as the Platonists once rightly recognised. – Hence, in addition to what is purely mathematical and what is subject to ‘fantasy’ [or ‘fancy’], I must conclude that certain metaphysical quantities perceptible by the mind on its own are to be admitted, and that a higher, and as it were *formal*, principle is to be added to the material mass of things, since all the truths of corporeal things cannot be deduced only from logical and geometrical axioms, i.e. concerning the great and the small, the whole and the part, shape and position, but other things must be brought in, namely cause and effect, *action* and *passion*, for in these things are preserved the reasons for the order of things. It is not important whether we call this principle of things ἐντελεχείαν [‘entelechy’] or force, so long as we keep in mind that it is only to be made intelligible to us by the idea of *forces*.’

⁶¹² Synesius’s *Hymn III* (already quoted at some length in Chapter 12). These are lines 231–4, and they mean: ‘I respect the intellectual / hidden order of things / But there is some MEDIATOR / that is not scattered’.

⁶¹³ Coleridge lifts almost all of this first paragraph (excluding only the second sentence, but including the allusion to Descartes) from Schelling’s *System des transscendentalen Idealismus* (1800), 147. Archimedes, the famous third-century BC Greek geometer and philosopher, said of the principle of the lever: ‘δῶς μοι πᾶ στῶ καὶ τὰν γᾶν κινάσω’ [‘give me a place to stand, and I shall move the earth’] (Papus, *Synagoge*, Book VIII).

tion of negative quantities into philosophy, published 1763.⁶¹⁴ In this he has shown, that instead of assailing the science of mathematics by metaphysics, as Berkley did in his *Analyst*, or of sophisticating it, as Wolff did,⁶¹⁵ by the vain attempt of deducing the first principles of geometry from supposed deeper grounds of ontology, it behoved the metaphysician rather to examine whether the only province of knowledge, which man has succeeded in erecting into a pure science, might not furnish materials or at least hints for establishing and pacifying the unsettled, warring, and embroiled domain of philosophy. An imitation of the mathematical *method* had indeed been attempted with no better success than attended the essay of David to wear the armour of Saul.⁶¹⁶ Another use however is possible and of far greater promise, namely, the actual application of the positions which had so wonderfully enlarged the discoveries of geometry, *mutatis mutandis*,⁶¹⁷ to philosophical subjects. Kant having briefly illustrated the utility of such an attempt in the questions of space, motion, and infinitely small quantities, as employed by the mathematician, proceeds to the idea of negative quantities and the transfer of them to metaphysical investigation. Opposites, he well observes, are of two kinds, either logical, i.e. such as are absolutely incompatible; or real without being contradictory. The former he denominates *Nihil negativum irrepräsentabile*,⁶¹⁸ the connexion of which produces nonsense. A body in motion is something—*Aliquid cogitabile*;⁶¹⁹ but a body, at one and the same time in motion and not in motion, is nothing, or at most, air articulated into nonsense. But a motory force of a body in one direction, and an equal force of the same body in an opposite direction is not incompatible, and the result, namely rest, is real and representable. For the purposes of mathematical calculus it is indifferent which force we term negative, and which positive, and consequently we appropriate the latter to that, which happens to be the principal object in our thoughts. Thus if a man's capital be ten

⁶¹⁴ Kant's *Versuch den Begriff der negativen Größen in die Weltweisheit einzuführen* ['Attempt to Introduce the Concept of Negative Magnitudes into Philosophy'] (1763).

⁶¹⁵ George Berkeley's *The Analyst: a DISCOURSE Addressed to an Infidel MATHEMATICIAN. WHEREIN it is examined whether the Object, Principles, and Inferences of the modern Analysis are more distinctly conceived, or more evidently deduced, than Religious Mysteries and Points of Faith* (1734) is an attack on the principles behind differential calculus. Coleridge also refers here to Christian Wolff's *Anfangsgründe aller mathematischen Wissenschaften* (1710; translated into Latin as *Elementa matheseos universae*, 1713–15) and his *Philosophia prima, sive Ontologia* (1730).

⁶¹⁶ 1 Samuel 18:38–9.

⁶¹⁷ 'With the changes required by the change of context'.

⁶¹⁸ 'The *negative* sense of nothing, the unrepresentable'.

⁶¹⁹ 'A thing that can be conceived'.

and his debts eight, the subtraction will be the same, whether we call the capital negative debt, or the debt negative capital. But in as much as the latter stands practically in reference to the former, we of course represent the sum as $10 - 8$. It is equally clear that two equal forces acting in opposite directions, both being finite and each distinguished from the other by its direction only, must neutralize or reduce each other to inaction. Now the transcendental philosophy demands; first, that two forces should be conceived which counteract each other by their essential nature; not only not in consequence of the accidental direction of each, but as prior to all direction, nay, as the primary forces from which the conditions of all possible directions are derivative and deducible: secondly, that these forces should be assumed to be both alike infinite, both alike indestructible. The problem will then be to discover the result or product of two such forces, as distinguished from the result of those forces which are finite, and derive their difference solely from the circumstance of their direction. When we have formed a scheme or outline of these two different kinds of force, and of their different results by the process of discursive reasoning, it will then remain for us to elevate the Thesis from notional to actual, by contemplating intuitively this one power with its two inherent indestructible yet counteracting forces, and the results or generations to which their inter-penetration gives existence, in the living principle and in the process of our own self-consciousness. By what instrument this is possible the solution itself will discover, at the same time that it will reveal, to and for whom it is possible. *Non omnia possumes omnes.*⁶²⁰ There is a philosophic, no less than a poetic genius, which is differenced from the highest perfection of talent, not by degree but by kind.

The counteraction then of the two assumed forces does not depend on their meeting from opposite directions; the power which acts in them is indestructible; it is therefore inexhaustibly re-ebullient; and as something must be the result of these two forces, both alike infinite, and both alike indestructible; and as rest or neutralization cannot be this result; no other conception is possible, but that the product must be a *tertium aliquid*,⁶²¹ or finite generation. Consequently this conception is necessary. Now this *tertium aliquid* can be no other than an inter-penetration of the counteracting powers, partaking of both[.]

⁶²⁰ 'Everything is not possible for everybody' (Vergil, *Eclogues*, 8:63).

⁶²¹ 'Third thing'.

* * * * *

Thus far had the work been transcribed for the press, when I received the following letter from a friend,⁶²² whose practical judgment I have had ample reason to estimate and revere, and whose taste and sensibility preclude all the excuses which my self-love might possibly have prompted me to set up in plea against the decision of advisers of equal good sense, but with less tact and feeling.

“Dear C.

“You ask my opinion concerning your Chapter on the Imagination, both as to the impressions it made on myself, and as to those which I think it will make on the PUBLIC, i.e. that part of the public, who from the title of the work and from its forming a sort of introduction to a volume of poems, are likely to constitute the great majority of your readers.

“As to myself, and stating in the first place the effect on my understanding, your opinions and method of argument were not only so new to me, but so directly the reverse of all I had ever been accustomed to consider as truth, that even if I had comprehended your premises sufficiently to have admitted them, and had seen the necessity of your conclusions, I should still have been in that state of mind, which in your note, p.75, 76⁶²³ you have so ingeniously evolved, as the antithesis to that in which a man is, when he makes a bull. In your own words, I should have felt as if I had been standing on my head.

“The effect on my feelings, on the other hand, I cannot better represent, than by supposing myself to have known only our light airy modern chapels of ease, and then for the first time to have been placed, and left alone, in one of our largest Gothic cathedrals in a gusty moonlight night of autumn. ‘Now in glimmer, and now in gloom;’⁶²⁴ often in palpable darkness not without a chilly sensation of terror; then suddenly emerging into broad yet visionary lights with coloured shadows, of fantastic shapes yet all decked with holy insignia and mystic symbols; and ever and anon coming out full upon pictures and stone-work images of great men, with whose names I was familiar, but which looked upon me with countenances and an expression, the most dissimilar to all I had been in the habit of connecting with those names. Those whom I had been taught to venerate as almost super-human in magnitude of intellect, I found perched in little fret-work niches, as grotesque dwarfs; while the grotesques, in my hitherto belief, stood guarding the high altar with all the characters of Apotheosis. In short, what I had supposed substances were thinned away into shadows, while every where shadows were deepened into substances:

⁶²² In fact the ‘friend’ was Coleridge himself: ‘that letter addressed to myself as from a friend, at the close of the first volume of the Literary Life . . . was written without taking my pen off the paper except to dip it in the inkstand’ (Coleridge, letter to Thomas Curtis, 29 April 1817; Griggs, *Collected Letters*, 4:728).

⁶²³ Chapter 4; in this edition pp. 55–6.

⁶²⁴ Coleridge, ‘Christabel’, line 169.

If substance may be call'd what shadow seem'd,
For each seem'd either! MILTON⁶²⁵

“Yet after all, I could not but repeat the lines which you had quoted from a MS. poem of your own in the FRIEND, and applied to a work of Mr. Wordsworth’s though with a few of the words altered:

——An orphic tale indeed,
A tale *obscure* of high and passionate thoughts
To a *strange* music chaunted!⁶²⁶

“Be assured, however, that I look forward anxiously to your great book on the CONSTRUCTIVE PHILOSOPHY, which you have promised and announced: and that I will do my best to understand it. Only I will not promise to descend into the dark cave of Trophonius⁶²⁷ with you, there to rub my own eyes, in order to make the sparks and figured flashes, which I am required to see.

“So much for myself. But as for the PUBLIC, I do not hesitate a moment in advising and urging you to withdraw the Chapter from the present work, and to reserve it for your announced treatises on the Logos or communicative intellect in Man and Deity. First, because imperfectly as I understand the present Chapter, I see clearly that you have done too much, and yet not enough. You have been obliged to omit so many links, from the necessity of compression, that what remains, looks (if I may recur to my former illustration) like the fragments of the winding steps of an old ruined tower. Secondly, a still stronger argument (at least one that I am sure will be more forcible with you) is, that your readers will have both right and reason to complain of you. This Chapter, which cannot, when it is printed, amount to so little as an hundred pages, will of necessity greatly increase the expense of the work; and every reader who, like myself, is neither prepared nor perhaps calculated for the study of so abstruse a subject so abstrusely treated,

⁶²⁵ *Paradise Lost*, 5:669–70.

⁶²⁶ Coleridge, ‘To William Wordsworth’, 45–7.

⁶²⁷ Fabled Greek architect, supposed builder of the temple of Apollo at Delphi, whose tomb was a popular oracle. ‘Trophonius, the Son of Erestnus, and Brother of Agamedes, a being possess’d with an immoderate Thirst of Glory, built himself a Mansion under Ground, at Lebadea a City of Baeotia, into which when he enter’d, he pretended to be inspired with an extraordinary Knowledge of future Events; but at length, either out of Design to raise in Men an Opinion, that he was translated to the Gods, or being some way necessitated thereto, persist’d in his Hole . . . they approach the Oracle, which is situated within a Mountain near a Grove, the Foundation of which is built spherical-wise, of white Stone, about the size, in circumference of a very small Threshing-floor . . . at the mouth of this, the Descendant, having brought with him Cakes dipt in Honey, lies along on the Ground and shoves himself Feet foremost into the Cave; then he thrusts in his Knees, after which the rest of his Body is roll’d along, by a Force not unlike that of a great and rapid River, which over-powering a Man with its Vortex, tumbles him over Head and Ears.’ (John Potter, *Archaeologia Graeca Or the Antiquities of Greece* (1751), 1:289–90)

*will, as I have before hinted, be almost entitled to accuse you of a sort of imposition on him. For who, he might truly observe, could from your title-page, viz., "My Literary Life and Opinions," published too as introductory to a volume of miscellaneous poems, have anticipated, or even conjectured, a long treatise on ideal Realism, which holds the same relation in abstruseness to Plotinus, as Plotinus does to Plato. It will be well, if already you have not too much of metaphysical disquisition in your work, though as the larger part of the disquisition is historical, it will doubtless be both interesting and instructive to many to whose unprepared minds your speculations on the esemplastic power would be utterly unintelligible. Be assured, if you do publish this Chapter in the present work, you will be reminded of Bishop Berkley's *Siris*,⁶²⁸ announced as an *Essay on Tar-water*, which beginning with *Tar* ends with the *Trinity*, the *omne scibile*⁶²⁹ forming the interspace. I say in the present work. In that greater work to which you have devoted so many years, and study so intense and various, it will be in its proper place. Your prospectus will have described and announced both its contents and their nature; and if any persons purchase it, who feel no interest in the subjects of which it treats, they will have themselves only to blame.*

"I could add to these arguments one derived from pecuniary motives, and particularly from the probable effects on the sale of your present publication; but they would weigh little with you compared with the preceding. Besides, I have long observed, that arguments drawn from your own personal interests more often act on you as narcotics than as stimulants, and that in money concerns you have some small portion of pig-nature in your moral idiosyncrasy, and like these amiable creatures, must occasionally be pulled backward from the boat in order to make you enter it. All success attend you, for if hard thinking and hard reading are merits, you have deserved it.

"Your affectionate, &c."

In consequence of this very judicious letter, which produced complete conviction on my mind, I shall content myself for the present with stating the main result of the Chapter, which I have reserved for that future publication, a detailed prospectus of which the reader will find at the close of the second volume.⁶³⁰

The IMAGINATION then I consider either as primary, or secondary. The primary IMAGINATION I hold to be the living Power and prime Agent of all human Perception, and as a repetition in the finite mind of the eternal act of creation in the infinite I AM. The secondary I

⁶²⁸ George Berkeley, *Siris: a chain of philosophical reflexions and inquiries concerning the Virtues of Tar-Water, And divers other Subjects connected together and arising from one another* (1744). The argument of this book does indeed proceed after the fashion Coleridge here indicates.

⁶²⁹ 'Everything knowable'.

⁶³⁰ The book as published included no prospectus, and it is likely that Coleridge never got around to writing it.

consider as an echo of the former, co-existing with the conscious will, yet still as identical with the primary in the *kind* of its agency, and differing only in *degree*, and in the *mode* of its operation. It dissolves, diffuses, dissipates, in order to re-create; or where this process is rendered impossible, yet still at all events it struggles to idealize and to unify. It is essentially *vital*, even as all objects (*as* objects) are essentially fixed and dead.⁶³¹

FANCY, on the contrary, has no other counters to play with, but fixities and definites. The Fancy is indeed no other than a mode of Memory emancipated from the order of time and space; and blended with, and modified by that empirical phenomenon of the will, which we express by the word CHOICE. But equally with the ordinary memory it must receive all its materials ready made from the law of association.

Whatever more than this, I shall think it fit to declare concerning the powers and privileges of the imagination in the present work, will be found in the critical essay on the uses of the Supernatural in poetry and the principles that regulate its introduction: which the reader will find prefixed to the poem of The Ancient Mariner.⁶³²

END OF VOLUME FIRST

⁶³¹ This famous paragraph remains one of the most widely discussed pieces of Romantic prose. According to Sara Coleridge (in 1847), and indicative of either a change of mind or a step on the way to refining his thoughts, Coleridge crossed out the lines 'and as a repetition in the finite mind of the eternal act of creation in the infinite I AM' in his copy of the first edition of the *Biographia*.

⁶³² The reader, turning to the relevant page of *Sybilline Leaves*, finds no such essay. If it was ever written, it has not survived. 1847 cuts this whole paragraph.

BIOGRAPHIA LITERARIA

VOLUME 2

CHAPTER 14

Occasion of the Lyrical Ballads, and the objects originally proposed—Preface to the second edition—The ensuing controversy, its causes and acrimony—Philosophic definitions of a poem and poetry with scholia.

During the first year that Mr. Wordsworth and I were neighbours,⁶³³ our conversations turned frequently on the two cardinal points of poetry, the power of exciting the sympathy of the reader by a faithful adherence to the truth of nature, and the power of giving the interest of novelty by the modifying colours of imagination. The sudden charm, which accidents of light and shade, which moon-light or sun-set diffused over a known and familiar landscape, appeared to represent the practicability of combining both. These are the poetry of nature. The thought suggested itself (to which of us I do not recollect) that a series of poems might be composed of two sorts. In the one, the incidents and agents were to be, in part at least, supernatural; and the excellence aimed at was to consist in the interesting of the affections by the dramatic truth of such emotions, as would naturally

⁶³³ Coleridge was living at Nether Stowey when he first met Wordsworth in 1797, whose residence (Alfoxden House) was a few miles away. This chapter describes their collaboration and its resultant publication, *Lyrical Ballads, with a Few Other Poems* (1798). Almost all the poems in that collection were written by Wordsworth; Coleridge contributed only four works, including the earliest version of 'The Rime of the Ancient Mariner'. The two-volume publication included a prefatory 'Advertisement' (written by Wordsworth) setting out the collection's aesthetic philosophy of simplicity, directness, and connection to the peasant ballad traditions: 'The majority of the following poems are to be considered as experiments. They were written chiefly with a view to ascertain how far the language of conversation in the middle and lower classes of society is adapted to the purpose of poetic pleasure.' A second edition was published in 1800, with the addition of a longer 'Preface', in which Wordsworth dilated upon his poetic theory. Coleridge refers to both prose texts in this chapter, as well as to the hostility of some critics to the new venture – most stinging were the reviews by Francis Jeffrey in the *Edinburgh Review* (from 1802 onwards), discussed below.

accompany such situations, supposing them real. And real in *this* sense they have been to every human being who, from whatever source of delusion, has at any time believed himself under supernatural agency. For the second class, subjects were to be chosen from ordinary life; the characters and incidents were to be such as will be found in every village and its vicinity, where there is a meditative and feeling mind to seek after them, or to notice them, when they present themselves.

In this idea originated the plan of the “Lyrical Ballads;” in which it was agreed, that my endeavours should be directed to persons and characters supernatural, or at least romantic; yet so as to transfer from our inward nature a human interest and a semblance of truth sufficient to procure for these shadows of imagination that willing suspension of disbelief for the moment, which constitutes poetic faith. Mr. Wordsworth, on the other hand, was to propose to himself as his object, to give the charm of novelty to things of every day, and to excite a feeling analogous to the supernatural, by awakening the mind’s attention to the lethargy of custom, and directing it to the loveliness and the wonders of the world before us; an inexhaustible treasure, but for which in consequence of the film of familiarity and selfish solicitude we have eyes, yet see not, ears that hear not, and hearts that neither feel nor understand.⁶³⁴

With this view I wrote the “Ancient Mariner,” and was preparing among other poems, the “Dark Ladie,” and the “Christobel,” in which I should have more nearly realized my ideal, than I had done in my first attempt.⁶³⁵ But Mr. Wordsworth’s industry had proved so much more successful, and the number of his poems so much greater, that my compositions, instead of forming a balance, appeared rather an interpolation of heterogeneous matter. Mr. Wordsworth added two or three poems written in his own character, in the impassioned, lofty, and sustained diction, which is characteristic of his genius. In this form the “Lyrical Ballads” were published; and were presented by him, as an *experiment*, whether subjects, which from their nature rejected the usual ornaments and extra-colloquial style of poems in general, might not be so managed in the language of ordinary life as to produce the pleasureable interest, which it is the peculiar business of poetry to impart. To the second edition he added a preface of considerable length; in which notwithstanding some passages of apparently a contrary import, he was understood to contend for the extension of

⁶³⁴ Isaiah 6:10.

⁶³⁵ ‘Ancient Mariner’ appeared in *Lyrical Ballads*; the unfinished ‘Christabel’ circulated in manuscript, but wasn’t published until 1816; also unfinished, ‘The Dark Ladie’ was not published until after Coleridge’s death.

this style to poetry of all kinds, and to reject as vicious and indefensible all phrases and forms of style that were not included in what he (unfortunately, I think, adopting an equivocal expression) called the language of *real* life. From this preface, prefixed to poems in which it was impossible to deny the presence of original genius, however mistaken its direction might be deemed, arose the whole long-continued controversy. For from the conjunction of perceived power with supposed heresy I explain the inveteracy and in some instances, I grieve to say, the acrimonious passions, with which the controversy has been conducted by the assailants.

Had Mr. Wordsworth's poems been the silly, the childish things, which they were for a long time described as being; had they been really distinguished from the compositions of other poets merely by meanness of language and inanity of thought; had they indeed contained nothing more than what is found in the parodies and pretended imitations of them; they must have sunk at once, a dead weight, into the slough of oblivion, and have dragged the preface along with them. But year after year increased the number of Mr. Wordsworth's admirers. They were found too not in the lower classes of the reading public, but chiefly among young men of strong sensibility and meditative minds; and their admiration (inflamed perhaps in some degree by opposition) was distinguished by its intensity, I might almost say, by its *religious* fervour. These facts, and the intellectual energy of the author, which was more or less consciously felt, where it was outwardly and even boisterously denied, meeting with sentiments of aversion to his opinions, and of alarm at their consequences, produced an eddy of criticism, which would of itself have borne up the poems by the violence with which it whirled them round and round. With many parts of this preface in the sense attributed to them and which the words undoubtedly seem to authorise, I never concurred; but on the contrary objected to them as erroneous in principle, and as contradictory (in appearance at least) both to other parts of the same preface, and to the author's own practice in the greater number of the poems themselves. Mr. Wordsworth in his recent collection has, I find, degraded this prefatory disquisition to the end of his second volume, to be read or not at the reader's choice.⁶³⁶ But he has not, as

⁶³⁶ Wordsworth reprinted his contributions to *Lyrical Ballads*, together with other poems he had written since, as *Poems by William Wordsworth: including Lyrical Ballads, and the Miscellaneous Pieces of the Author. With additional poems, a new preface, and a supplementary essay. In two volumes* (1815). The original *Lyrical Ballads* 'Preface' was reprinted at the end of this volume, and a new preface, recording the changes in Wordsworth's poetic thought, appeared at the beginning.

far as I can discover, announced any change in his poetic creed. At all events, considering it as the source of a controversy, in which I have been honored more, than I deserve, by the frequent conjunction of my name with his, I think it expedient to declare once for all, in what points I coincide with his opinions, and in what points I altogether differ. But in order to render myself intelligible I must previously, in as few words as possible, explain my ideas, first, of a POEM; and secondly, of POETRY itself, in *kind*, and in *essence*.

The office of philosophical *disquisition* consists in just *distinction*; while it is the privilege of the philosopher to preserve himself constantly aware, that distinction is not division. In order to obtain adequate notions of any truth, we must intellectually separate its distinguishable parts; and this is the technical *process* of philosophy. But having so done, we must then restore them in our conceptions to the unity, in which they actually co-exist; and this is the *result* of philosophy. A poem contains the same elements as a prose composition; the difference therefore must consist in a different combination of them, in consequence of a different object proposed. According to the difference of the object will be the difference of the combination. It is possible, that the object may be merely to facilitate the recollection of any given facts or observations by artificial arrangement; and the composition will be a poem, merely because it is distinguished from prose by metre, or by rhyme, or by both conjointly. In this, the lowest sense, a man might attribute the name of a poem to the well known enumeration of the days in the several months;

Thirty days hath September,
April, June, and November, &c.

and others of the same class and purpose. And as a particular pleasure is found in anticipating the recurrence of sounds and quantities, all compositions that have this charm superadded, whatever be their contents, *may* be entitled poems.

So much for the superficial *form*. A difference of object and contents supplies an additional ground of distinction. The immediate purpose may be the communication of truths; either of truth absolute and demonstrable, as in works of science; or of facts experienced and recorded, as in history. Pleasure, and that of the highest and most permanent kind, may *result* from the *attainment* of the end; but it is not itself the immediate end. In other works the communication of pleasure may be the immediate purpose; and though truth, either moral or intellectual, ought to be the *ultimate* end, yet this will distinguish the character of the author, not the class to which the work belongs. Blest

indeed is that state of society, in which the immediate purpose would be baffled by the perversion of the proper ultimate end; in which no charm of diction or imagery could exempt the Bathyllus even of an Anacreon, or the Alexis of Virgil, from disgust and aversion!⁶³⁷

But the communication of pleasure may be the immediate object of a work not metrically composed; and that object may have been in a high degree attained, as in novels and romances. Would then the mere superaddition of metre, with or without rhyme, entitle *these* to the name of poems? The answer is, that nothing can permanently please, which does not contain in itself the reason why it is so, and not otherwise. If metre be superadded, all other parts must be made consonant with it. They must be such, as to justify the perpetual and distinct attention to each part, which an exact correspondent recurrence of accent and sound are calculated to excite. The final definition then, so deduced, may be thus worded. A poem is that species of composition, which is opposed to works of science, by proposing for its *immediate* object pleasure, not truth; and from all other species (having *this* object in common with it) it is discriminated by proposing to itself such delight from the *whole*, as is compatible with a distinct gratification from each component *part*.

Controversy is not seldom excited in consequence of the disputants attaching each a different meaning to the same word; and in few instances has this been more striking, than in disputes concerning the present subject. If a man chooses to call every composition a poem, which is rhyme, or measure, or both, I must leave his opinion uncontroverted. The distinction is at least competent to characterize the writer's intention. If it were subjoined, that the whole is likewise entertaining or affecting, as a tale, or as a series of interesting reflections, I of course admit this as another fit ingredient of a poem, and an additional merit. But if the definition sought for be that of a *legitimate* poem, I answer, it must be one, the parts of which mutually

⁶³⁷ Coleridge's disgust is, as we would nowadays say, homophobic. He refers to famous poems celebrating same-sex love: first of Greek poet Anacreon (582–485 BC) for Bathyllus, and secondly of Roman poet Vergil (760–719 BC) for Alexis. Thomas Moore's translation of a section of Anacreon's *Ode XVII* ('But oh! suffuse his limbs of fire / With all the flow of young desire . . .') adds a footnote explaining that he has bowdlerised his version: 'I have taken the liberty here of somewhat veiling the original. Madame Dacier, in her translation, has hung out lights (as Sterne would call it) at this passage. It is very much to be regretted that this substitution of asterisks has been so much adopted in the popular interpretations of the Classics; it serves but to bring whatever is exceptionable into notice.' (*Odes of Anacreon, translated by Thomas Moore* (1800), 74–5). 'Alexis' is the name of the beautiful youth beloved by Corydon in *Eclogue 2*. 'Corydon' is taken by many to be a version of Vergil himself.

support and explain each other; all in their proportion harmonizing with, and supporting the purpose and known influences of metrical arrangement. The philosophic critics of all ages coincide with the ultimate judgement of all countries, in equally denying the praises of a just poem, on the one hand, to a series of striking lines or distichs, each of which absorbing the whole attention of the reader to itself disjoins it from its context, and makes it a separate whole, instead of an harmonizing part; and on the other hand, to an unsustained composition, from which the reader collects rapidly the general result unattracted by the component parts. The reader should be carried forward, not merely or chiefly by the mechanical impulse of curiosity, or by a restless desire to arrive at the final solution; but by the pleasureable activity of mind excited by the attractions of the journey itself. Like the motion of a serpent, which the Egyptians made the emblem of intellectual power,⁶³⁸ or like the path of sound through the air; at every step he pauses and half recedes; and from the retrogressive movement collects the force which again carries him onward. *Precipitandus est liber spiritus*, says Petronius Arbiter most happily.⁶³⁹ The epithet, *liber*, here balances the preceding verb; and it is not easy to conceive more meaning condensed in fewer words.

But if this should be admitted as a satisfactory character of a poem, we have still to seek for a definition of poetry. The writings of PLATO, and Bishop TAYLOR, and the *Theoria Sacra* of BURNET,⁶⁴⁰ furnish undeniable proofs that poetry of the highest kind may exist without metre, and even without the contradistinguishing objects of a poem. The first chapter of Isaiah (indeed a very large proportion of the whole book) is poetry in the most emphatic sense; yet it would be not less irrational than strange to assert, that pleasure, and not truth, was the immediate object of the prophet. In short, whatever *specific* import we attach to the word, poetry, there will be found involved in it, as a

⁶³⁸ 'As the ant and the bee are used with us as emblems of industry, so was the serpent referred to by [the Ancient Egyptians] as the symbol of intelligence and circumspection' (John Bellamy, *The Ophion, or The Theology of the Serpent and the Unity of God* (1811), 11).

⁶³⁹ 'The *free* spirit is precipitated onwards' (Petronius, *Satyricon*, 118). Coleridge's emphasis.

⁶⁴⁰ Theologian Jeremy Taylor (1613–67) was known as 'the Shakespeare of Divines' because of his fine style. Thomas Burnet (1635–1715) was best known for his *Telluris Theoria Sacra* (first part published in Latin 1681 and issued in English, as *Sacred Theory of the Earth*, in 1684; a second part appeared in Latin in 1689, and in English in 1690). It is a work of speculative cosmogony in which Burnet attempts to reconcile modern science with the Bible by, among other things, suggesting that the waters of Noah's flood were stored inside the Earth, which he believed to be hollow.

necessary consequence, that a poem of any length neither can be, or ought to be, all poetry. Yet if an harmonious whole is to be produced, the remaining parts must be preserved *in keeping* with the poetry; and this can be no otherwise effected than by such a studied selection and artificial arrangement, as will partake of *one*, though not a *peculiar* property of poetry. And this again can be no other than the property of exciting a more continuous and equal attention, than the language of prose aims at, whether colloquial or written.

My own conclusions on the nature of poetry, in the strictest use of the word, have been in part anticipated in the preceding disquisition on the fancy and imagination. What is poetry? is so nearly the same question with, what is a poet? that the answer to the one is involved in the solution of the other. For it is a distinction resulting from the poetic genius itself, which sustains and modifies the images, thoughts, and emotions of the poet's own mind. The poet, described in *ideal* perfection, brings the whole soul of man into activity, with the subordination of its faculties to each other according to their relative worth and dignity. He diffuses a tone, and spirit of unity, that blends, and (as it were) *fuses*, each into each, by that synthetic and magical power, to which we have exclusively appropriated the name of imagination. This power, first put in action by the will and understanding, and retained under their irremissive, though gentle and unnoticed, controul (*laxis effertur habenis*)⁶⁴¹ reveals itself in the balance or reconciliation of opposite or discordant qualities: of sameness, with difference; of the general, with the concrete; the idea, with the image; the individual, with the representative; the sense of novelty and freshness, with old and familiar objects; a more than usual state of emotion, with more than usual order; judgement ever awake and steady self-possession, with enthusiasm and feeling profound or vehement; and while it blends and harmonizes the natural and the artificial, still subordinates art to nature; the manner to the matter; and our admiration of the poet to our sympathy with the poetry. "Doubtless," as Sir John Davies observes of the soul (and his words may with slight alteration be applied, and even more appropriately to the poetic IMAGINATION.)

Doubtless this could not be, but that she turns
 Bodies to spirit by sublimation strange,
 As fire converts to fire the things it burns,
 As we our food into our nature change.

⁶⁴¹ 'Continuing with slackened rein'; Petrarch, 'Epistola Barbato Sulmonensi', 39.

From their gross matter she abstracts their forms,
And draws a kind of quintessence from things;
Which to her proper nature she transforms
To bear them light, on her celestial wings.

Thus does she, when from individual states
She doth abstract the universal kinds;
Which then re-clothed in divers names and fates
Steal access through the senses to our minds.⁶⁴²

Finally, GOOD SENSE is the BODY of poetic genius, FANCY its DRAPERY, MOTION its LIFE, and IMAGINATION the SOUL that is every where, and in each; and forms all into one graceful and intelligent whole.

⁶⁴² Quoted, with various changes, from *Nosce Teipsum: of the Soule of Man and the Immortality Thereof* (1599) by Elizabethan poet and satirist John Davies of Hereford (1570–1626).

CHAPTER 15

The specific symptoms of poetic power elucidated in a critical analysis of Shakspeare's *Venus and Adonis*, and *Lucrece*.

In the application of these principles to purposes of practical criticism as employed in the appraisal of works more or less imperfect, I have endeavoured to discover what the qualities in a poem are, which may be deemed promises and specific symptoms of poetic power, as distinguished from general talent determined to poetic composition by accidental motives, by an act of the will, rather than by the inspiration of a genial and productive nature. In this investigation, I could not, I thought, do better, than keep before me the earliest work of the greatest genius, that perhaps human nature has yet produced, our *myriad-minded** Shakspear. I mean the "Venus and Adonis," and the "Lucrece;" works which give at once strong promises of the strength, and yet obvious proofs of the immaturity, of his genius. From these I abstracted the following marks, as characteristics of original poetic genius in general.

1. In the "Venus and Adonis," the first and most obvious excellence is the perfect sweetness of the versification; its adaptation to the subject; and the power displayed in varying the march of the words without passing into a loftier and more majestic rhythm, than was demanded by the thoughts, or permitted by the propriety of preserving a sense of melody predominant. The delight in richness and sweetness of sound, even to a faulty excess, if it be evidently original, and not the result of an easily imitable mechanism, I regard as a highly favorable promise in the compositions of a young man "The man that hath not

* Ἄνθρωπος μυριονοῦς, a phrase which I have borrowed from a Greek monk, who applies it to a Patriarch of Constantinople. I might have said, that I have *reclaimed*, rather than borrowed it: for it seems to belong to Shakspear, *de jure singulari, et ex privilegio naturæ*.⁶⁴³

⁶⁴³ The Latin means 'by singular right, and privilege of his nature'. Coleridge found the Greek phrase in Naucratius's eulogy for Abbot Theodorus Studita (759–826), an important early churchman in Constantinople (though not actually a Patriarch). ἄνθρωπος simply means 'man', but μυριόνους is a very rare word (it's not in Liddell and Scott, and as far as I can determine only occurs in this one place). The full phrase is 'ὁ μυριόνους τῆ θιοσκόπῳ κυβερνήσει', rendered into Latin in the same text as 'cui infinita quaedam ad spiritualem gubernationem mens' ['. . . whose was a mind with an infinite capacity for spiritual government'] (*Naucrati Confessoris Encyclica de obtu S. Theodori*, in *Auctorio Combesiano Bibliothecae Patrum Graec.* (8 vols, 1662), 2:855).

music in his soul”⁶⁴⁴ can indeed never be a genuine poet. Imagery (even taken from nature, much more when transplanted from books, as travels, voyages, and works of natural history) affecting incidents; just thoughts; interesting personal or domestic feelings; and with these the art of their combination or intertexture in the form of a poem; may all by incessant effort be acquired as a trade, by a man of talent and much reading, who, as I once before observed, has mistaken an intense desire of poetic reputation for a natural poetic genius; the love of the arbitrary end for a possession of the peculiar means. But the sense of musical delight, with the power of producing it, is a gift of imagination; and this together with the power of reducing multitude into unity of effect, and modifying a series of thoughts by some one predominant thought or feeling, may be cultivated and improved, but can never be learnt. It is in these that “Poeta nascitur non fit.”⁶⁴⁵

2. A second promise of genius is the choice of subjects very remote from the private interests and circumstances of the writer himself. At least I have found, that where the subject is taken immediately from the author’s personal sensations and experiences, the excellence of a particular poem is but an equivocal mark, and often a fallacious pledge, of genuine poetic power. We may perhaps remember the tale of the statuary, who had acquired considerable reputation for the legs of his goddesses, though the rest of the statue accorded but indifferently with ideal beauty; till his wife elated by her husband’s praises, modestly acknowledged, that she had been his constant model. In the *Venus and Adonis*, this proof of poetic power exists even to excess. It is throughout as if a superior spirit more intuitive, more intimately conscious, even than the characters themselves, not only of every outward look and act, but of the flux and reflux of the mind in all its subtlest thoughts and feelings, were placing the whole before our view; himself meanwhile unparticipating in the passions, and actuated only by that pleasurable excitement, which had resulted from the energetic fervor of his own spirit in so vividly exhibiting, what it had so accurately and profoundly contemplated. I think, I should have conjectured from these poems, that even then the great instinct, which impelled the poet to the drama, was secretly working in him, prompting him by a series and never broken chain of imagery, always vivid and because unbroken, often minute; by the highest effort of the picturesque in words, of which words are capable, higher perhaps than was ever realized by any other poet, even Dante not excepted;

⁶⁴⁴ Shakespeare, *Merchant of Venice*, 5:1:83.

⁶⁴⁵ ‘A poet is born, not made’ – a proverbial phrase.

to provide a substitute for that visual language, that constant intervention and running comment by tone, look and gesture, which in his dramatic works he was entitled to expect from the players. His “Venus and Adonis” seem at once the characters themselves, and the whole representation of those characters by the most consummate actors. You seem to be *told* nothing, but to see and hear everything. Hence it is, that from the perpetual activity of attention required on the part of the reader; from the rapid flow, the quick change, and the playful nature of the thoughts and images; and above all from the alienation, and, if I may hazard such an expression, the utter *aloofness* of the poet’s own feelings, from those of which he is at once the painter and the analyst; that though the very subject cannot but detract from the pleasure of a delicate mind, yet never was poem less dangerous on a moral account. Instead of doing as Ariosto, and as, still more offensively, Wieland has done,⁶⁴⁶ instead of degrading and deforming passion into appetite, the trials of love into the struggles of concupiscence; Shakspeare has here represented the animal impulse itself, so as to preclude all sympathy with it, by dissipating the reader’s notice among the thousand outward images, and now beautiful, now fanciful circumstances, which form its dresses and its scenery; or by diverting our attention from the main subject by those frequent witty or profound reflections, which the poet’s ever active mind has deduced from, or connected with, the imagery and the incidents. The reader is forced into too much action to sympathize with the merely passive of our nature. As little can a mind thus roused and awakened be brooded on by mean and indistinct emotion, as the low, lazy mist can creep upon the surface of a lake, while a strong gale is driving it onward in waves and billows.

3. It has been before observed, that images, however beautiful, though faithfully copied from nature, and as accurately represented in words, do not of themselves characterize the poet. They become

⁶⁴⁶ Italian epic poet Ludovico Ariosto (1474–1533) and German poet and translator of Shakespeare, Christoph Wieland (1733–1813). Of the former, Coleridge expressed his disappointment that poetry he admired was marred by ‘gross and disgusting licentiousness’. The latter’s epic *Oberon* (1780) tells the story of Huon, one of Charlemagne’s knights, who encounters the titular fairy king in the woods of France, and undergoes various fantastical adventures, many involving beautiful women. Coleridge admired it, although it also offended his pudgeur; in ‘Satyrane’s Letters’ (see below, p. 375) he records Wordsworth’s criticism that its ‘interest . . . turn[s] entirely upon animal gratification’. It was translated, and bowdlerised, by Coleridge’s friend William Sotheby in 1798. (Of this edition a reviewer said: ‘much of the voluptuous scenery, which abounds, is concealed by the decorum of the translator behind a thicker veil than Wieland had provided’; ‘Sotheby’s Oberon’, *The Annual Review and History of Literature* 5 (1807), 501.)

proofs of original genius only as far as they are modified by a predominant passion; or by associated thoughts or images awakened by that passion; or when they have the effect of reducing multitude to unity, or succession to an instant; or lastly, when a human and intellectual life is transferred to them from the poet's own spirit,

Which shoots its being through earth, sea, and air.⁶⁴⁷

In the two following lines for instance, there is nothing objectionable, nothing which would preclude them from forming, in their proper place, part of a descriptive poem:

Behold yon row of pines, that shorn and bow'd
Bend from the sea-blast, seen at twilight eve.⁶⁴⁸

But with a small alteration of rhythm, the same words would be equally in their place in a book of topography, or in a descriptive tour. The same image will rise into a semblance of poetry if thus conveyed:

Yon row of bleak and visionary pines,
By twilight-glimpse discerned, mark! how they flee
From the fierce sea-blast, all their tresses wild
Streaming before them.

I have given this as an illustration, by no means as an instance, of that particular excellence which I had in view, and in which Shakspeare even in his earliest, as in his latest works, surpasses all other poets. It is by this, that he still gives a dignity and a passion to the objects which he presents. Unaided by any previous excitement, they burst upon us at once in life and in power.

Full many a glorious morning have I seen
Flatter the mountain tops with sovereign eye.
Shakspeare's Sonnet 33rd

Not mine own fears, nor the prophetic soul
Of the wide world dreaming on things to come—
* * * * *
* * * * *

The mortal moon hath her eclipse endur'd,
And the sad augurs mock their own presage;
Incertainties now crown themselves assur'd,

⁶⁴⁷ Coleridge, 'France: an Ode', 103.

⁶⁴⁸ These lines, and the 'Yon row of bleak and visionary pines' rewriting of them immediately below, are both notebook fragments by Coleridge.

And Peace proclaims olives of endless age.
 Now with the drops of this most balmy time
 My Love looks fresh: and DEATH to me subscribes!
 Since spite of him, I'll live in this poor rhyme,
 While he insults o'er dull and speechless tribes.
 And thou in this shalt find thy monument,
 When tyrant's crests, and tombs of brass are spent.

Sonnet 107

As of higher worth, so doubtless still more characteristic of poetic genius does the imagery become, when it moulds and colors itself to the circumstances, passion, or character, present and foremost in the mind. For unrivalled instances of this excellence, the reader's own memory will refer him to the LEAR, OTHELLO, in short to which not of the "*great, ever living, dead man's*" dramatic works?⁶⁴⁹ *Inopem me copia fecit.*⁶⁵⁰ How true it is to nature, he has himself finely expressed in the instance of love in Sonnet 98.

From you have I been absent in the spring,
 When proud pied April drest in all its trim
 Hath put a spirit of youth in every thing;
 That heavy Saturn laugh'd and leap'd with him.
 Yet nor the lays of birds, nor the sweet smell
 Of different flowers in odour and in hue,
 Could make me any summer's story tell,
 Or from their proud lap pluck them, where they grew:
 Nor did I wonder at the lilies white,
 Nor praise the deep vermillion in the rose;
 They were, tho' sweet, but figures of delight,
 Drawn after you, you pattern of all those.
 Yet seem'd it winter still, and you away,
As with your shadow, I with these did play!

Scarcely less sure, or if a less valuable, not less indispensable mark

Γονίμου μέν Ποιητοῦ——
 ——οσις ρημα γενναιον λακαι,⁶⁵¹

⁶⁴⁹ This folds together two Shakespearian quotations: 'such great commanders / That ever-living man of memory / Henry the fifth' (from the *First Part of Henry VI*, 4:3:47–51); and 'living corse, clos'd in a dead man's tomb' (*Romeo and Juliet*, 5:2:56).

⁶⁵⁰ 'Plenitude has made me poor' (Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 3:466).

⁶⁵¹ '... and a creative Poet / that true to his birth speaks forcefully' (Aristophanes, *Frogs*, 96–7). The whole sentence, from which this is excerpted, is translated by Charles Dunster as follows: 'But wheresoe'er we seek, we ne'er can find / A bard endow'd with

will the imagery supply, when, with more than the power of the painter, the poet gives us the liveliest image of succession with the feeling of simultaneousness!

With this he breaketh from the sweet embrace
 Of those fair arms, that held him to her heart,
 And homeward through the dark lawns runs apace:
Look how a bright star shooteth from the sky!
*So glides he in the night from Venus' eye.*⁶⁵²

4. The last character I shall mention, which would prove indeed but little, except as taken conjointly with the former; yet without which the former could scarce exist in a high degree, and (even if this were possible) would give promises only of transitory flashes, and a meteoric power; is DEPTH, and ENERGY of THOUGHT. No man was ever yet a great poet, without being at the same time a profound philosopher. For poetry is the blossom and the fragrancy of all human knowledge, human thoughts, human passions, emotions, language. In Shakspeare's *poems*, the creative power, and the intellectual energy wrestle as in a war embrace. Each in its excess of strength seems to threaten the extinction of the other. At length, in the DRAMA they were reconciled, and fought each with its shield before the breast of the other. Or like two rapid streams, that at their first meeting within narrow and rocky banks mutually strive to repel each other, and intermix reluctantly and in tumult; but soon finding a wider channel and more yielding shores blend, and dilate, and flow on in one current and with one voice. The Venus and Adonis did not perhaps allow the display of the deeper passions. But the story of Lucretia seems to favor, and even demand their intensest workings. And yet we find in *Shakspeare's* management of the tale neither pathos, nor any other *dramatic* quality. There is the same minute and faithful imagery as in the former poem, in the same vivid colours, inspirited by the same impetuous vigour of thought, and diverging and contracting with the same activity of the assimilative and of the modifying faculties; and with a yet larger display, a yet wider range of knowledge and reflection; and lastly, with the same perfect dominion, often *domination*, over the whole world of language. What then shall we say? even this; that Shakspeare, no mere child of nature; no automaton of genius; no

powers to produce / Some work of genuine fancy' (Charles Dunster (trans.), *Frogs*, in *Comedies of Aristophanes: viz.: The Clouds, Plutus, The Frogs, The Birds* (1812), 286).

⁶⁵² Shakspeare, *Venus and Adonis*, 811–16, Coleridge's emphasis. The original has 'those fair arms, which bound him to her breast'. Coleridge perhaps altered this because 'breast' trespassed upon his rather exacting sense of propriety.

passive vehicle of inspiration possessed by the spirit, not possessing it; first studied patiently, meditated deeply, understood minutely, till knowledge become habitual and intuitive wedded itself to his habitual feelings, and at length gave birth to that stupendous power, by which he stands alone, with no equal or second in his own class; to that power, which seated him on one of the two glory-smitten summits of the poetic mountain, with Milton as his compeer not rival. While the former darts himself forth, and passes into all the forms of human character and passion, the one Proteus of the fire and the flood;⁶⁵³ the other attracts all forms and things to himself, into the unity of his own IDEAL. All things and modes of action shape themselves anew in the being of MILTON; while SHAKSPEARE becomes all things, yet for ever remaining himself. O what great men hast thou not produced, England! my country! truly indeed—

Must *we* be free or die, who speak the tongue,
Which SHAKSPEARE spake; the faith and morals hold,
Which MILTON held. In every thing we are sprung
Of earth's first blood, have titles manifold!

WORDSWORTH⁶⁵⁴

⁶⁵³ The reference is to Vergil's *Georgics* 4:387–452, where the shape-changing sea-god Proteus is captured despite his best efforts to escape: 'First in dissembled fire attempts to part: / Then roaring beasts and running streams he tries' (*The Works of Virgil, translated by John Dryden* (3 vols, 1697), 1:231).

⁶⁵⁴ Wordsworth, 'Sonnets Dedicated to Liberty', 1:16, lines 11–14.

CHAPTER 16

Striking points of difference between the Poets of the present age and those of the 15th and 16th centuries—Wish expressed for the union of the characteristic merits of both.

Christendom, from its first settlement on feudal rights, has been so far one great body, however imperfectly organized, that a similar spirit will be found in each period to have been acting in all its members. The study of Shakspeare's *poems* (I do not include his dramatic works, eminently as they too deserve that title) led me to a more careful examination of the contemporary poets both in England and in other countries. But my attention was especially fixed on those of Italy, from the birth to the death of Shakspeare; that being the country in which the fine arts had been most sedulously, and hitherto most successfully cultivated. Abstracted from the degrees and peculiarities of individual genius, the properties common to the good writers of each period seem to establish one striking point of difference between the poetry of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, and that of the present age. The remark may perhaps be extended to the sister art of painting. At least the latter will serve to illustrate the former. In the present age the poet (I would wish to be understood as speaking generally, and without allusion to individual names) seems to propose to himself as his main object, and as that which is the most characteristic of his art, new and striking IMAGES; with INCIDENTS that interest the affections or excite the curiosity. Both his characters and his descriptions he renders, as much as possible, specific and individual, even to a degree of portraiture. In his diction and metre, on the other hand, he is comparatively careless. The measure is either constructed on no previous system, and acknowledges no justifying principle but that of the writer's convenience; or else some mechanical movement is adopted, of which one couplet or stanza is so far an adequate specimen, as that the occasional differences appear evidently to arise from accident, or the qualities of the language itself, not from meditation and an intelligent purpose. And the language from "Pope's translation of Homer," to "Darwin's Temple of Nature,"⁶⁵⁵ may, notwithstanding

⁶⁵⁵ Pope's Homer was published 1715–26; Darwin's poem in 1803.

some illustrious exceptions, be too faithfully characterized, as claiming to be poetical for no better reason, than that it would be intolerable in conversation or in prose. Though alas! even our prose writings, nay even the stile of our more set discourses, strive to be in the fashion, and trick themselves out in the soiled and over-worn finery of the meretricious muse. It is true, that of late a great improvement in this respect is observable in our most popular writers. But it is equally true, that this recurrence to plain sense, and genuine mother English, is far from being general; and that the composition of our novels, magazines, public harangues, &c. is commonly as trivial in thought, and yet enigmatic in expression, as if ECHO and SPHINX had laid their heads together to construct it. Nay, even of those who have most rescued themselves from this contagion, I should plead inwardly guilty to the charge of duplicity or cowardice, if I withheld my conviction, that few have guarded the purity of their native tongue with that jealous care, which the sublime Dante in his tract “De la nobile volgare eloquenza,”⁶⁵⁶ declares to be the first duty of a poet. For language is the armoury of the human mind; and at once contains the trophies of its past, and the weapons of its future conquests. “Animadvertite, quam sit ab improprietate verborum pronum hominibus prolabi in errores circa res!” HOBBS: *Exam. et Exmend. hod. Math.*⁶⁵⁷—“Sat vero, in hâc vitæ brevitate et naturæ obscuritate, rerum est, quibus cognoscendis tempus impendatur, ut confusis et multivocis sermonibus intelligendis illud consumere non opus est. Eheu! quantas strages paravere verba nubila, quæ tot dicunt, ut nihil dicunt—nubes potius, e quibus et in rebus politicis et in ecclesiâ turbines et tonitrua erumpunt! Et proinde recte dictum putamus a Platone in Gorgia: ος αν τα ονοματα ειδει, ισεται και τα πραγματα: et ab Epicteto, αρχη παιδευσως η των ονοματων επισκεψις: et prudentissime Galenus scribit, η των ονοματων χρησις παραχθεισα και την των πραγματος επιταραττει γνωσιν, Egregie vero J. C. Scaliger, in Lib. I. de Plantis: Est *primum*, inquit, *sapientis officium, bene sentire, ut sibi vivat: proximum, bene loqui, ut patriæ vivat.* SENNERTUS *de Puls: Differentiâ.*⁶⁵⁸

⁶⁵⁶ The actual title is *De vulgari eloquentia*; it was written c.1305.

⁶⁵⁷ ‘Observe, how prone men are to slide from improper use of words to actual errors about these things’ (Thomas Hobbes, *Examinatio et emendation mathematicorum hodiernæ* (1660), 4:83).

⁶⁵⁸ ‘It is true that there are many things and secrets of nature worthy of study during our brief life, such that the confused, many-voiced discussions ought not to take up our time. Alas, cloudy words distract us, seeming to say much but in fact saying nothing – these are clouds from which storms break out, damaging both church and state! It is rightly said by Plato in his “Gorgias”, *those who know words properly will know things too*; and as Epictetus says, *the study of words is the beginning of knowledge*; and Galen most prudently puts it, *if there is confusion in the way we use words, then there will be confusion in our*

Something analogous to the materials and structure of modern poetry I seem to have noticed (but here I beg to be understood as speaking with the utmost diffidence) in our common landscape painters. Their foregrounds and intermediate distances are comparatively unattractive: while the main interest of the landscape is thrown into the back ground, where mountains and torrents and castles forbid the eye to proceed, and nothing tempts it to trace its way back again. But in the works of the great Italian and Flemish masters, the front and middle objects of the landscape are the most obvious and determinate, the interest gradually dies away in the back ground, and the charm and peculiar worth of the picture consists, not so much in the specific objects which it conveys to the understanding in a visual language formed by the substitution of figures for words, as in the beauty and harmony of the colours, lines, and expression, with which the objects are represented. Hence novelty of subject was rather avoided than

knowledge of things. Truly does J. C. Scaliger say, in the first book of his “Plants”, the *first duty* (he says) *of the wise man is to think well, for his own sake; the next duty is to speak well, for the sake of his country.* Coleridge adapts a passage from German doctor and writer Daniel Sennert (1527–1637):

Sat enim in hac vitæ brevitæ & Naturæ obscuritate rerum est, quibus cognoscendis tempus impendatur; ut obscuris sermonibus intelligendis illud consumere opus non sit. Et proinde recte dictum putamus a Platone In Gorgia, ὅς ἂν τὰ ὀνόματα εἶδει ἐπίτητα ἴσεται καὶ τὰ πράγματα *cognitionem nominum sequitur ipsarum rerum cognitio*; & ab Epicteto ἀρχὴ παιδεύσεως ἢ τῶν ὀνομάτων ἐπίσκεψις, *initium cognitionis est nominum consideratio* . . . Et Prudentissime Galenus 3. *de simpl. med. facult.*c.12. scribit: ἡ τῶν ὀνομάτων χρῆσις παραχθείσα καὶ τὴν τῶν πράγματων ἐπιταράττει γῶσιν. *Conturbatur nominum usus & rerum ipsarum cognitionem conturbat*; & 3 *de Puls. Differentiis* c.6 *si nomina propria suppetant, his uti nos par est; sinon, definition praestat res singulas explicare, quanta metaphor a nomina ntuari, siquidem docere instituas, non obtundere. Et de vict. rat. in neut. com. 4. t. 18 . . . et egregie J. C. Scalinger, in lib.1.de plantis. Est primum, inquit, Sapientis officium bene scriber, ut sibi vivat: proximum bene loqui, ut patriae vivat.* Quippe quod animal sit jure sociabile, neutiquam suos aget conventus impulsu naturae scriptae formicarum, apumve, aut etiam locustarum more, fed ratione adductus induet sese in commune jus, patieturque ipse, patique alterum jubebit simul. (Sennert, *De Chymicorum cum Aristotelicis et Galenicis consensu ac dissensu* (1619), 110.)

Coleridge has shuffled this around, omitting some passages, pulling out the reference to ‘de Puls. Differentia’ from the material quoted (in fact this refers to Galen’s own *De Pulsuum Differentiis*) and mistakenly attributing it to Sennert himself. He has also inserted a long sentence of his own composition into the middle: ‘Eheu! quantas strages paravere verba nubila, quae tot dicunt ut nihil dicunt – nubes potius, e quibus et in rebus politicis et in ecclesia turbines et tonitrua erumpunt!’ [‘Alas, cloudy words distract us, seeming to say much but in fact saying nothing – these are clouds from which storms break out, damaging both church and state!’] The quotation that Sennert attributes to Plato’s *Gorgias* is not actually in that dialogue (although the *Gorgias* is concerned, as several Platonic dialogues are, with the relationship between ὀνόματα – ‘names’ – and πράγματα – ‘things themselves’). The closest verbal parallel to this particular phrase is Plato’s *Cratylus* 436A.

sought for. Superior excellence in the manner of treating the same subjects was the trial and test of the artist's merit.

Not otherwise is it with the more polished poets of the 15th and 16th century, especially with those of Italy. The imagery is almost always general: sun, moon, flowers, breezes, murmuring streams, warbling songsters, delicious shades, lovely damsels cruel as fair, nymphs, naiads, and goddesses, are the materials which are common to all, and which each shaped and arranged according to his judgment or fancy, little solicitous to add or to particularize. If we make an honorable exception in favor of some English poets, the thoughts too are as little novel as the images; and the fable of their narrative poems, for the most part drawn from mythology, or sources of equal notoriety, derive their chief attractions from the manner of treating them; from impassioned flow, or picturesque arrangement. In opposition to the present age, and perhaps in as faulty an extreme, they placed the essence of poetry in the *art*. The excellence, at which they aimed, consisted in the exquisite polish of the diction, combined with perfect simplicity. This their prime object they attained by the avoidance of every word, which a *gentleman* would *not* use in dignified conversation, and of every word and phrase, which none but a *learned* man *would* use; by the studied position of words and phrases, so that not only each part should be melodious in itself, but contribute to the harmony of the whole, each note referring and conducting to the melody of all the foregoing and following words of the same period or stanza; and lastly with equal labour, the greater because unbetrayed, by the variation and various harmonies of their metrical movement. Their measures, however, were not indebted for their variety to the introduction of new metres, such as have been attempted of late in the "Alonzo and Imogen,"⁶⁵⁹ and others borrowed from the German, having in their very mechanism a specific overpowering tune, to which the generous reader humours his voice and emphasis, with more indulgence to the author than attention to the meaning or quantity of the words; but which, to an ear familiar with the *numerous* sounds of the Greek and Roman poets, has an effect not unlike that of galloping over a paved road in a German stage-waggon without springs. On the contrary, our elder bards both of Italy and England produced a far greater, as well as more charming variety by countless modifications, and subtle balances of sound in the common metres of

⁶⁵⁹ 'ALONZO THE BRAVE, AND FAIR IMOGINE. – A Romance'; a ballad by Matthew Lewis (1775–1818). It originally appeared in Chapter 9 of his Gothic novel, *The Monk* (1796). It was widely excerpted and reprinted.

their country. A lasting and enviable reputation awaits that man of genius, who should attempt and realize a union. Who should recall the high finish; the appropriateness; the facility; the delicate proportion; and above all, the perfusive and omnipresent grace, which have preserved, as in a shrine of precious amber, the “Sparrow” of Catullus, the “Swallow,” the “Grasshopper,” and all the other little loves of Anacreon:⁶⁶⁰ and which, with bright, though diminished glories, revisited the youth and early manhood of christian Europe, in the vales of* Arno, and the groves of Isis and of Cam; and who with these should combine the keener interest, deeper pathos, manlier reflection, and the fresher and more various imagery, which give a value and a name that will not pass away to the poets who have done honor to our own times, and to those of our immediate predecessors.

* These thoughts were suggested to me during the perusal of the Madrigals of GIOVAMBATISTA STROZZI published in Florence (nella Stamperia del Sermartelli) 1st May 1593, by his sons Lorenzo and Filippo Strozzi, with a dedication to their deceased paternal uncle, “Signor Leone Strozzi, Generale delle battaglie di Santa Chiesa”.⁶⁶¹ As I do not remember to have seen either the poems or their author mentioned in any English work, or to have found them in any of the common collections of Italian poetry; and as the little work is of rare occurrence; I will transcribe a few specimens. I have seldom met with compositions that possessed, to my feelings, more of that satisfying *entireness*, that complete adequateness of the manner to the matter which so charms us in Anacreon, joined with the tenderness, and more than the *delicacy* of Catullus. Trifles as they are, they were probably elaborated with great care; yet in the perusal we refer them to a spontaneous energy rather than to voluntary effort. To a cultivated taste there is a delight in *perfection* for its own sake, independent of the material in which it is manifested, that none but a cultivated taste can understand or appreciate.

After what I have advanced, it would appear presumption to offer a translation; even if the attempt were not discouraged by the different genius of the English mind and language, which demands a denser body of thought as the condition of a high polish, than the Italian. I cannot but deem it likewise an advantage in the Italian tongue, in many other respects inferior to our own, that the language of poetry is more distinct from that of prose than with us. From the earlier appearance and established primacy of the Tuscan poets, concurring with the number of independent states, and the diversity of written dialects, the Italians have gained a poetic idiom, as the Greeks before them had obtained from the same causes with greater and more various discriminations—ex. gr. the ionic for their heroic verses; the attic for their iambic; and the two modes of the doric, the lyric or sacerdotal,

⁶⁶⁰ Latin poet, Gaius Valerius Catullus (c. 84–54 BC), and Greek lyric poet, Anacreon (582–485 BC). The “Sparrow” is Catullus 2, a poem about the sadness of an unnamed girl (sometimes taken to be Catullus’s lover, Lesbia) following the death of her pet sparrow. Anacreon 10 is addressed to a swallow and Anacreon 34 is addressed to a grasshopper.

⁶⁶¹ The volume is *Madrigali di Giovambatista Strozzi* (1593). The title page adds ‘Con Licenza, e Privilegio. In Firenze, Nella Stamperia del Sermartelli’ [‘at the Sermartelli Press’]. Coleridge takes other details from the preface. This volume contains nearly 300 madrigals; in 1805 Coleridge copied twenty-seven of these into his notebook ‘as mementoes to myself, if ever I should be happy enough to resume poetic composition’ (*Notebooks*, 2:2599), and selected nine of those for his footnote here.

and the pastoral, the distinctions of which were doubtless more obvious to the Greeks themselves than they are to us.

I will venture to add one other observation before I proceed to the transcription. I am aware that the sentiments which I have avowed concerning the points of difference between the poetry of the present age, and that of the period between 1500 and 1650, are the reverse of the opinion commonly entertained. I was conversing on this subject with a friend, when the servant, a worthy and sensible woman, coming in, I placed before her two engravings, the one a pinky-coloured plate of the day, the other a masterly etching by Salvator Rosa,⁶⁶² from one of his own pictures. On pressing her to tell us, which she preferred, after a little blushing and flutter of feeling, she replied—why, that, Sir! to be sure! (pointing to the *ware* from the Fleet-street print shops) It's so *neat* and elegant. T'other is such a *scratchy* slovenly thing." An artist,⁶⁶³ whose writings are scarcely less valuable than his works, and to whose authority more deference will be willingly paid, than I could even wish, should be shewn to mine, has told us, and from his own experience too, that good taste must be *acquired*, and like all other good things, is the result of thought, and the submissive study of the best models. If it be asked, "But what shall I deem such?" the answer is; *presume* those to be the best, the *reputation* of which has been matured into *fame* by the consent of ages. For wisdom always has a final majority, if not by conviction, yet by acquiescence. In addition to Sir J. Reynolds I may mention Harris of Salisbury,⁶⁶⁴ who in one of his philosophical disquisitions has written on the means of acquiring a just taste with the precision of Aristotle, and the elegance of Quintillian.

MADRIGALE.

Gelido suo ruscel chiaro, e tranquillo
 M'insegnó Amor, di state a mezzo'l giorno:
 Ardean le selve, ardean le piagge, e i collí.
 Ond 'io, ch' al piu gran gielo ardo e sfavillo,
 Subito corsi; ma si puro adorno
 Girsene il vidi, che turbar no'l volli:
 Sol mi specchiava, e'n dolce ombrosa sponda
 Mi stava intento al mormorar dell' onda.

MADRIGALE.

Aure dell' angoscioso viver mio
 Refrigerio soave,
 E dolce si, che piu non mi par grave
 Ne'l arder, ne'l morir, anz' il desio;
 Deh voi'l ghiaccio, e le nubi, e'l tempo rio
 Discacciatene omai, che l'onda chiara,
 E l'ombra non men cara
 A scherzare, a cantar per suoi boschetti,
 E prati Festa ed Allegrezza alletti.

⁶⁶² Italian painter and engraver Salvator Rosa (1615–73).

⁶⁶³ Sir Joshua Reynolds (1723–92), painter, art critic and arbiter of taste.

⁶⁶⁴ James Harris (1709–80), who in his *Philological Inquiries* praises the landscapes of Salvator Rosa ("and a few more") for their 'exquisite Taste', adding: 'but *Perfection*, alas! was not the work of a day. Many Prejudices were to be removed; many gradual Ascents to be made; Ascents from Bad to Good, and from Good to Better before . . . *the tremendous Charms* of a *Salvator Rosa* be equalled in the Scenes of a *Piercefield*, or a *Mount Edgecumb* . . . twas not before the *present* Century, that we established a chaster Taste.' (*The Works of James Harris Esq., with an Account of his Life and Character* (2 vols, 1801), 2:560)

MADRIGALE.

Pacifiche, ma spesso in amorosa
 Guerra co' fiori, el' erba
 Alla stagione acerba
 Verdi Insegne del giglio e della rosa
 Movete, Aure, pian pian; che tregua o posa,
 Se non pace, io ritrovo:
 E so ben dove—Oh vago, a mansueto
 Sguardo, oh labbra d'ambrosia, oh rider lieto!

MADRIGALE.

Hor come un Scoglio stassi,
 Hor come un rio se'n fugge,
 Ed hor crud' Orsa rugge,
 Hor canta Angelo pio: ma che non fassi?
 E che non fammi, O Sassi,
 O Rivi, o belve, o Dii, questa mia vaga
 Non so, se Ninfa, o Maga,
 Non so, se Donna, o Dea,
 Non so, se dolce ó rea?

MADRIGALE.

Piangendo mi baciaste,
 E ridendo il negasté:
 In doglia hebbivi pia,
 In festa hebbivi ria:
 Nacque Gioia di pianti,
 Dolor di riso: O amanti
 Miseri, habbate insieme
 Ognor Paura e Speme.

MADRIGALE.

Bel Fior, tu mi rimembri
 La rugiadosa guancia del bel viso;
 E si vera l'assembri,
 Che'n te sovente, come in lei m'affiso:
 Ed hor dell vago riso,
 Hor dell serene sguardo
 Io pur cieco riguardo. Ma qual fugge,
 O Rosa, il mattin lieve?
 E chi te, come neve,
 E'l mio cor teco, e la mia vita strugge.

MADRIGALE.

ANNA mia, ANNA dolce, oh sempre nuovo
 E piu chiaro contento,
 Quanta dolcezza sento
 In sol ANNA diceudo? Io mi par pruovo,
 Ne quì tra noi ritruovo,
 Ne tra cieli armonia,
 Che del bel nome suo piu dolce sia:
 Altro il Cielo, altro Amore,
 Altro non suona l'Eco del mio core.

MADRIGALE.

Hor che'l prato, e la selva si scolora,
 Al tuo Sereno ombroso
 Muovine, alto Riposo!
 Deh ch 'io riposi una sol notte, un hora!
 Han le fere, e gli augelli, ognun talora
 Ha qualche pace; io quando,
 Lasso! non vonne errando,
 E non piango, e non grido? e qual pur forte?
 Ma poiché, non sente egli, odine, Morte!

MADRIGALE.

Risi e piansi d'Amor; ne però mai
 Se non in fiamma, ó 'n onda, ó 'n vento scrissi;
 Spesso mercè trovai
 Crudel; sempre in me morto, in altri vissi!
 Hor da' più scuri abyssi al Ciel m'alzai,
 Hor ne pur caddi giuso:
 Stanco al fin qui son chiuso!⁶⁶⁵

⁶⁶⁵ The nine Strozzi madrigals Coleridge selects may be translated as follows:

MADRIGAL [1]

The icy brook, so clear and quiet,
 Taught me about Love one summer noonday;
 The woods on fire, the slopes on fire, and the hills too.
 I'm the same – the greater the frost, the more I burn and sparkle,
 Coursing onward, but adorned with such purity
 That I only watched it, not wanting to disturb it:
 So I reflected, sitting on a sweet and shady bank
 Intent upon the murmuring of its waves.

MADRIGAL [2]

Breezes, comfort of my tormented life
 So cooling and gentle,
 So sweet that it no longer seems bad
 To burn, to die – except for the desire!
 Banish frost, and clouds, and foul weather
 Now that the lucid wave,
 And the just-as-precious shade,
 Entices them to play and sing in the groves
 And meadows – Festivity and Merriment.

MADRIGAL [3]

So peaceful, yet often in amorous
 War with the flowers and the grass
 The unripe season reveals the
 Green insignia of the lily and the rose;
 Advance, you Breezes, slowly, slowly, bring truce or respite,
 If you cannot bring full peace, to me;
 And I well know where! – O timid, shy one,
 See! O ambrosial lips, o happy laughter!

MADRIGAL [4]

Now like a rock she stands,
 Now like a stream she flees,
 And now roars like a wild bear,
 Now sings like a pious angel, but that's not her!
 And what *doesn't* she turn me into – stones,
 Or rivers, or beasts, or Gods, in my wanderings?
 I don't know if she's a nymph, or witch,
 I don't know if a woman or goddess,
 I don't know whether sweet or heartless.

MADRIGAL [5]

Weeping you kissed me,
 And laughing you refused me:
 In sorrow you were yielding
 In happiness you were cruel:
 Joy was born of tears,
 Pain of laughter: O wretched
 lovers, may they coincide
 Forever – fear and hope.

MADRIGAL [6]

Lovely Flower, you bring to my memory
 The dewy cheek of her lovely face;
 And yes so real is the resemblance,
 That I as often look upon you as her:
 And think of her sweet laugh,
 Her now-serene look
 Though I'm too blind to it. But how it flees,
 O Rose, the mild morning!
 And how you, like snow –
 And my heart with thee, and my life – melt away!

MADRIGAL [7; Strozzi's original is addressed not to 'ANNA' but to 'Filli'.

Perhaps Coleridge substituted the name because at the time he copied it out his mind was running on that 'Anne' – a singer – who is addressed in 'Lines Composed in a Concert Room' (1799). This woman's identity is unknown; it may have been Anna Maria Crouch (1763–1805), who often performed at Drury Lane.]

My ANNA, sweet ANNA, oh always new
 And ever brighter cadence,
 How sweetly do I feel it
 Just saying ANNA? I have searched,
 But nowhere here among us
 Nor even in the harmony of heaven,
 Is a good name found that is so sweet:
 As in Heaven, so in Love, there's
 Nothing but the sounds of my heart.

MADRIGAL [8]

Now meadow and forest grow dim,
Beneath your shadowy sky
Come forth, highest Repose,
Ah, may I rest but one night, one hour!
Wild beasts, birds and all living things know
Some peace – but as for me,
Alas! when do I not wander
When do I not cry, and weep? and even louder?
But since I am not heard, listen to me, Death.

MADRIGAL [9]

Love made me laugh and cry, but never did
I write except in fire, in water, or in wind;
Often I found that mercy
Was cruel, always feeling myself die as others lived!
Sometimes from a darker abyss I rose to the sky,
Sometimes I fell down again;
Here at last I make my final stand!

CHAPTER 17

Examination of the tenets peculiar to Mr. Wordsworth—Rustic life (above all, *low* and rustic life) especially unfavorable to the formation of a human diction—The *best* parts of language the product of philosophers, not of clowns or shepherds—Poetry essentially ideal and generic—The language of Milton as much the language of *real* life, yea, incomparably more so than that of the cottager.

As far then as Mr. Wordsworth in his preface contended, and most ably contended, for a reformation in our poetic diction, as far as he has evinced the truth of passion, and the *dramatic* propriety of those figures and metaphors in the original poets, which stript of their justifying reasons, and converted into mere artifices of connection or ornament, constitute the characteristic falsity in the poetic style of the moderns; and as far as he has, with equal acuteness and clearness, pointed out the process in which this change was effected, and the resemblances between that state into which the reader's mind is thrown by the pleasureable confusion of thought from an unaccustomed train of words and images; and that state which is induced by the natural language of impassioned feeling; he undertook a useful task, and deserves all praise, both for the attempt and for the execution. The provocations to this remonstrance in behalf of truth and nature were still of perpetual recurrence before and after the publication of this preface. I cannot likewise but add, that the comparison of such poems of merit, as have been given to the public within the last ten or twelve years, with the majority of those produced previously to the appearance of that preface, leave no doubt on my mind, that Mr. Wordsworth is fully justified in believing his efforts to have been by no means ineffectual. Not only in the verses of those who have professed their admiration of his genius, but even of those who have distinguished themselves by hostility to his theory, and depreciation of his writings, are the impressions of his principles plainly visible. It is possible, that with these principles others may have been blended, which are not equally evident; and some which are unsteady and subvertible from the narrowness or imperfection of their basis. But it is more than possible, that these errors of defect or exaggeration, by kindling and feeding the controversy, may have conduced not only

to the wider propagation of the accompanying truths, but that by their frequent presentation to the mind in an excited state, they may have won for them a more permanent and practical result. A man will borrow a part from his opponent the more easily, if he feels himself justified in continuing to reject a part. While there remain important points in which he can still feel himself in the right, in which he still finds firm footing for continued resistance, he will gradually adopt those opinions, which were the least remote from his own convictions, as not less congruous with his own theory, than with that which he reprobates. In like manner with a kind of instinctive prudence, he will abandon by little and little his weakest posts, till at length he seems to forget that they had ever belonged to him, or affects to consider them at most as accidental and “petty annexments,”⁶⁶⁶ the removal of which leaves the citadel unhurt and unendangered.

My own differences from certain supposed parts of Mr. Wordsworth’s theory ground themselves on the assumption, that his words had been rightly interpreted, as purporting that the proper diction for poetry in general consists altogether in a language taken, with due exceptions, from the mouths of men in real life, a language which actually constitutes the natural conversation of men under the influence of natural feelings. My objection is, first, that in *any* sense this rule is applicable only to *certain* classes of poetry; secondly, that even to these classes it is not applicable, except in such a sense, as hath never by any one (as far as I know or have read) been denied or doubted; and lastly, that as far as, and in that degree in which it is *practicable*, yet as a *rule* it is useless, if not injurious, and therefore either need not, or ought not to be practised. The poet informs his reader, that he had generally chosen *low and rustic* life; but not *as* low and rustic, or in order to repeat that pleasure of doubtful moral effect, which persons of elevated rank and of superior refinement oftentimes derive from a happy *imitation* of the rude unpolished manners and discourse of their inferiors. For the pleasure so derived may be traced to three exciting causes. The first is the naturalness, in *fact*, of the things represented. The second is the apparent naturalness of the *representation*, as raised and qualified by an imperceptible infusion of the author’s own knowledge and talent, which infusion does, indeed, constitute it an *imitation* as distinguished from a mere *copy*. The third cause may be found in the reader’s conscious feeling of his superiority awakened by the contrast presented to him; even as for the same purpose the

⁶⁶⁶ ‘When it falls, / Each small annexment, petty consequence / Attends the boisterous ruin’ (Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, 3:3:20–2).

kings and great barons of yore retained, sometimes *actual* clowns and fools, but more frequently shrewd and witty fellows in that *character*. These, however, were not Mr. Wordsworth's objects. *He* chose low and rustic life, "because in that condition the essential passions of the heart find a better soil, in which they can attain their maturity, are less under restraint, and speak a plainer and more emphatic language; because in that condition of life our elementary feelings coexist in a state of greater simplicity, and consequently may be more accurately contemplated, and more forcibly communicated; because the manners of rural life germinate from those elementary feelings; and from the necessary character of rural occupations are more easily comprehended, and are more durable; and lastly, because in that condition the passions of men are incorporated with the beautiful and permanent forms of nature."⁶⁶⁷

Now it is clear to me, that in the most interesting of the poems, in which the author is more or less dramatic, as the "Brothers," "Michael," "Ruth," the "Mad Mother," &c. the persons introduced are by no means taken *from low or rustic life* in the common acceptation of those words; and it is not less clear, that the sentiments and language, as far as they can be conceived to have been really transferred from the minds and conversation of such persons, are attributable to causes and circumstances not necessarily connected with "their occupations and abode." The thoughts, feelings, language, and manners of the shepherd-farmers in the vales of Cumberland and Westmoreland, as far as they are actually adopted in those poems, may be accounted for from causes, which will and do produce the same results in *every* state of life, whether in town or country. As the two principal I rank that INDEPENDANCE, which raises a man above servitude, or daily toil for the profit of others, yet not above the necessity of industry and a frugal simplicity of domestic life; and the accompanying unambitious, but solid and religious, EDUCATION, which has rendered few books familiar, but the bible, and the liturgy or hymn book. To this latter cause, indeed, which is so far *accidental*, that it is the blessing of particular countries and a particular age, not the product of particular places or employments, the poet owes the shew of probability, that his personages might really feel, think, and talk with any tolerable resemblance to his representation. It is an excellent remark of Dr. Henry More's (*Enthusiasmus triumphatus*, Sec. XXXV) that "a man of confined education, but of good parts, by constant reading of the bible will naturally form a more winning and commanding rhetoric than

⁶⁶⁷ Wordsworth, 'Preface to *Lyrical Ballads*' (1800).

those that are learned: the intermixture of tongues and of artificial phrases debasing *their* style.”⁶⁶⁸

It is, moreover, to be considered that to the formation of healthy feelings, and a reflecting mind, *negations* involve impediments not less formidable, than sophistication and vicious intermixture. I am convinced, that for the human soul to prosper in rustic life, a certain vantage-ground is pre-requisite. It is not every man, that is likely to be improved by a country life or by country labours. Education, or original sensibility, or both, must pre-exist, if the changes, forms, and incidents of nature are to prove a sufficient stimulant. And where these are not sufficient, the mind contracts and hardens by want of stimulants: and the man becomes selfish, sensual, gross, and hard-hearted. Let the management of the POOR LAWS in Liverpool, Manchester, or Bristol be compared with the ordinary dispensation of the poor rates in agricultural villages, where the *farmers* are the overseers and guardians of the poor. If my own experience have not been particularly unfortunate, as well as that of the many respectable country clergymen with whom I have conversed on the subject, the result would engender more than scepticism concerning the desirable influences of low and rustic life in and for itself. Whatever may be concluded on the other side, from the stronger local attachments and enterprising spirit of the Swiss, and other mountaineers, applies to a particular mode of pastoral life, under forms of property that permit and beget manners truly republican, not to rustic life in general, or to the absence of artificial cultivation. On the contrary the mountaineers, whose manners have been so often eulogized, are in, general better educated and greater readers than men of equal rank elsewhere. But where this is not the case, as among the peasantry of North Wales, the ancient mountains, with all their terrors and all their glories, are pictures to the blind, and music to the deaf.

I should not have entered so much into detail upon this passage, but here seems to be the point, to which all the lines of difference converge as to their source and centre. (I mean, as far as, and in whatever respect, my poetic creed *does* differ from the doctrines promulgated

⁶⁶⁸ Henry More (1614–87) discusses ‘enthusiasm’ as a sort of mental disease (we might say: mania) rather than a positive attitude to life. This quotation concerns the case of David George, (d.1556), an individual of low birth who declared himself to be the messiah: ‘For a man illiterate, as he was, but of good parts, by constant reading of the Bible will naturally contract a more winning and commanding Rhetorick then those that are learned, the intermixture of tongues and of artificial phrases debasing their style, and making it sound more after the manner of men, though ordinarily there may be more of God in it then in that of the Enthusiast.’ (Henry More, *Enthusiasmus Triumphans, Or, a Discourse of the Nature, Causes, Kinds and Cure of Enthusiasme* (1656), 34)

in this preface.) I adopt with full faith, the principle of Aristotle, that poetry as poetry is essentially* *ideal*, that it avoids and excludes all *accident*; that its apparent individualities of rank, character, or occupation must be *representative* of a class; and that the *persons* of poetry must be clothed with *generic* attributes, with the *common* attributes of the class; not with such as one gifted individual might *possibly* possess, but such as from his situation it is most probable before-hand, that he *would* possess. If my premises are right, and my deductions legitimate, it follows that there can be no *poetic* medium between the swains of Theocritus and those of an imaginary golden age.

The characters of the vicar and the shepherd-mariner in the poem of the "BROTHERS," those of the shepherd of Green-head Gill in the "MICHAEL," have all the verisimilitude and representative quality, that the purposes of poetry can require. They are persons of a known and abiding class, and their manners and sentiments the natural product of circumstances common to the class. Take "MICHAEL" for instance:

An old man stout of heart, and strong of limb;
His bodily frame had been from youth to age
Of an unusual strength: his mind was keen,

* Say not that I am recommending abstractions, for these class-characteristics which constitute the instructiveness of a character, are so modified and particularized in each person of the Shaksperian Drama, that life itself does not excite more distinctly that sense of individuality which belongs to real existence. Paradoxical as it may sound, one of the essential properties of Geometry is not less essential to dramatic excellence; and Aristotle has accordingly required of the poet an involution of the universal in the individual. The chief differences are, that in Geometry it is the universal truth, which is uppermost in the consciousness; in poetry the individual form in which the truth is clothed. With the ancients, and not less with the elder dramatists of England and France, both comedy and tragedy were considered as kinds of poetry. They neither sought in comedy to make us laugh merely; much less to make us laugh by wry faces, accidents of jargon, *slang* phrases for the day, or the clothing of common-place morals in metaphors drawn from the shops or mechanic occupations of their characters. Nor did they condescend in tragedy to wheedle away the applause of the spectators, by representing before them fac-similes of their own mean selves in all their existing meanness, or to work on their sluggish sympathies by a pathos not a whit more respectable than the maudlin tears of drunkenness. Their tragic scenes were meant to *affect* us indeed; but yet within the bounds of pleasure, and in union with the activity both of our understanding and imagination. They wished to transport the mind to a sense of its possible greatness, and to implant the germs of that greatness during the temporary oblivion of the worthless "thing we are," and of the peculiar state, in which each man *happens* to be; suspending our individual recollections and lulling them to sleep amid the music of nobler thoughts. FRIEND, Pages 251, 252.⁶⁶⁹

⁶⁶⁹ This passage from *The Friend* (No. 16, December 1809) is part of the same material reprinted below as 'Satyrane's Letters'. Some later editions of the *Biographia* accordingly cut this footnote, to avoid duplicating material.

Intense and frugal, apt for all affairs,
 And in his shepherd's calling he was prompt
 And watchful more than ordinary men.
 Hence he had learnt the meaning of all winds,
 Of blasts of every tone; and oftentimes
 When others heeded not, he heard the South
 Make subterraneous music, like the noise
 Of bagpipers on distant highland hills.
 The shepherd, at such warning, of his flock
 Bethought him, and he to himself would say,
 The winds are now devising work for me!
 And truly at all times the storm, that drives
 The traveller to a shelter, summon'd him
 Up to the mountains. He had been alone
 Amid the heart of many thousand mists,
 That came to him and left him on the heights.
 So liv'd he, till his eightieth year was pass'd.
 And grossly that man errs, who should suppose
 That the green vallies, and the streams and rocks,
 Were things indifferent to the shepherd's thoughts.
 Fields, where with chearful spirits he had breath'd
 The common air; the hills, which he so oft
 Had climb'd with vigorous steps; which had impress'd
 So many incidents upon his mind
 Of hardship, skill or courage, joy or fear;
 Which like a book preserved the memory
 Of the dumb animals, whom he had sav'd,
 Had fed or shelter'd, linking to such acts,
 So grateful in themselves, the certainty
 Of honorable gains; these fields, these hills
 Which were his living being, even more
 Than his own blood—what could they less? had laid
 Strong hold on his affections, were to him
 A pleasurable feeling of blind love,
 The pleasure which there is in life itself.⁶⁷⁰

On the other hand, in the poems which are pitched at a lower note, as the "HARRY GILL," "IDIOT BOY," &c. the *feelings* are those of human nature in general; though the poet has judiciously laid the *scene* in the country, in order to place *himself* in the vicinity of interesting images,

⁶⁷⁰ Wordsworth, 'Michael: a Pastoral Poem' (1800), 42–79.

without the necessity of ascribing a sentimental perception of their beauty to the persons of his drama. In the "Idiot Boy," indeed, the mother's character is not so much a real and native product of a "situation where the essential passions of the heart find a better soil, in which they can attain their maturity and speak a plainer and more emphatic language,"⁶⁷¹ as it is an impersonation of an instinct abandoned by judgement. Hence the two following charges seem to me not wholly groundless: at least, they are the only plausible objections, which I have heard to that fine poem. The one is, that the author has not, in the poem itself, taken sufficient care to preclude from the reader's fancy the disgusting images of *ordinary, morbid idiocy*, which yet it was by no means his intention to represent. He was even by the "burr, burr, burr," uncounteracted by any preceding description of the boy's beauty, assisted in recalling them. The other is, that the idiocy of the *boy* is so evenly balanced by the folly of the *mother*, as to present to the general reader rather a laughable burlesque on the blindness of anile dotage, than an analytic display of maternal affection in its ordinary workings.

In the "Thorn," the poet himself acknowledges in a note the necessity of an introductory poem, in which he should have portrayed the character of the person from whom the words of the poem are supposed to proceed: a superstitious man moderately imaginative, of slow faculties and deep feelings, "a captain of a small trading vessel, for example, who being past the middle age of life, had retired upon an annuity, or small independent income, to some village or country town of which he was not a native, or in which he had not been accustomed to live. Such men having nothing to do become credulous and talkative from indolence."⁶⁷² But in a poem, still more in a lyric poem (and the NURSE in Shakspeare's *Romeo and Juliet* alone prevents me from extending the remark even to dramatic *poetry*, if indeed even the Nurse itself can be deemed altogether a case in point) it is not possible to imitate truly a dull and garrulous discourser, without repeating the effects of dulness and garrulity. However this may be, I dare assert, that the parts (and these form the far larger portion of the whole) which might as well or still better have proceeded from the poet's own imagination, and have been spoken in his own character, are those which have given, and which will continue to give, universal delight; and that the passages exclusively appropriate to the supposed

⁶⁷¹ Wordsworth, 'Preface to *Lyrical Ballads*'.

⁶⁷² This is quoted from a note Wordsworth added to the poem in later (1805 and after) editions of the *Lyrical Ballads*.

narrator, such as the last couplet of the third stanza;* the seven last lines of the tenth;** and the five following stanzas, with the exception of the four admirable lines at the commencement of the fourteenth, are felt by many unprejudiced and unsophisticated hearts, as sudden

* I've measured it from side to side;
'Tis three feet long, and two feet wide.⁶⁷³

**Nay, rack your brain—'tis all in vain,
I'll tell you every thing I know;
But to the Thorn, and to the Pond
Which is a little step beyond,
I wish that you would go:
Perhaps, when you are at the place,
You something of her tale may trace.

I'll give you the best help I can:
Before you up the mountain go,
Up to the dreary mountain-top,
I'll tell you all I know.
'Tis now some two-and-twenty years
Since she (her name is Martha Ray)
Gave, with a maiden's true good will,
Her company to Stephen Hill;
And she was blithe and gay,
And she was happy, happy still
Whene'er she thought of Stephen Hill.

And they had fixed the wedding-day,
The morning that must wed them both;
But Stephen to another maid
Had sworn another oath;
And with this other maid to church
Unthinking Stephen went—
Poor Martha! on that woeful day
A pang of pitiless dismay
Into her soul was sent;
A fire was kindled in her breast,
Which might not burn itself to rest.

They say, full six months after this,
While yet the summer leaves were green,
She to the mountain-top would go,
And there was often seen.
'Tis said a child was in her womb,
As now to any eye was plain;
She was with child, and she was mad;
Yet often she was sober sad
From her exceeding pain.
Oh me! ten thousand times I'd rather
That he had died, that cruel father!

⁶⁷³ Wordsworth, 'The Thorn', 32-3. In the light of Coleridge's criticism, Wordsworth changed these lines in subsequent editions of the poem, to 'Though but of compass small, and bare / To thirsty suns and parching air.'

and unpleasant sinkings from the height to which the poet had previously lifted them, and to which he again re-elevates both himself and his reader.

If then I am compelled to doubt the theory, by which the choice of *characters* was to be directed, not only *a priori*, from grounds of reason, but both from the few instances in which the poet himself *need* be supposed to have been governed by it, and from the comparative inferiority of those instances; still more must I hesitate in my assent to the sentence which immediately follows the former citation; and which I can neither admit as particular fact, nor as general rule. “The language too of these men has been adopted (purified indeed from what appears to be its real defects, from all lasting and rational causes of dislike or disgust) because such men hourly communicate with the best objects from which the best part of language is originally derived; and because, from their rank in society, and the sameness and narrow circle of their intercourse, being less under the action of social vanity, they convey their feelings and notions in simple and

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Last Christmas when they talked of this,
 Old farmer Simpson did maintain,
 That in her womb the infant wrought
 About its mother’s heart, and brought
 Her senses back again:
 And when at last her time drew near,
 Her looks were calm, her senses clear.

No more I know, I wish I did,
 And I would tell it all to you;
 For what became of this poor child
 There’s none that ever knew:
 And if a child was born or no,
 There’s no one that could ever tell;
 And if ’twas born alive or dead,
 There’s no one knows, as I have said;
 But some remember well,
 That Martha Ray about this time
 Would up the mountain often climb.⁶⁷⁴

⁶⁷⁴ This is Wordsworth’s ‘The Thorn’, 104–65, omitting the four lines (144–7) which Coleridge considered too good to be included in his general dispraise:

Sad case for such a brain to hold
 Communion with a stirring child!
 Sad case, as you may think, for one
 Who had a brain so wild!

unelaborated expressions.”⁶⁷⁵ To this I reply; that a rustic’s language, purified from all provincialism and grossness, and so far re-constructed as to be made consistent with the rules of grammar (which are in essence no other than the laws of universal logic, applied to Psychological materials) will not differ from the language of any other man of common-sense, however learned or refined he may be, except as far as the notions, which the rustic has to convey, are fewer and more indiscriminate. This will become still clearer, if we add the consideration (equally important though less obvious) that the rustic, from the more imperfect developement of his faculties, and from the lower state of their cultivation, aims almost solely to convey *insulated facts*, either those of his scanty experience or his traditional belief; while the educated man chiefly seeks to discover and express those *connections* of things, or those relative *bearings* of fact to fact, from which some more or less general law is deducible. For *facts* are valuable to a wise man, chiefly as they lead to the discovery of the indwelling *law*,⁶⁷⁶ which is the true *being* of things, the sole solution of their modes of existence, and in the knowledge of which consists our dignity and our power.

As little can I agree with the assertion, that from the objects with which the rustic hourly communicates, the best part of language is formed. For first, if to communicate with an object implies such an acquaintance with it, as renders it capable of being discriminately reflected on, the distinct knowledge of an uneducated rustic would furnish a very scanty vocabulary. The few things, and modes of action requisite for his bodily conveniences, would alone be individualized; while all the rest of nature would be expressed by a small number of confused general terms. Secondly, I deny that the words and combinations of words derived from the objects, with which the rustic is familiar, whether with distinct or confused knowledge, can be justly said to form the *best* part of language. It is more than probable, that many classes of the brute creation possess discriminating sounds, by which they can convey to each other notices of such objects as concern their food, shelter, or safety. Yet we hesitate to call the aggregate of such sounds a language, otherwise than metaphorically. The best part of human language, properly so called, is derived from reflection on the acts of the mind itself. It is formed by a voluntary appropriation of fixed symbols to internal acts, to processes

⁶⁷⁵ Wordsworth, ‘Preface to *Lyrical Ballads*’.

⁶⁷⁶ Coleridge deliberately inverts the common eighteenth-century mode of discussing ‘original sin’ as ‘indwelling-sin’: see for instance: John Owen, *The Nature, Power, Deceit and Prevalency of Indwelling-Sin in Believers* (1774).

and results of imagination, the greater part of which have no place in the consciousness of uneducated man; though in civilized society, by imitation and passive remembrance of what they hear from their religious instructors and other superiors, the most uneducated share in the harvest which they neither sowed, nor reaped. If the history of the phrases in hourly currency among our peasants were traced, a person not previously aware of the fact would be surprized at finding so large a number, which three or four centuries ago were the exclusive property of the universities and the schools; and at the commencement of the Reformation had been transferred from the school to the pulpit, and thus gradually passed into common life. The extreme difficulty, and often the impossibility, of finding words for the simplest moral and intellectual processes of the languages of uncivilized tribes has proved perhaps the weightiest obstacle to the progress of our most zealous and adroit missionaries. Yet these tribes are surrounded by the same nature, as our peasants are; but in still more impressive forms; and they are, moreover, obliged to *particularize* many more of them. When therefore Mr. Wordsworth adds, “accordingly, such a language” (meaning, as before, the language of rustic life purified from provincialism) “arising out of repeated experience and regular feelings, is a more permanent, and a far more philosophical language, than that which is frequently substituted for it by poets, who think that they are conferring honor upon themselves and their art in proportion as they indulge in arbitrary and capricious habits of expression;”⁶⁷⁷ it may be answered, that the language, which he has in view, can be attributed to rustics with no greater right, than the style of Hooker or Bacon to Tom Brown or Sir Roger L’Estrange.⁶⁷⁸ Doubtless, if what is peculiar to each were omitted in each, the result must needs be the same. Further, that the poet, who uses an illogical diction, or a style fitted to excite only the low and changeable pleasure of wonder by means of groundless novelty, substitutes a language of *folly* and *vanity*, not for that of the *rustic*, but for that of *good sense* and *natural feeling*.

⁶⁷⁷ Wordsworth, ‘Preface to *Lyrical Ballads*’.

⁶⁷⁸ English theological writer Richard Hooker (1554–1600) and Elizabethan polymath Francis Bacon (1561–1626) – both famous for their refined, ornate prose styles – are repeatedly quoted and discussed in the *Biographia*. Writer of lowbrow parodies, Thomas Brown (1663–1704), and Restoration journalist Sir Roger L’Estrange (1616–1704) are, as far as Coleridge is concerned, at the other end of the prose-style scale. Of the latter, Coleridge wrote disdainfully of ‘the *Black-guard Slang*, which passed for *easy* writing from the Restoration of Charles to the accession of Queen Anne . . . I believe, Sir Roger L’Estrange was the introducer of this Thames-Waterman’s Language – was ably discipled by the facetious Tom Brown’ (Coleridge, *Marginalia*, 1:182).

Here let me be permitted to remind the reader, that the positions, which I controvert, are contained in the sentences—“*a selection of the REAL language of men;*”—“*the language of these men (i.e., men in low and rustic life) I have proposed to myself to imitate, and as far as is possible, to adopt the very language of men.*” “*Between the language of prose and that of metrical composition, there neither is, nor can be, any essential difference.*” It is against these exclusively, that my opposition is directed.

I object, in the very first instance, to an equivocation in the use of the word “real.” Every man’s language varies, according to the extent of his knowledge, the activity of his faculties, and the depth or quickness of his feelings. Every man’s language has, first, its *individualities*; secondly, the common properties of the *class* to which he belongs; and thirdly, words and phrases of *universal* use. The language of Hooker, Bacon, Bishop Taylor, and Burke differs from the common language of the learned class only by the superior number and novelty of the thoughts and relations which they had to convey. The language of Algernon Sidney⁶⁷⁹ differs not at all from that, which every well-educated gentleman would wish to write, and (with due allowances for the undeliberateness, and less connected train, of thinking natural and proper to conversation) such as he would wish to talk. Neither one or the other differ half as much from the general language of cultivated society, as the language of Mr. Wordsworth’s homeliest composition differs from that of a common peasant. For “real” therefore, we must substitute *ordinary*, or *lingua communis*. And this, we have proved, is no more to be found in the phraseology of low and rustic life, than in that of any other class. Omit the peculiarities of each and the result of course must be common to all. And assuredly the omissions and changes to be made in the language of rustics, before it could be transferred to any species of poem, except the drama or other professed imitation, are at least as numerous and weighty, as would be required in adapting to the same purpose the ordinary language of tradesmen and manufacturers. Not to mention, that the language so highly extolled by Mr. Wordsworth varies in every county, nay in every village, according to the accidental character

⁶⁷⁹ Algernon Sidney (1622–83) was an English political writer and anti-Royalist activist, the grand-nephew of Sir Philip Sidney. He was executed for supposedly conspiring against the life of Charles II, although his trial was to a large extent rigged. He was the author of *Discourses Concerning Government* (1698) and *Court Maxims* (1665–6) – the prose of this latter is indeed genteely conversational, in part because Sidney wrote it in the form of a dialogue. As Engell and Bate point out, Wordsworth invokes Algernon Sidney in his sonnet ‘Great Men Have Been Among Us’, and ‘refers to him frequently in *The Friend*, 1:68, (CC) 79, 92, 215, 217, 266, 324. His annotations upon Sidney’s *Works* (1772) were published’ (Engell and Bate, *Biographia Literaria*, 2:56).

of the clergyman, the existence or non-existence of schools; or even, perhaps, as the exciseman, publican, or barber happen to be, or not to be, zealous politicians, and readers of the weekly newspaper *pro bono publico*.⁶⁸⁰ Anterior to cultivation the lingua communis of every country, as Dante has well observed, exists every where in parts, and no where as a whole.⁶⁸¹

Neither is the case rendered at all more tenable by the addition of the words, “*in a state of excitement*.”⁶⁸² For the nature of a man’s words, where he is strongly affected by joy, grief, or anger, must necessarily depend on the number and quality of the general truths, conceptions and images, and of the words expressing them, with which his mind had been previously stored. For the property of passion is not to *create*; but to set in increased activity. At least, whatever new connections of thoughts or images, or (which is equally, if not more than equally, the appropriate effect of strong excitement) whatever generalizations of truth or experience, the heat of passion may produce; yet the terms of their conveyance must have pre-existed in his former conversations, and are only collected and crowded together by the unusual stimulation. It is indeed very possible to adopt in a poem the unmeaning repetitions, habitual phrases, and other blank counters, which an unfurnished or confused understanding interposes at short intervals, in order to keep hold of his subject which is still slipping from him, and to give him time for recollection; or in mere aid of vacancy, as in the scanty companies of a country stage the same player pops backwards and forwards, in order to prevent the appearance of empty spaces, in the procession of Macbeth, or Henry VIIIth. But what assistance to the poet, or ornament to the poem, these can supply, I am at a loss to conjecture. Nothing assuredly can differ either in origin or in mode more widely from the *apparent* tautologies of intense and turbulent feeling, in which the passion is greater and of longer endurance, than to be exhausted or satisfied by a single representation of the image

⁶⁸⁰ ‘For the benefit of the public’. See, for comparison, this *Annual Register* account of the anti-Napoleonic uprising in Spain: ‘It was common to see in the public walks and squares 20 or 30 persons, who kindly undertook to read the newspapers aloud, *pro bono publico*. The same thing took place in the workshops and manufactories’ (‘History of Europe’, *Annual Register of World Events*, 52 (1812), 218).

⁶⁸¹ The reference is to Dante’s treatise *De vulgari eloquentia* (1302–5), Section 16: ‘Itaque, adepti quod querebamus, dicimus illustre, cardinale, aulicum et curiale vulgare in Latio quod omnis latie civitatis est et nullius esse videtur’ [‘So we have come to the end of our search: we can identify the most illustrious, the cardinal, courtly, and churchly vernacular in Italy as that which belongs to every Italian city yet seems to belong to none’].

⁶⁸² Wordsworth’s actual phrasing was: ‘languages of men in a state of vivid sensation’ (‘Preface to *Lyrical Ballads*’, 1800).

or incident exciting it. Such repetitions I admit to be a beauty of the highest kind; as illustrated by Mr. Wordsworth himself from the song of Deborah. "*At her feet he bowed, he fell, he lay down; at her feet he bowed, he fell; where he bowed, there he fell down dead.*"⁶⁸³

⁶⁸³ Wordsworth quoted the passage cited (it's from Judges 5:27) in order to demonstrate that 'repetition and apparent tautology are frequently beauties of the highest kind' (Wordsworth, 'Note to *The Thorn*').

CHAPTER 18

Language of metrical composition, why and wherein essentially different from that of prose—Origin and elements of metre—Its necessary consequences, and the conditions thereby imposed on the metrical writer in the choice of his diction.

I conclude therefore, that the attempt is impracticable; and that, were it not impracticable, it would still be useless. For the very power of making the selection implies the previous possession of the language selected. Or where can the poet have lived? And by what rules could he direct his choice, which would not have enabled him to select and arrange his words by the light of his own judgement? We do not adopt the language of a class by the mere adoption of such words exclusively, as that class would use, or at least understand; but likewise by following the *order*, in which the words of such men are wont to succeed each other. Now this order, in the intercourse of uneducated men, is distinguished from the diction of their superiors in knowledge and power, by the greater *disjunction* and *separation* in the component parts of that, whatever it be, which they wish to communicate. There is a want of that prospectiveness of mind, that *surview*, which enables a man to foresee the whole of what he is to convey, appertaining to any one point; and by this means so to subordinate and arrange the different parts according to their relative importance, as to convey it at once, and as an organized whole.

Now I will take the first stanza, on which I have chanced to open, in the Lyrical Ballads. It is one the most simple and the least peculiar in its language.

In distant countries have I been,
And yet I have not often seen
A healthy man, a man full grown,
Weep in the public road alone.
But such a one, on English ground,
And in the broad highway I met;
Along the broad highway he came,
His cheeks with tears were wet.
Sturdy he seem'd, though he was sad,
And in his arms a lamb he had.⁶⁸⁴

⁶⁸⁴ Wordsworth, 'The Last of the Flock' (1798), 1–10.

The words here are doubtless such as are current in all ranks of life; and of course not less so, in the hamlet and cottage, than in the shop, manufactory, college, or palace. But is this the *order*, in which the rustic would have placed the words? I am grievously deceived, if the following less *compact* mode of commencing the same tale be not a far more faithful copy. "I have been in a many parts far and near, and I don't know that I ever saw before a man crying by himself in the public road; a grown man I mean, that was neither sick nor hurt," &c. &c. But when I turn to the following stanza in "The Thorn:"

At all times of the day and night
 This wretched woman thither goes,
 And she is known to every star
 And every wind that blows:
 And there beside the thorn she sits,
 When the blue day-light's in the skies;
 And when the whirlwind's on the hill,
 Or frosty air is keen and still;
 And to herself she cries,
 Oh misery! Oh misery!
 Oh woe is me! Oh misery!⁶⁸⁵

And compare this with the language of ordinary men; or with that which I can conceive at all likely to proceed, in *real* life, from *such* a narrator, as is supposed in the note to the poem; compare it either in the succession of the images or of the sentences, I am reminded of the sublime prayer and hymn of praise, which MILTON,⁶⁸⁶ in opposition to an established liturgy, presents as a fair *specimen* of common extemporary devotion, and such as we might expect to hear from every self-inspired minister of a conventicle! And I reflect with delight, how little a mere theory, though of his own workmanship, interferes with the processes of genuine imagination in a man of true poetic genius, who possesses, as Mr. Wordsworth, if ever man did, most assuredly does possess,

⁶⁸⁵ Wordsworth, 'The Thorn' (1798), 67–77.

⁶⁸⁶ Coleridge means the prayer that Milton puts into the mouth of a spontaneously praising Adam in *Paradise Lost*, 5:153–208, containing such pre-Wordsworthian 'simple' celebration of nature as:

Ye Mists and Exhalations that now rise
 From Hill or steaming Lake, duskie or grey,
 Till the Sun paint your fleecie skirts with Gold,
 In honour to the Worlds great Author rise,
 Whether to deck with Clouds th' uncoloured skie,
 Or wet the thirstie Earth with falling showers,
 Rising or falling still advance his praise. (*Paradise Lost*, 5:185–91)

THE VISION AND THE FACULTY DIVINE.⁶⁸⁷

One point then alone remains, but that the most important; its examination having been, indeed, my chief inducement for the preceding inquisition. “*There neither is nor can be any essential difference between the language of prose and metrical composition.*”⁶⁸⁸ Such is Mr. Wordsworth’s assertion. Now prose itself, at least, in all argumentative and consecutive works differs, and ought to differ, from the language of conversation; even as* reading ought to differ from talking. Unless therefore the difference denied be that of the mere *words*, as materials common to all styles of writing, and not of the *style* itself in the universally admitted sense of the term, it might be naturally presumed that there must exist a still greater between the ordonnance of poetic composition and that of prose, than is expected to distinguish prose from ordinary conversation.

* It is no less an error in teachers, than a torment to the poor children, to enforce the necessity of reading as they would talk. In order to cure them of *singing* as it is called; that is, of too great a difference. The child is made to repeat the words with his eyes from off the book; and then indeed, his tones resemble talking, as far as his fears, tears and trembling will permit. But as soon as the eye is again directed to the printed page, the spell begins anew; for an instinctive sense tells the child’s feelings, that to utter its own momentary thoughts, and to recite the written thoughts of another, as of another, and a far wiser than himself, are two widely different things; and as the two acts are accompanied with widely different feelings, so must they justify different modes of enunciation. Joseph Lancaster, among his other sophistications of the excellent Dr. Bell’s invaluable system, cures this fault of *singing*, by hanging fetters and chains on the child, to the music of which one of his school-fellows, who walks before, dolefully chaunts out the child’s last speech and confession, birth, parentage, and education. And this soul-benumbing ignominy, this unholy and heart-hardening burlesque on the last fearful infliction of outraged law, in pronouncing the sentence to which the stern and familiarized judge not seldom bursts into tears, has been extolled as a happy and ingenious method of remedying—what? and how?—why, one extreme in order to introduce another, scarce less distant from good sense, and certainly likely to have worse moral effects, by enforcing a semblance of petulant ease and self-sufficiency, in repression, and possible after-perversion of the natural feelings. I have to beg Dr. Bell’s pardon for this connection of the two names, but he knows that contrast is no less powerful a cause of association than likeness.⁶⁸⁹

⁶⁸⁷ Wordsworth, *Excursion*, 1:79.

⁶⁸⁸ Wordsworth, ‘Preface to *Lyrical Ballads*’ (1800).

⁶⁸⁹ Joseph Lancaster (1778–1838) was a Quaker educationalist, who developed the pedagogic philosophy of Andrew Bell (1753–1832), author of *An Experiment in Education* (1797), in ways that many, Coleridge included, considered at variance with its original ‘dynamic’ inclusive principles – not least because of Lancaster’s emphasis on the pedagogic benefits of punishment. It was a topic to which Coleridge often returned in his writing. In a lecture delivered at Bristol on 18 November 1813 he praised Bell and mocked Lancaster for his punitive approach: ‘to load a boy with fetters . . . to expose him to the sneers and insults of his peers because forsooth he reads his lessons in a *singing tone*, was a pitiful mockery of human nature’ (quoted in Engell and Bate, *Biographia Literaria*, 2:61).

There are not, indeed, examples wanting in the history of literature, of apparent paradoxes that have summoned the public wonder as new and startling truths, but which on examination have shrunk into tame and harmless *truisms*; as the eyes of a cat, seen in the dark, have been mistaken for flames of fire.⁶⁹⁰ But Mr. Wordsworth is among the last men, to whom a delusion of this kind would be attributed by any one, who had enjoyed the slightest opportunity of understanding his mind and character. Where an objection has been anticipated by such an author as natural, his answer to it must needs be interpreted in some sense which either is, or has been, or is capable of being controverted. My object then must be to discover some other meaning for the term “*essential difference*” in this place, exclusive of the indistinction and community of the words themselves. For whether there ought to exist a class of words in the English, in any degree resembling the poetic dialect of the Greek and Italian, is a question of very subordinate importance. The number of such words would be small indeed, in our language; and even in the Italian and Greek, they consist not so much of different words, as of slight differences in the *forms* of declining and conjugating the same words; forms, doubtless, which having been, at some period more or less remote, the common grammatic flexions of some tribe or province, had been accidentally appropriated to poetry by the general admiration of certain master intellects, the first established lights of inspiration, to whom that dialect happened to be native.

Essence, in its primary signification, means the principle of *individuation*, the inmost principle of the *possibility* of any thing, *as* that particular thing. It is equivolant to the *idea* of a thing, whenever we use the word *idea*, with philosophic precision. Existence, on the other hand, is distinguished from essence, by the superinduction of *reality*. Thus we speak of the essence, and essential properties of a circle; but we do not therefore assert, that any thing, which really *exists*, is mathematically circular. Thus too, without any tautology we contend for the *existence* of the Supreme Being; that is, for a reality correspondent to the *idea*. There is, next, a *secondary* use of the word *essence*, in which it signifies the point or ground of contra-distinction between two modifications of the same substance or subject. Thus we should be allowed to say, that the style of architecture of Westminster Abbey is *essentially* different from that of Saint Paul, even though both had been built with blocks cut into the same form, and from the same quarry. Only in this

⁶⁹⁰ ‘A flame of fire’ is Biblical. Indeed, perhaps this cat is a sly reference to one of the more improbable visions of the *Revelation of Saint John*: ‘his head and hairs were white like wool, as white as snow, and his eyes were as a flame of fire’ (Revelation 1:14).

latter sense of the term must it have been *denied* by Mr. Wordsworth (for in this sense alone is it *affirmed* by the general opinion) that the language of poetry (i.e. the formal construction, or architecture, of the words and phrases) is *essentially* different from that of prose. Now the burthen of the proof lies with the oppugner, not with the supporters of the common belief. Mr. Wordsworth, in consequence, assigns as the proof of his position, “that not only the language of a large portion of every good poem, even of the most elevated character, must necessarily, except with reference to the metre, in no respect differ from that of good prose; but likewise that some of the most interesting parts of the best poems will be found to be strictly the language of prose, when prose is well written. The truth of this assertion might be demonstrated by innumerable passages from almost all the poetical writings, even of Milton himself.” He then quotes Gray’s sonnet—

In vain to me the smiling mornings shine,
 And reddening Phoebus lifts his golden fire;
 The birds in vain their amorous descant join,
 Or cheerful fields resume their green attire;
 These ears, alas! for other notes repine;
A different object do these eyes require;
My lonely anguish melts no heart but mine,
And in my breast the imperfect joys expire!
 Yet morning smiles the busy race to cheer,
 And new born pleasure brings to happier men:
 The fields to all their wonted tributes bear,
 To warm their little loves the birds complain.
I fruitless mourn to him that cannot hear,
*And weep the more, because I weep in vain;*⁶⁹¹

and adds the following remark:—“It will easily be perceived, that the only part of this Sonnet which is of any value, is the lines printed in italics. It is equally obvious, that except in the rhyme, and in the use of the single word ‘fruitless’ for fruitlessly, which is so far a defect, the language of these lines does in no respect differ from that of prose.”⁶⁹²

An idealist defending his system by the fact, that when asleep we often believe ourselves awake, was well answered by his plain neighbour, “Ah, but when awake do we ever believe ourselves asleep?”⁶⁹³

⁶⁹¹ Thomas Gray, ‘Sonnet on the Death of Richard West’ (1742).

⁶⁹² Wordsworth, ‘Preface to *Lyrical Ballads*’.

⁶⁹³ The ‘idealist’ is Blaise Pascal (1623–62): ‘no person can tell, except by faith, whether he is asleep or awake; because in our sleep we as strongly fancy ourselves to be awake as when we really are so: we imagine that we see space, figure, and motion: we perceive

Things identical must be convertible. The preceding passage seems to rest on a similar sophism. For the question is not, whether there may not occur in prose an order of words, which would be equally proper in a poem; nor whether there are not beautiful lines and sentences of frequent occurrence in good poems, which would be equally becoming as well as beautiful in good prose; for neither the one nor the other has ever been either denied or doubted by any one. The true question must be, whether there are not modes of expression, a *construction*, and an *order* of sentences, which are in their fit and natural place in a serious prose composition, but would be disproportionate and heterogeneous in metrical poetry; and, vice versa, whether in the language of a serious poem there may not be an arrangement both of words and sentences, and a use and selection of (what are called) *figures of speech*, both as to their kind, their frequency, and their occasions, which on a subject of equal weight would be vicious and alien in correct and manly prose. I contend, that in both cases this unfitness of each for the place of the other frequently will and ought to exist.

And first from the *origin* of metre. This I would trace to the balance in the mind effected by that spontaneous effort which strives to hold in check the workings of passion. It might be easily explained likewise in what manner this salutary antagonism is assisted by the very state, which it counteracts; and how this balance of antagonists became organized into *metre* (in the usual acceptation of that term) by a supervening act of the will and judgement, consciously and for the foreseen purpose of pleasure. Assuming these principles, as the data of our argument, we deduce from them two legitimate conditions, which the critic is entitled to expect in every metrical work. First, that as the *elements* of metre owe their existence to a state of increased excitement, so the metre itself should be accompanied by the natural language of excitement.⁶⁹⁴ Secondly, that as these elements are formed into metre

the time pass away; we calculate it; in short, we act as if we were awake. Therefore, as by our own confession, one half of our life is spent in sleep, during which, whatever we may suppose, we have no notion of truth, all our ideas being mere illusions, who can tell but the other half of our life, in which we think ourselves awake, is not also a sleep, a little different from the former, from which we awake when we think ourselves asleep, as we sometimes dream that we dream, heaping one reverie upon another' (Pascal, *Thoughts on Religion, and Other Important Subjects: Recently Translated from the French* (1806), 216). The 'plain neighbour', I take it, is Coleridge himself.

⁶⁹⁴ According to Coleridge's letters, this was one of the matters he and Wordsworth discussed over the period of the composition of the *Lyrical Ballads*: '*Metre itself* implies *passion*, i.e. a state of excitement, both in the Poet's mind, & is expected in that of the Reader—and tho' I stated this to Wordsworth, & he has in some sort stated it in his preface, yet he has [not] done justice to it, nor has he in my opinion sufficiently answered it' (letter to Sotheby, 13 July 1802; Griggs, *Collected Letters*, 2:812).

artificially, by a *voluntary* act, with the design and for the purpose of blending *delight* with emotion, so the traces of present *volition* should throughout the metrical language be proportionately discernible. Now these two conditions must be reconciled and co-present. There must be not only a partnership, but a union; an interpenetration of passion and of will, of *spontaneous* impulse and of *voluntary* purpose. Again, this union can be manifested only in a frequency of forms and figures of speech (originally the offspring of passion, but now the adopted children of power) greater, than would be desired or endured, where the emotion is not voluntarily encouraged and kept up for the sake of that pleasure, which such emotion so tempered and mastered by the will, is found capable of communicating. It not only dictates, but of itself tends to produce, a more frequent employment of picturesque and vivifying language, than would be natural in any other case, in which there did not exist, as there does in the present, a previous and well understood, though tacit, *compact* between the poet and his reader, that the latter is entitled to expect, and the former bound to supply this species and degree of pleasurable excitement. We may in some measure apply to this union the answer of POLIXENES, in the Winter's Tale, to PERDITA's neglect of the streaked gilly-flowers, because she had heard it said,

There is an art which in their piedness shares
With great creating nature.

Pol. Say there be:

Yet nature is made better by no mean,
But nature makes that mean. So, ev'n that art,
Which you say adds to nature, is an art,
That nature makes! You see, sweet maid, we marry
A gentler scyon to the wildest stock:
And make conceive a bark of ruder kind
By bud of nobler race. This is an art,
Which does mend nature—change it rather; but
The art itself is nature.⁶⁹⁵

Secondly, I argue from the EFFECTS of metre. As far as metre acts in and for itself, it tends to increase the vivacity and susceptibility both of the general feelings and of the attention. This effect it produces by the continued excitement of surprize, and by the quick reciprocations of curiosity still gratified and still re-excited, which are too slight indeed to be at any one moment objects of distinct consciousness, yet become

⁶⁹⁵ Shakespeare, *Winter's Tale*, 4:4:87–97.

considerable in their aggregate influence. As a medicated atmosphere, or as wine during animated conversation; they act powerfully, though themselves unnoticed. Where, therefore, correspondent food and appropriate matter are not provided for the attention and feelings thus roused, there must needs be a disappointment felt; like that of leaping in the dark from the last step of a stair-case, when we had prepared our muscles for a leap of three or four.

The discussion on the powers of metre in the preface is highly ingenious and touches at all points on truth. But I cannot find any statement of its powers considered abstractly and separately. On the contrary Mr. Wordsworth seems always to estimate metre by the powers, which it exerts during (and, as I think, in *consequence of*) its combination with other elements of poetry. Thus the previous difficulty is left unanswered, *what* the elements are, with which it must be combined in order to produce its own effects to any pleasurable purpose. Double and tri-syllable rhymes, indeed, form a lower species of wit, and attended to exclusively for their own sake may become a source of momentary amusement; as in poor Smart's distich to the Welch 'Squire who had promised him a hare:

Tell me thou son of great Cadwallader!
Hast sent the hare? or hast thou swallow'd her?⁶⁹⁶

But for any *poetic* purposes, metre resembles (if the aptness of the simile may excuse its meanness) yeast, worthless or disagreeable by itself, but giving vivacity and spirit to the liquor with which it is proportionally combined.

The reference to the "Children in the Wood" by no means satisfies my judgement.⁶⁹⁷ We all willingly throw ourselves back for

⁶⁹⁶ Christopher Smart, 'To the Rev. Mr. Powell, on the Non-Performance of a Promise he made the Author of a Hare' (1752). The relevant passage:

By punctual post the letter came,
With P***ll's hand, and P***ll's name:
Yet there appear'd, for love or money,
Nor hare, nor leveret, nor coney . . .
Thou valiant son of great Cadwallader,
Hast thou a hare, or hast thou swallow'd her? (1-14)

Cadwallader was the seventh-century king of Gwynedd, the last Welsh king to claim lordship over all of Britain.

⁶⁹⁷ Wordsworth's 'Preface' contrasts a parodic quatrain by Samuel Johnson with a stanza from a popular ballad known variously as 'Children in the Wood' or 'Babes in the Wood' (it has the former title in *Percy's Reliques*): 'Long as I have detained my Reader, I hope he will permit me to caution him against a mode of false criticism which has been applied to Poetry in which the language closely resembles that of life and nature. Such verses have been triumphed over in parodies of which Dr. Johnson's Stanza is a fair specimen.'

awhile into the feelings of our childhood. This ballad, therefore, we read under such recollections of our own childish feelings, as would equally endear to us poems, which Mr. Wordsworth himself would regard as faulty in the opposite extreme of gaudy and technical ornament. Before the invention of printing, and in a still greater degree, before the introduction of writing, metre, especially *alliterative* metre, (whether alliterative at the beginning of the words, as in “Pierce Plouman,”⁶⁹⁸ or at the end as in rhymes) possessed an independent value as assisting the recollection, and consequently the preservation, of *any* series of truths or incidents. But I am not convinced by the collation of facts, that the “*Children in the Wood*” owes either its preservation, or its popularity, to its metrical form. Mr. Marshall’s repository⁶⁹⁹ affords a number of tales in prose inferior in pathos and general merit, some of as old a date, and many as widely popular.

I put my hat upon my head,
And walk’d into the Strand,
And there I met another man
Whose hat was in his hand.

‘Immediately under these lines I will place one of the most justly admired stanzas of the “Babes in the Wood.”

These pretty Babes with hand in hand
Went wandering up and down;
But never more they saw the Man
Approaching from the Town.

‘In both of these stanzas the words, and the order of the words, in no respect differ from the most unimpassioned conversation . . . yet the one stanza we admit as admirable, and the other as a fair example of the superlatively contemptible. Whence arises this difference? Not from the metre, not from the language, not from the order of the words; but the matter expressed in Dr. Johnson’s stanza is contemptible. The proper method of treating trivial and simple verses to which Dr. Johnson’s stanza would be a fair parallelism is not to say this is a bad kind of poetry, or this is not poetry, but this wants sense; it is neither interesting in itself, nor can lead to any thing interesting; the images neither originate in that sane state of feeling which arises out of thought, nor can excite thought or feeling in the Reader. This is the only sensible manner of dealing with such verses: Why trouble yourself about the species till you have previously decided upon the genus? Why take pains to prove that an Ape is not a Newton when it is self-evident that he is not a man?’ (Wordsworth, ‘Preface to *Lyrical Ballads*’). Later in this chapter, Coleridge adapts these last words to purpose his own argument.

⁶⁹⁸ 1360–87.

⁶⁹⁹ John Marshall was a London printer who specialised in children’s books (he was known as ‘the children’s friend’). He published Hannah More’s *Cheap Repository Tracts* between 1795 and December 1797; and then, following a dispute with More, continued publishing the tracts on his own until 1799. These were collections of short prose tales aimed at literate poor people, as an alternative to the ‘corrupt and vicious little books and ballads which have been hung out of windows in the most alluring forms or hawked through town and country’. About a third of the stories they contained were simplified Bible stories; others were improving didactic folk tales, such as the ones Coleridge mentions.

TOM HICKATHRIFT, JACK THE GIANT-KILLER, GOODY TWO-SHOES, and LITTLE RED RIDING-HOOD are formidable rivals. And that they have continued in prose, cannot be fairly explained by the assumption, that the comparative meanness of their thoughts and images precluded even the humblest forms of metre. The scene of GOODY TWO-SHOES in the church is perfectly susceptible of metrical narration; and, among the *Θαύματα θαυμαστότατα*⁷⁰⁰ even of the present age, I do not recollect a more astonishing image than that of the “*whole rookery, that flew out of the giant’s beard,*” scared by the tremendous voice, with which this monster answered the challenge of the heroic TOM HICKATHRIFT!⁷⁰¹

If from these we turn to compositions universally, and independently of all early associations, beloved and admired; would the MARIA, THE MONK, or THE POOR MAN’S ASS of STERNE,⁷⁰² be read with more delight, or have a better chance of immortality, had they without any change in the diction been composed in rhyme, than in their present state? If I am not grossly mistaken, the general reply would be in the negative. Nay, I will confess, that in Mr. Wordsworth’s own volumes the ANECDOTE FOR FATHERS, SIMON LEE, ALICE FELL, THE BEGGARS, AND THE SAILOR’S MOTHER, notwithstanding the beauties which are to be found in each of them where the poet interposes the music of his own thoughts, would have been more delightful to me in prose, told and managed, as by Mr. Wordsworth they would have been, in a moral essay, or pedestrian tour.

Metre in itself is simply a stimulant of the attention, and therefore excites the question: Why is the attention to be thus stimulated? Now the question cannot be answered by the pleasure of the metre itself; for this we have shown to be *conditional*, and dependent on the appropriateness of the thoughts and expressions, to which the metrical form is superadded. Neither can I conceive any other

⁷⁰⁰ *Thaumastotata*: ‘Wonder of wonders!’ πολλῶν δὲ θαυμαστοποιῶν θαύματα [‘many of the most wonderful wonders’] (Dio Chrysostom, *Orationes*, 8:132).

⁷⁰¹ Tom Hickathrift (or sometimes Jack Hickathrift) is a folk hero from East Anglian tradition, an individual of unusual strength who killed giants and afterwards distributed their land amongst the common people. The widely reprinted, rather bawdy *History of Thomas Hickathrift* (1780) does not contain Coleridge’s line about the rookery flying out of the giant’s beard, but such a detail is a traditional feature of fairy-tale giants. (‘Of course his giant was prodigious: there was a whole rookery that always flew out of his beard whenever he shook his head; his mouth was like the granite quarries; his teeth were like park palings; and his tongue as big as the farmer’s roller . . . and he was so tall that the maid was obliged to go up a ladder to brush his hair’ (James Pycroft, *Elkerton Rectory, Part 2 of ‘Twenty Years in the Church’* (1862), 102).)

⁷⁰² Laurence Sterne’s *Sentimental Journey Through France and Italy* (1768) contains three interpolated tales, called ‘Maria’, ‘The Monk’ and ‘The Dead Ass’.

answer that can be rationally given, short of this: I write in metre, because I am about to use a language different from that of prose. Besides, where the language is not such, how interesting soever the reflections are, that are capable of being drawn by a philosophic mind from the thoughts or incidents of the poem, the metre itself must often become feeble. Take the three last stanzas of the SAILOR'S MOTHER, for instance. If I could for a moment abstract from the effect produced on the author's feelings, as a man, by the incident at the time of its real occurrence, I would dare appeal to his own judgement, whether in the *metre* itself he found a sufficient reason for *their* being written *metrically*?

And thus continuing, she said
 I had a son, who many a day
 Sailed on the seas; but he is dead;
 In Denmark he was cast away:
 And I have travelled far as Hull, to see
 What clothes he might have left, or other property.

The bird and cage, they both were his;
 'Twas my son's bird; and neat and trim
 He kept it; many voyages
 This singing bird hath gone with him;
 When last he sailed he left the bird behind;
 As it might be, perhaps, from bodings of his mind.

He to a fellow-lodger's care
 Had left it, to be watched and fed,
 Till he came back again; and there
 I found it when my son was dead;
 And now, God help me for my little wit!
 I trail it with me, Sir! he took so much delight in it.⁷⁰³

If disproportioning the emphasis we read these stanzas so as to make the rhymes perceptible, even *tri-syllable* rhymes could scarcely produce an equal sense of oddity and strangeness, as we feel here in finding *rhymes at all* in sentences so exclusively colloquial. I would further ask whether, but for that visionary state, into which the figure of the woman and the susceptibility of his own genius

⁷⁰³ Wordsworth, 'The Sailor's Mother' (1802), 19–36. The 'bird' is a stuffed owl. It was from this poem that Charles Lee (1870–1956) and D. B. Wyndham Lewis (1891–1969) took the title for their designedly hilarious and much-reprinted compendium, *The Stuffed Owl: an Anthology of Bad Verse* (1930).

had placed the poet's imagination (a state, which spreads its influence and coloring over all, that co-exists with the exciting cause, and in which

The simplest, and the most familiar things
Gain a strange power of spreading awe around* them)

I would ask the poet whether he would not have felt an abrupt down-fall in these verses from the preceding stanza?

The ancient spirit is not dead;
Old times, thought I, are breathing there!
Proud was I, that my country bred
Such strength, a dignity so fair!
She begged an alms, like one in poor estate;
I looked at her again, nor did my pride abate.⁷⁰⁴

It must not be omitted, and is besides worthy of notice, that those stanzas furnish the only fair instance that I have been able to discover in all Mr. Wordsworth's writings, of an *actual* adoption, or true imitation, of the *real* and *very* language of *low and rustic life*, freed from provincialisms.

Thirdly, I deduce the position from all the causes elsewhere assigned, which render metre the proper form of poetry, and poetry imperfect and defective without metre. Metre therefore having been connected with *poetry* most often and by a peculiar fitness, whatever else is combined with *metre* must, though it be not itself *essentially* poetic, have nevertheless some property in common with poetry, as an intermedium of affinity, a sort, (if I may dare borrow a well-known

* Altered from the description of Night-Mair in the Remorse.

Oh Heaven! 'twas frightful! Now run-down and stared at,
By hedious shapes that cannot be remembered;
Now seeing nothing and imaging nothing;
But only being afraid—stiffled with fear!
While every goodly or familiar form
Had a strange power of spreading terror round me.

N.B. Though Shakspeare has for his own *all-justifying* purposes introduced the Night-Mare with her own foals, yet Mair means a Sister, or perhaps a Hag.⁷⁰⁵

⁷⁰⁴ Wordsworth, 'The Sailor's Mother', 7-12.

⁷⁰⁵ Coleridge quotes from his own *Remorse*, 4:1:68-73. The Shakespeare reference is to *King Lear*, 3:4:120-1, 'Swithold footed twice the 'old, / He met the night-mare and her nine-fold'. Coleridge is quite right that, etymologically speaking, the 'mare' in *nightmare* has nothing to do with horses.

phrase from technical chemistry), of *mordaunt*⁷⁰⁶ between it and the superadded metre. Now poetry, Mr. Wordsworth truly affirms, does always imply PASSION: which word must be here understood in its most general sense, as an excited state of the feelings and faculties. And as every passion has its proper pulse, so will it likewise have its characteristic modes of expression. But where there exists that degree of genius and talent which entitles a writer to aim at the honors of a poet, the very *act* of poetic composition *itself* is, and is *allowed* to imply and to produce, an unusual state of excitement, which of course justifies and demands a correspondent difference of language, as truly, though not perhaps in as marked a degree, as the excitement of love, fear, rage, or jealousy. The vividness of the descriptions or declamations in DONNE, or DRYDEN, is as much and as often derived from the force and fervour of the describer, as from the reflections forms or incidents which constitute their subject and materials. The wheels take fire from the mere rapidity of their motion.⁷⁰⁷ To what extent, and under what modifications, this may be admitted to act, I shall attempt to define in an after remark on Mr. Wordsworth's reply to this objection, or rather on his objection to this reply, as already anticipated in his preface.

Fourthly, and as intimately connected with this, if not the same argument in a more general form, I adduce the high spiritual instinct of the human being impelling us to seek unity by harmonious adjustment, and thus establishing the principle that *all* the parts of an organized whole must be assimilated to the more *important* and *essential* parts. This and the preceding arguments may be strengthened by the reflection, that the composition of a poem is among the *imitative* arts; and that imitation, as opposed to copying, consists either in the interfusion of the SAME throughout the radically DIFFERENT, or of the different throughout a base radically the same.

Lastly, I appeal to the practice of the best poets, of all countries and

⁷⁰⁶ 'Of the various colouring substances, used in the art of dyeing, some may be permanently attached to the dyed fabric, and fully communicate their colour to it, without the intervention of any other substance; while others leave a mere stain, removeable by washing with water. The latter class, however, may be durably attached by the mediation of what was formerly called a *mordaunt*, but has since been more properly termed, by Mr. Henry, a basis.' (William Henry, *The Elements of Experimental Chemistry* (1815), 231)

⁷⁰⁷ The fiery wheels are from the Biblical book of Ezekiel 1:15–20 and 10:1–22. This sentence, however, is lifted from William Hazlitt's description of the oratory of Edmund Burke: 'The wheels of his imagination did not catch fire from the rottenness of the materials, but from the rapidity of their motion' (Hazlitt, *The Eloquence of the British Senate, being a Selection of the Best Speeches of the Most Distinguished English, Irish and Scotch Parliamentary Speakers* (2 vols, 1809), 2:214).

in all ages, as *authorizing* the opinion, (*deduced* from all the foregoing) that in every import of the word ESSENTIAL, which would not here involve a mere truism, there may be, is, and ought to be, an *essential* difference between the language of prose and of metrical composition.

In Mr. Wordsworth's criticism of GRAY's Sonnet, the reader's sympathy with his praise or blame of the different parts is taken for granted rather perhaps too easily. He has not, at least, attempted to win or compel it by argumentative analysis. In *my* conception at least, the lines rejected as of no value do, with the exception of the two first, differ as much and as little from the language of common life, as those which he has printed in italics as possessing genuine excellence. Of the five lines thus honorably distinguished, two of them differ from prose even more widely, than the lines which either precede or follow, in the *position* of the words.

*A different object do these eyes require;
My lonely anguish melts no heart but mine;
And in my breast the imperfect joys expire.*

But were it otherwise, what would this prove, but a truth, of which no man ever doubted? Videlicet, that there are sentences, which would be equally in their place both in verse and prose. Assuredly it does not prove the point, which alone requires proof; namely, that there are not passages, which would suit the one, and not suit the other. The first line of this sonnet is distinguished from the ordinary language of men by the epithet to morning. (For we will set aside, at present, the consideration, that the particular word "*smiling*" is hackneyed, and (as it involves a sort of personification) not quite congruous with the common and material attribute of *shining*.) And, doubtless, this adjunction of epithets for the purpose of additional description, where no particular attention is demanded for the quality of the thing, would be noticed as giving a poetic cast to a man's conversation. Should the sportsman⁷⁰⁸ exclaim, "*come boys! the rosy morning calls you up,*" he will be supposed to have some song in his head. But no one suspects this, when he says, "A wet morning shall not confine us to our beds." This then is either a defect in poetry, or it is not. Whoever should decide in the *affirmative*, I would request him to re-peruse any one poem, of any confessedly great poet from Homer to Milton, or from Eschylus to Shakspeare; and to strike out (in thought I mean) every instance of this kind. If the number of these fancied erasures did not startle him;

⁷⁰⁸ Coleridge means someone pursuing one of the three sports (hunting, fishing, shooting), not somebody playing games such as cricket or football.

or if he continued to deem the work improved by their total omission; he must advance reasons of no ordinary strength and evidence, reasons grounded in the essence of human nature. Otherwise I should not hesitate to consider him as a man not so much *proof against* all authority, as *dead* to it.

The second line,

And reddening Phœbus lifts his golden fire.

has indeed almost as many faults as words. But then it is a bad line, not because the language is distinct from that of prose; but because it conveys incongruous images, because it confounds the cause and the effect, the real *thing* with the personified *representative* of the thing; in short, because it differs from the language of GOOD SENSE! That the "Phœbus" is hacknied, and a school-boy image, is an *accidental* fault, dependent on the age in which the author wrote, and not deduced from the nature of the thing. That it is part of an exploded mythology, is an objection more deeply grounded. Yet when the torch of ancient learning was re-kindled, so cheering were its beams, that our eldest poets, cut off by christianity from all *accredited* machinery, and deprived of all *acknowledged* guardians and symbols of the great objects of nature, were naturally induced to adopt, as a *poetic* language, those fabulous personages, those forms of the* supernatural in nature, which had given them such dear delight in the poems of their great masters. Nay, even at this day what scholar of genial taste will not so far sympathize with them, as to read with pleasure in PETRARCH, CHAUCER, or SPENSER, what he would perhaps condemn as puerile in a modern poet?

I remember no poet, whose writings would safelier stand the test of Mr. Wordsworth's theory, than SPENSER. Yet will Mr. Wordsworth say, that the style of the following stanzas is either undistinguished from prose, and the language of ordinary life? Or that it is vicious, and that the stanzas are *blots* in the Faery Queen?

* But still more by the mechanical system of philosophy which has needlessly infected our theological opinions, and teaching us to consider the world in its relation to God, as of a building to its mason leaves the idea of omnipresence a mere abstract notion in the state room of our reason.⁷⁰⁹

⁷⁰⁹ See, for example: 'We should reflect, that, as the operative Mason erects his building according to the designs laid down by the architect for him on the tressel-board, which is to direct his work; so ought we to raise our spiritual building according to the designs laid down for us by the Grand Architect of the world, in the Holy Bible, our spiritual tressel-board' (William Hutchinson, *The Spirit of Masonry in Moral and Elucidatory Lectures* (1795), 256).

By this the northern waggoner had set
 His sevenfold teme behind the stedfast starre,
 That was in ocean waves yet never wet,
 But firm is fixt and sendeth light from farre
 To all that in the wild deep wandering are.
 And chearful chaunticleer with his note shrill
 Had warned once that Phœbus' fiery carre
 In haste was climbing up the easterne hill,
 Full envious that night so long his room did fill.

Book I. Can. 2. St. 2.

At last the golden orientall gate
 Of greatest heaven gan to open fayre,
 And Phœbus fresh as brydegrome to his mate,
 Came dauncing forth, shaking his deawie hayre,
 And hurl'd his glist'ring beams through gloomy ayre;
 Which when the wakeful elfe perceived, streightway
 He started up, and did him selfe prepayre
 In sun-bright armes, and battailous array;
 For with that pagan proud he combat will that day.

B. I. Can 5, St. 2.

On the contrary to how many passages, both in hymn books and in blank verse poems, could I (were it not invidious) direct the reader's attention, the style of which is most *unpoetic, because*, and only because, it is the style of *prose*? He will not suppose me capable of having in my mind such verses, as

I put my hat upon my head
 And walk'd into the strand;
 And there I met another man,
 Whose hat was in his hand.⁷¹⁰

⁷¹⁰ This quatrain (quoted by Wordsworth in the 'Preface to *Lyrical Ballads*') is by Samuel Johnson, who 'excelled also in the talent of burlesque versification, and, upon occasion of a discourse at Sir Joshua Reynolds's on Dr. Percy's "Reliques of Ancient English poetry," in which the beautiful simplicity of many of the ballads therein contained was remarked with some exaggeration, Johnson contended, that what was called simplicity was, in truth, inanity; and, to illustrate his argument, and ridicule that kind of poetry, uttered the following impromptu:

As with my hat upon my head,
 I walk'd along the Strand,
 I there did meet another man,
 With his hat in his hand,

And it being at a tea-conversation, he, addressing himself to Miss Reynolds, went on rhyming thus,

To such specimens it would indeed be a fair and full reply, that these lines are not bad, because they are *unpoetic*; but because they are empty of all sense and feeling; and that it were an idle attempt to prove that an ape is not a Newton, when it is evident that he is not a man.⁷¹¹ But the sense shall be good and weighty, the language correct and dignified, the subject interesting and treated with feeling; and yet the style shall, notwithstanding all these merits, be justly blameable as *prosaic*, and solely because the words and the order of the words would find their appropriate place in prose, but are not suitable to *metrical* composition. The “Civil Wars” of Daniel⁷¹² is an instructive, and even interesting work; but take the following stanzas (and from the hundred instances which abound I might probably have selected others far more striking)

And to the end we may with better ease
Discern the true discourse, vouchsafe to shew
What were the times foregoing near to these,
That these we may with better profit know.
Tell how the world fell into this disease;
And how so great distemperature did grow;
So shall we see with what degrees it came;
How things at full do soon wax out of frame.

Ten kings had from the Norman conqu’ror reign’d
With intermixt and variable fate,
When England to her greatest height attain’d
Of power, dominion, glory, wealth, and state;
After it had with much ado sustain’d
The violence of princes with debate
For titles, and the often mutinies
Of nobles for their ancient liberties.

I pray thee, gentle Renny dear,
That thou wilt give to me,
With cream and sugar temper’d well,
Another dish of tea.

(*The Works of Samuel Johnson, L.L.D.: Together with his life, and notes on his Lives of the Poets, by Sir John Hawkins* (11 vols, 1787), 1:389)

⁷¹¹ Wordsworth’s phrase, from the passage quoted above: “Why take pains to prove that an Ape is not a Newton when it is self-evident that he is not a man?”

⁷¹² English historian and poet, Samuel Daniel (1562–1619), whose *Civile wars between the two houses of Lancaster and Yorke* (8 books, 1595–1609) treats the Wars of the Roses as an epic poem. “Edmund Bolton and Gabriel Harvey . . . both mention him with respect as a polisher and purifier of the English language. Browne calls him “well-languaged Daniel;” and Drummond esteems him “for sweetness in rhyming second to none.” (*A Complete Edition of the Poets of Great Britain* (1793), 4:113). Coleridge quotes from the opening stanza of Daniel’s epic, and then makes references to Browne’s description.

For first the Norman, conqu'ring all by might,
 By might was forced to keep what he had got;
 Mixing our customs and the form of right
 With foreign constitutions, he had brought;
 Mastering the mighty, humbling the poorer wight,
 By all severest means that could be wrought;
 And making the succession doubtful rent
 His new-got state and left it turbulent.

B. 1. St. VII. VIII & IX

Will it be contended on the one side, that these lines are mean and senseless? Or on the other, that they are not prosaic, and for *that* reason unpoetic? This poet's well-merited epithet is that of the "*well-languaged Daniel*;" but likewise and by the consent of his contemporaries no less than of all succeeding critics, the "prosaic Daniel." Yet those, who thus designate this wise and amiable writer from the frequent incorrespondency of his diction to his metre in the majority of his compositions, not only deem them valuable and interesting on other accounts; but willingly admit, that there are to be found throughout his poems, and especially in his *Epistles* and in his *Hymen's Triumph*, many and exquisite specimens of that style which, as the *neutral ground* of prose and verse, is common to both. A fine and almost faultless extract, eminent as for other beauties, so for its perfection in this species of diction, may be seen in LAMB'S *Dramatic Specimens*, &c.⁷¹³ a work of various interest from the nature of the selections themselves (all from the plays of Shakspeare's contemporaries) and deriving a high additional value from the notes, which are full of just and original criticism, expressed with all the freshness of originality.

Among the possible effects of practical adherence to a theory, that aims to *identify* the style of prose and verse (if it does not indeed claim for the latter a yet nearer resemblance to the average style of men in the vivâ voce intercourse of real life) we might anticipate the following as not the least likely to occur. It will happen, as I have indeed before observed, that the metre itself, the sole acknowledged difference, will occasionally become metre to the eye only. The existence of *prosaisms*, and that they detract from the merit of a poem, *must* at length be conceded, when a number of successive lines can be rendered, even to the most delicate ear, unrecognizable as verse, or as having even been intended for verse, by simply transcribing them as prose: when if the

⁷¹³ Charles Lamb, *Specimens of English dramatic poets, who lived about the time of Shakspeare, with Notes* (2 vols, 1808), 1:238–42, which includes three extracts from Daniel's 'Hymen's Triumphs'.

poem be in blank verse, this can be effected without any alteration, or at most by merely restoring one or two words to their proper places, from which they have been* transplanted for no assignable cause or reason but that of the author's convenience; but if it be in rhyme, by

* As the ingenious gentleman under the influence of the Tragic Muse contrived to dislocate, "I wish you a good morning, Sir! Thank you, Sir, and I wish you the same," into two blank-verse heroics:—

To you a morning good, good Sir! I wish.

You, Sir! I thank: to you the same wish I.⁷¹⁴

In those parts of Mr. Wordsworth's works which I have thoroughly studied, I find fewer instances in which this would be practicable than I have met in many poems, where an approximation of prose has been sedulously and on system guarded against. Indeed excepting the stanzas already quoted from the *Sailor's Mother*, I can recollect but one instance: viz. a short passage of four or five lines in *THE BROTHERS*,⁷¹⁵ that model of English pastoral, which I never yet read with unclouded eye.—"James, pointing to its summit, over which they had all purposed to return together, informed them that he would wait for them there. They parted, and his comrades passed that way some two hours after, but they did not find him at the appointed place, *a circumstance of which they took no heed*: but one of them going by chance into the house, which at this time was James's house, learnt *there*, that nobody had seen him all that day." The only charge which has been made is in the position of the little word *there* in two instances, the position in the original being clearly such as is not adopted in ordinary conversation. The other words printed in *italics* were so marked because, though good and genuine English, they are not the phraseology of common conversation either in the word put in apposition, or in the connection by the genitive pronoun. Men in general would have said, "but that was a circumstance they paid no attention to, or took no notice of," and the language is, on the theory of the preface, justified only by the narrator's being the *Vicar*. Yet if any ear *could* suspect, that these sentences were ever printed as metre, on those very words alone could the suspicion have been grounded.

⁷¹⁴ Coleridge seems to have styled his bathetic 'tragic' couplet after an example in Alexander Pope's mock-treatise, *Peri Bathous, Or the Art of Sinking in Poetry* (1727), or more precisely after the report of that example in the *Biographia Dramatica*: 'Pope, in his *Art of Sinking in Poetry*, which was published after the death of Rowe, has the following observation: "I have seen a play professedly writ in the style of Shakspeare, wherein the resemblance lay in one single line,

"And so good morrow t'ye, good master lieutenant."

The satirist, however, was mistaken. The line is not in *Jane Shore*, but in *Lady Jane Gray*, which professes no imitation of Shakspeare; nor is the quotation a fair one, being interpolated to render it ridiculous.

"And so good morning, good master lieutenant,"

is the verse as printed by Rowe.' (*Biographia Dramatica, or a Companion to the Playhouse: containing Historical and critical Memoirs, and original Anecdotes, of British and Irish Dramatic Writers* (3 vols, 1812) 2:341)

⁷¹⁵ Wordsworth's *The Brothers* (1800), 362–71:

Upon its aëry summit crowned with heath,
The loiterer, not unnoticed by his comrades,
Lay stretched at ease; but, passing by the place
On their return, they found that he was gone.
No ill was feared; till one of them by chance
Entering, when evening was far spent, the house
Which at that time was James's home, there learned
That nobody had seen him all that day.

the mere exchange of the final word of each line for some other of the same meaning, equally appropriate, dignified and euphonic.

The answer or objection in the preface to the anticipated remark “that metre paves the way to other distinctions,” is contained in the following words. “The distinction of rhyme and metre is voluntary and uniform, and not like that produced by (what is called) poetic diction, arbitrary and subject to infinite caprices, upon which no calculation whatever can be made. In the one case the reader is utterly at the mercy of the poet respecting what imagery or diction he may choose to connect with the passion.”⁷¹⁶ But is this a *poet*, of whom a poet is speaking? No surely! rather of a fool or madman: or at best of a vain or ignorant phantast! And might not Brains so wild and so deficient make just the same havock with rhymes and metres, as they are supposed to effect with modes and figures of speech? How is the reader at the *mercy* of such men? If he continue to read their nonsense, is it not his own fault? The ultimate end of criticism is much more to establish the principles of writing, than to furnish *rules* how to pass judgement on what has been written by others; if indeed it were possible that the two could be separated. But if it be asked, by what principles the poet is to regulate his own style, if he do not adhere closely to the sort and order of words which he hears in the market, wake, high-road, or plough-field? I reply; by principles, the ignorance or neglect of which would convict him of being no *poet*, but a silly or presumptuous usurper of the name! By the principles of grammar, logic, psychology! In one word by such a knowledge of the facts, material and spiritual, that most appertain to his art, as if it have been governed and applied by *good sense*, and rendered instinctive by habit, becomes the representative and reward of our past conscious reasonings, insights, and conclusions, and acquires the name of TASTE.⁷¹⁷ By what *rule* that does not leave the reader at the poet’s mercy, and the poet at his own, is the latter to distinguish between the language suitable to *suppressed*, and the language, which is characteristic of *indulged*, anger? Or between that of rage and that of jealousy? Is it obtained by wandering about in search of angry or jealous people in uncultivated society, in order to copy their words? Or not far rather by the power of imagination proceeding upon the

⁷¹⁶ Wordsworth, ‘Preface to *Lyrical Ballads*’.

⁷¹⁷ ‘The last thing mentioned as necessary to form good taste is Judgment, or Good Sense . . . as to the improvement of taste in this particular;—I shall only remark, that whatever tends to correct, and methodise, our knowledge, either of men, or of things, is to be considered as a means of improving the judgment’ (James Beattie, *Dissertations Moral and Critical* (2 vols, 1783), 1:220, 228).

all in each of human nature? By *meditation*, rather than by *observation*? And by the latter in consequence only of the former? As eyes, for which the former has pre-determined their field of vision, and to which, as to *its* organ, it communicates a microscopic power? There is not, I firmly believe, a man now living, who has from his own inward experience a clearer intuition, than Mr. Wordsworth himself, that the last mentioned are the true sources of *genial* discrimination. Through the same process and by the same creative agency will the poet distinguish the degree and kind of the excitement produced by the very act of poetic composition. As intuitively will he know, what differences of style it at once inspires and justifies; what intermixture of conscious volition is natural to that state; and in what instances such figures and colors of speech degenerate into mere creatures of an arbitrary purpose, cold technical artifices of ornament or connection. For even as truth is its own light and evidence, discovering at once itself and falsehood, so is it the prerogative of poetic genius to distinguish by parental instinct its proper offspring from the changelings, which the gnomes of vanity or the fairies of fashion may have laid in its cradle or called by its names. Could a rule be given from *without*, poetry would cease to be poetry, and sink into a mechanical art. It would be *μορφωσις*, not *ποίησις*.⁷¹⁸ The *rules* of the IMAGINATION are themselves the very powers of growth and production. The *words* to which they are reducible, present only the outlines and external appearance of the fruit. A deceptive counterfeit of the superficial form and colors may be elaborated; but the marble peach feels cold and heavy, and *children* only put it to their mouths. We find no difficulty in admitting as excellent, and the legitimate language of poetic fervor self-impassioned, DONNE'S apostrophe to the Sun in the second stanza of his "Progress of the Soul."

Thee, eye of heaven! this great soul envies not:
 By thy male force is all, we have, begot.
 In the first East thou now beginn'st to shine,
 Suck'st early balm and island spices there;
 And wilt anon in thy loose-rein'd career
 At Tagus, Po, Seine, Thames, and Danow dine,

⁷¹⁸ The second term, 'ποίησις' (*poiēsis*), means 'a making, a creation, a production', and is used of poetry in Aristotle and Plato. The first, 'μορφωσις' (*morphōsis*), means 'a shaping, a bringing into shape'; although Coleridge may have in mind the New Testament use of the word as 'mere semblance' or 'outward appearance': 'An instructor of the foolish, a teacher of babes, which hast the form [μορφωσις] of knowledge and of the truth in the law' (Romans 2:20); 'Having a form [μορφωσις] of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away' (2 Timothy 3:5).

And see at night this western world of mine:
 Yet hast thou not more nations seen, than she,
 Who before thee one day began to be,
 And, thy frail light being quenched, shall long, long outlive thee.⁷¹⁹

Or the next stanza but one:

Great Destiny, the commissary of God,
 That hast marked out a path and period
 For ev'ry thing! Who, where we offspring took,
 Our ways and ends see'st at one instant: thou
 Knot of all causes! Thou, whose changeless brow
 Ne'er smiles nor frowns! O vouchsafe thou to look,
 And shew my story in thy eternal book, &c.

As little difficulty do we find in excluding from the honors of unaffected warmth and elevation the madness prepense of Pseudopoesy, or the startling *hysteric* of weakness over-exerting itself, which bursts on the unprepared reader in sundry odes and apostrophes to abstract terms. Such are the Odes to Jealousy, to Hope, to Oblivion, and the like, in Dodsley's collection⁷²⁰ and the magazines of that day, which seldom fail to remind me of an Oxford copy of verses on the two SUTTONS,⁷²¹ commencing with

INOCULATION, heavenly maid! descend!

It is not to be denied that men of undoubted talents, and even poets of true, though not of first-rate, genius, have from a mistaken theory

⁷¹⁹ Donne, 'The Second Anniversarie: Of the Progress of the Soul' (1612), lines 11–20. The stanza quoted below is lines 31–7.

⁷²⁰ Robert Dodsley (1703–64) edited a variety of literary anthologies with the word 'Collection' in the title. Coleridge is presumably referring to *A Collection of Poems in Six Volumes. By Several Hands: Printed by J. Hughs, for J. Dodsley, in Pall-Mall* (1765), which contains (though not the precise titles listed here) a 'Hymn on Solitude', an 'Ode on Melancholy', an 'Ode to Independency', one 'On Wit', 'Grace and Good-nature', 'Immortality', and an 'Ode to Death'.

⁷²¹ Daniel and Robert Sutton were physicians who improved smallpox inoculation techniques in the 1760s. Coleridge goes on to quote – or, rather, mischevously to misquote – a poem about inoculation (actually addressed to Lady Mary Wortley Montagu and not to the Sutton brothers at all) by one William Lipscomb (1754–1842), called 'Beneficial Effects of Inoculation' (1772):

Her country's champion Montagu arose.
 Pure patriot zeal her every thought inspir'd,
 Glow'd on her cheek, and all her bosom fir'd: . . .
 INOCULATION, heaven instructed maid,
 She woo'd from Turkey's shores to Britain's aid. (*Gentleman's Magazine*, 53 (1783),
 869)

deluded both themselves and others in the opposite extreme. I once read to a company of sensible and well-educated women the introductory period of Cowley's preface to his *Pindaric Odes, written in imitation of the style and manner of the odes of Pindar*. "If (says Cowley) a man should undertake to translate Pindar, word for word, it would be thought that one madman had translated another; as may appear, when he, that understands not the original, reads the verbal traduction of him into Latin prose, than which nothing seems more raving."⁷²² I then proceeded with his own free version of the second Olympic, composed for the charitable purpose of *rationalizing* the Theban Eagle.

Queen of all harmonious things,
 Dancing words and speaking strings,
 What God, what hero, wilt thou sing?
 What happy man to equal glories bring?
 Begin, begin thy noble choice,
 And let the hills around reflect the image of thy voice.
 Pisa does to Jove belong,
 Jove and Pisa claim thy song.
 The fair first-fruits of war, th' Olympic games,
 Alcides offer'd up to Jove;
 Alcides too thy strings may move!
 But oh! what man to join with these can worthy prove?
 Join Theron boldly to their sacred names;
 Theron the next honor claims;
 Theron to no man gives place;
 Is first in Pisa's and in Virtue's race;
 Theron there, and he alone,
 Ev'n his own swift forefathers has outgone.⁷²³

One of the company exclaimed, with the full assent of the rest, that if the original were madder than this, it must be incurably mad. I then translated the ode from the Greek, and as nearly as possible, word for word; and the impression was, that in the general movement of the periods, in the form of the connections and transitions, and in the sober majesty of lofty sense, it appeared to them to approach more nearly, than any other poetry they had heard, to the style of our bible in the prophetic books. The first strophe will suffice as a specimen:

⁷²² Coleridge quotes the first line of Cowley's preface to his *Pindaric Odes* (1656); the first poem in that collection is the 'Second Olympic Ode of Pindar', the opening of which is quoted immediately below.

⁷²³ Cowley, 'Second Olympic Ode of Pindar' (1656), 1-18.

Ye harp-controuling hymns! (or) ye hymns the sovereigns of
 harps!
 What God? what Hero?
 What Man shall we celebrate?
 Truly Pisa indeed is of Jove,
 But the Olympiad (or the Olympic games) did Hercules
 establish,
 The first-fruits of the spoils of war.
 But Theron for the four-horsed car,
 That bore victory to him,
 It behoves us now to voice aloud:
 The Just, the Hospitable,
 The Bulwark of Agrigentum,
 Of renowned fathers
 The Flower, even him
 Who preserves his native city erect and safe.

But are such rhetorical caprices condemnable only for their deviation from the language of real life? and are they by no other means to be precluded, but by the rejection of all distinctions between prose and verse, save that of metre? Surely good sense, and a moderate insight into the constitution of the human mind, would be amply sufficient to prove, that such language and such combinations are the native product neither of the fancy nor of the imagination; that their operation consists in the excitement of surprize by the juxta-position and *apparent* reconciliation of widely different or incompatible things. As when, for instance, the hills are made to reflect the image of a *voice*. Surely, no unusual taste is requisite to see clearly, that this compulsory juxta-position is not produced by the presentation of impressive or delightful forms to the inward vision, nor by any sympathy with the modifying powers with which the genius of the poet had united and inspirited all the objects of his thought; that it is therefore a species of *wit*, a pure work of the *will*, and implies a leisure and self-possession both of thought and of feeling, incompatible with the steady fervour of a mind possessed and filled with the grandeur of its subject. To sum up the whole in one sentence. When a poem, or a part of a poem, shall be adduced, which is evidently vicious in the figures and contexture of its style, yet for the condemnation of which no reason can be assigned, except that it differs from the style in which men actually converse, then, and not till then, can I hold this theory to be either plausible, or practicable, or capable of furnishing either rule, guidance, or precaution, that might not, more easily and more safely,

as well as more naturally, have been deduced in the author's own mind from considerations of grammar, logic, and the truth and nature of things, confirmed by the authority of works, whose fame is not of ONE country, nor of ONE age.

CHAPTER 19

Continuation—Concerning the real object which, it is probable, Mr. Wordsworth had before him in his critical preface— Elucidation and application of this.

It might appear from some passages in the former part of Mr. Wordsworth's preface, that he meant to confine his theory of style, and the necessity of a close accordance with the actual language of men, to those particular subjects from low and rustic life, which by way of experiment he had purposed to naturalize as a new species in our English poetry. But from the train of argument that follows; from the reference to Milton; and from the spirit of his critique on Gray's sonnet; those sentences appear to have been rather courtesies of modesty, than actual limitations of his system. Yet so groundless does this system appear on a close examination; and so strange and* over-whelming in its consequences, that I cannot, and I do not, believe that the poet did ever himself adopt it in the unqualified sense, in which his expressions have been understood by others, and which indeed according to all the common laws of interpretation they seem

* I had in my mind the striking but untranslatable epithet, which the celebrated Mendelssohn⁷²⁴ applied to the great founder of the Critical Philosophy "*Der alleszermalmende KANT*," i.e. the all-be-crushing, or rather the *all-to-nothing-crushing* KANT. In the facility and force of compound epithets, the German from the number of its cases and inflections approaches to the Greek, that language so

Bless'd in the happy marriage of sweet words.⁷²⁵

It is in the woeful harshness of its sounds alone that the German need shrink from the comparison.

⁷²⁴ German philosopher Moses Mendelssohn (1729–86) – grandfather of the composer – who used this epithet: 'des alles zermalmenden Kants' (Moses Mendelssohn, *Morgenstunden: oder, Vorlesungen über das daseyn Gottes* (1786), 2).

⁷²⁵ This line is from a Jacobean play called *Lingua*, by Thomas Tomkis (c.1580–1634). Early in the play, the title character boasts of all the languages at his command:

The ancient Hebrew, clad with mysteries,
The learned Greeke, rich in fit epithites
Blest in the lovely marriage of pure words,
The Caldly wise, the Arabian physical!,
The Romane eloquent, the Tuscan grave,
The braving Spanish, and the smooth-tong'd French. (Tomkis, *Lingua* (1607),
1:1:59–64)

to bear. What then did he mean? I apprehend, that in the clear perception, not unaccompanied with disgust or contempt, of the gaudy affectations of a style which passed too current with too many for poetic diction, (though in truth it had as little pretensions to poetry, as to logic or common sense) he narrowed his view for the time; and feeling a justifiable preference for the language of nature, and of good-sense, even in its humblest and least ornamented forms, he suffered himself to express, in terms at once too large and too exclusive, his predilection for a style the most remote possible from the false and showy splendor which he wished to explode. It is possible, that this predilection, at first merely comparative, deviated for a time into direct partiality. But the real object, which he had in view, was, I doubt not, a species of excellence which had been long before most happily characterized by the judicious and amiable GARVE, whose works are so justly beloved and esteemed by the Germans, in his remarks on GELLERT (see *Sammlung Einiger Abhandlungen von Christian Garve*)⁷²⁶ from which the following is literally translated. “The talent, that is required in order to make excellent verses, is perhaps greater than the philosopher is ready to admit, or would find it in his power to acquire: the talent to seek only the apt expression of the thought, and yet to find at the same time with it the rhyme and the metre. Gellert possessed this happy gift, if ever any one of our poets possessed it; and nothing perhaps contributed more to the great and universal impression which his fables made on their first publication, or conduces more to their continued popularity. It was a strange and curious phenomenon, and such as in Germany had been previously unheard of, to read verses in which every thing was expressed, just as one would wish to talk, and yet all dignified, attractive, and interesting; and all at the same time perfectly correct as to the measure of the syllables and the rhyme. It is certain, that poetry when it has attained this excellence makes a far greater impression than prose. So much so indeed, that even the gratification which the very rhymes afford, becomes then no longer a contemptible or trifling gratification.”

⁷²⁶ Christian Fürchtegott Gellert (1715–69) was Professor of Philosophy at Leipzig, and also a poet and a writer of fables (*Fabeln und Erzählungen* [‘Fables and Tales’], 1746–8). He also wrote a loosely plagiarised version of Samuel Richardson’s English novel, *Pamela (Leben der schwedischen Gräfin von G.* [‘The Life of the Swedish Countess of G.’] (1746)). On his death he was succeeded in the post of Professor of Philosophy at Leipzig by Christian Garve (1742–98), who translated Burke, Adam Ferguson, Cicero and Aristotle into German. Coleridge quotes from ‘Vermischte Anmerkungen über Gellerts Moral, dessen Schriften überhaupt und Charakter’ [‘Miscellaneous notes on Gellert’s Moral Philosophy, his writings in general and character’], published in his *Sammlung einiger Abhandlungen* [‘Selected Papers’] (1799).

However novel this phenomenon may have been in Germany at the time of Gellert, it is by no means new, nor yet of recent existence in our language. Spite of the licentiousness with which Spencer occasionally compels the orthography of his words into a subservience to his rhymes, the whole *Fairy Queen* is an almost continued instance of this beauty. Waller's song "Go, lovely Rose, &c."⁷²⁷ is doubtless familiar to most of my readers; but if I had happened to have had by me the Poems of COTTON, more but far less deservedly celebrated as the author of the *Virgil travestied*,⁷²⁸ I should have indulged myself, and I think have gratified many who are not acquainted with his serious works, by selecting some admirable specimens of this style. There are not a few poems in that volume, replete with every excellence of thought, image, and passion, which we expect or desire in the poetry of the milder muse; and yet so worded, that the reader sees no one reason either in the selection or the order of the words, why he might not have said the very same in an appropriate conversation, and cannot conceive how indeed he could have expressed such thoughts otherwise, without loss or injury to his meaning.

But in truth our language is, and from the first dawn of poetry ever has been, particularly rich in compositions distinguished by this

⁷²⁷ The celebrated lyric by Edmund Waller (1606–87), often set to music. It begins:

Go, lovely Rose –
 Tell her that wastes her time and me,
 That now she knows,
 When I resemble her to thee,
 How sweet and fair she seems to be.
 Tell her that's young,
 And shuns to have her graces spied,
 That hadst thou sprung
 In deserts where no men abide,
 Thou must have uncommended died.

⁷²⁸ Charles Cotton (1630–87) was indeed best known in Coleridge's day for his knock-about *Scarronides, or, Virgil travestied. A mock poem on the first and fourth books of Virgil's Aeneid, in English burlesque* (1664–70), which had been reprinted as recently as 1807 – it begins: 'I sing the man (read it who list, / A Trojan true as ever pissed)'. Coleridge and Wordsworth both, however, admired Cotton's serious poems. As a sample of the style of these latter, here is a stanza from 'To Coelia':

I've served my time faithful and true,
 Expecting to be placed
 In happy freedom, as my due,
 To all the joys thou hast:
 Ill husbandry in love is such
 A scandal to love's power,
 We ought not to misspend so much
 As one poor short-lived hour.

excellence. The final *e*, which is now mute, in Chaucer's age was either sounded or dropt indifferently. We ourselves still use either *beloved* or *belov'd* according as the rhyme, or measure, or the purpose of more or less solemnity may require. Let the reader then only adopt the pronunciation of the poet and of the court, at which he lived, both with respect to the final *e* and to the accentuation of the last syllable: I would then venture to ask, what even in the colloquial language of elegant and unaffected women (who are the peculiar mistresses of "pure English and undefiled,")⁷²⁹ what could we hear more natural, or seemingly more unstudied, than the following stanzas from Chaucer's *Troilus and Creseide*.

And after this forth to the gate he went,
 Ther as Creseide out rode a ful gode paas:
 And up and doun there made he many a wente,
 And to himselfe ful oft he said, Alas!
 Fro hennis rode my blisse and my solas:
 As wouldè blisful God now for his joie,
 I might her sene agen come in to Troie!
 And to the yondir hill I gan her guide,
 Alas! and there I toke of her my leave:
 And yond I saw her to her fathir ride;
 For sorow of which mine hearte shall to-cleve;
 And hithir home I came whan it was eve;
 And here I dwel, out-cast from allè joie,
 And shall, til I maie sene her efte in Troie.
 And of himselfe imaginid he ofte
 To ben defaitid, pale and waxen lesse
 Than he was wonte, and that men saidin softe,
 What may it be? who can the sothè guess,
 Why Troilus hath al this hevinesse?
 And al this n' as but his melancholie,
 That he had of himselfe suche fantasie.
 Another time imaginin he would
 That every wight, that past him by the wey,
 Had of him routhe, and that they saien should,
 I am right sorry, Troilus will die!
 And thus he drove a daie yet forth or twey,
 As ye have herde: suche life gan he to lede

⁷²⁹ A reference to Spenser's description of Chaucer (in *Faerie Queene*, 4.2.32) as 'Dan Chaucer, well of English undefiled'. Coleridge may also be playing on the Biblical phrase, 'Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father' (James 1:27).

As he that stode betwixin hope and drede:
 For which him likid in his songis shewe
 Th' eucheson of his wo as he best might,
 And made a songe of wordis but a fewe,
 Somwhat his woefull herté for to light,
 And when he was from every mann'is sight
 With softé voice he of his lady dere,
 That absent was, gan sing as ye may hear:

* * * * *

This song, when he thus songin had, ful soon
 He fell agen into his sighis olde:
 And every night, as was his wonte to done;
 He stodè the bright moonè to beholde
 And all his sorrowe to the moone he tolde,
 And said: I wis, whan thou art hornid newe,
 I shall be glad, if al the world be trewe!⁷³⁰

Another exquisite master of this species of style, where the scholar and the poet supplies the material, but the perfect well-bred gentleman the expressions and the arrangement, is George Herbert. As from the nature of the subject, and the too frequent quaintness of the thoughts, his "Temple; or Sacred Poems and Private Ejaculations"⁷³¹ are comparatively but little known, I shall extract two poems. The first is a Sonnet, equally admirable for the weight, number, and expression of the thoughts, and for the simple dignity of the language. (Unless indeed a fastidious taste should object to the latter half of the sixth line.) The second is a poem of greater length, which I have chosen not only for the present purpose, but likewise as a striking example and illustration of an assertion hazarded in a former page of these sketches: namely, that the characteristic fault of our elder poets is the reverse of that, which distinguishes too many of our more recent versifiers; the one conveying the most fantastic thoughts in the most correct and natural language; the other in the most fantastic language

⁷³⁰ Chaucer, *Troilus and Criseyde*, 5:603–51.

⁷³¹ Coleridge owned and closely annotated *The Temple* (1633) by George Herbert (1593–1633) (*Marginalia*, 2:1032–41), although this copy dates from the 1820s and can't have been the one Coleridge used for the *Biographia*. Although not otherwise recorded, we can assume he worked from the 1799 reprint of the 1633 title. It's even possible that Coleridge wrote the preface for it. George Herbert, *Temple; or Sacred Poems and Private Ejaculations, to which is added a Biographical Sketch of the Author* (Bristol, 1799). This edition also includes Christopher Harvey's *The Synagogue* (1640), a series of companion poems written in dialogue with Herbert's work, from which Coleridge goes on to quote.

conveying the most trivial thoughts. The latter is a riddle of words; the former an enigma of thoughts. The one reminds me of an odd passage in Drayton's IDEAS:

SONNET IX

As other men, so I myself do muse,
 Why in this sort I wrest invention so;
 And why these *giddy metaphors* I use,
 Leaving the path the greater part do go?
 I will resolve you: *I am lunatic!*⁷³²

The other recalls a still odder passage in the "SYNAGOGUE: *or the Shadow of the Temple,*" a connected series of poems in imitation of Herbert's "TEMPLE," and in some editions annexed to it.

O how my mind
 Is gravell'd!
 Not a thought,
 That I can find,
 But's ravell'd
 All to nought!
 Short ends of threds,
 And narrow shreds
 Of lists;
 Knots, snarled ruffs,
 Loose broken tufts
 Of twists,
 Are my torn meditations ragged cloathing,
 Which wound, and woven, shape a sute for nothing:
 One while I think, and then I am in pain
 To think how to unthink that thought again!⁷³³

Immediately after these burlesque passages I cannot proceed to the extracts promised, without changing the ludicrous tone of feeling by the interposition of the three following stanzas of Herbert's.

VIRTUE.

Sweet day so cool, so calm, so bright,
 The bridal of the earth and sky:
 The dew shall weep thy fall to-night,
 For thou must dye!

⁷³² Michael Drayton, *Idea, in sixty-three sonnets* (1619), 9:1-5.

⁷³³ Christopher Harvey, 'Confusion', 1-16; in *The Synagogue* (1640).

And have good cause: there it was dipt and dy'd,
 And washt, and wrung: the very wringing yet
 Enforceth tears. *Your heart was foul, I fear.*

Indeed 'tis true. I did and do commit
 Many a fault, more than my lease will bear;
 Yet still ask'd pardon, and was not deny'd.
 But you shall hear. After my heart was well,
 And clean and fair, as I one eventide,

(I sigh to tell)

Walkt by myself abroad, I saw a large
 And spacious furnace flaming, and thereon
 A boiling caldron, round about whose verge
 Was in great letters set AFFLICTION.
 The greatness shew'd the owner. So I went
 To fetch a sacrifice out of my fold,
 Thinking with that, which I did thus present,
 To warm his love, which, I did fear, grew cold.

But as my heart did tender it, the man
 Who was to take it from me, slipt his hand,
 And threw my *heart* into the scalding pan;
 My heart that brought it (do you understand?)
 The *offerer's* heart. *Your heart was hard, I fear.*
 Indeed 'tis true. I found a callous matter
 Began to spread and to expatiate there:
 But with a richer drug than scalding water
 I bath'd it often, ev'n with holy blood,
 Which at a board, while many drank bare wine,
 A friend did steal into my cup for good,
 Ev'n taken inwardly, and most divine
 To supple hardnesses. But at the length
 Out of the caldron getting, soon I fled
 Unto my house, where to repair the strength
 Which I had lost, I hasted to my bed:
 But when I thought to sleep out all these faults,

(I sigh to speak)

I found that some had stuff'd the bed with thoughts,
 I would say *thorns*. Dear, could my heart not break,
 When with my pleasures even my rest was gone?
 Full well I understood who had been there:
 For I had given the key to none but one:
 It must be he. *Your heart was dull, I fear.*
 Indeed a slack and sleepy state of mind

Did oft possess me; so that when I pray'd,
Though my lips went, my heart did stay behind.
But all my scores were by another paid,
Who took my guilt upon him. *Truly, friend;*
For ought I hear, your master shews to you
More favour than you wot of. Mark the end!
The font did only what was old renew:
The caldron suppld what was grown too hard:
The thorns did quicken what was grown too dull:
All did but strive to mend what you had marr'd.
Wherefore be cheer'd, and praise him to the full
Each day, each hour, each moment of the week,
Who fain would have you be new, tender quick!

CHAPTER 20

The former subject continued—The neutral style, or that common to Prose and Poetry, exemplified by specimens from Chaucer, Herbert, &c.

I have no fear in declaring my conviction, that the excellence defined and exemplified in the preceding Chapter is not the characteristic excellence of Mr. Wordsworth's style; because I can add with equal sincerity, that it is precluded by higher powers. The praise of uniform adherence to genuine, logical English is undoubtedly his; nay, laying the main emphasis on the word *uniform*, I will dare add that, of all contemporary poets, it is *his alone*. For in a less absolute sense of the word, I should certainly include MR. BOWLES, LORD BYRON, and, as to all his later writings, Mr. SOUTHEY, the exceptions in their works being so few and unimportant. But of the specific excellence described in the quotation from Garve, I appear to find more, and more undoubted specimens in the works of others; for instance, among the minor poems of Mr. Thomas Moore, and of our illustrious Laureate.⁷³⁴ To me it will always remain a singular and noticeable fact; that a theory which would establish this *lingua communis*,⁷³⁵ not only as the best, but as the only commendable style, should have proceeded from a poet, whose diction, next to that of Shakspeare and Milton, appears to me of all others the most *individualized* and characteristic. And let it be remembered too, that I am now interpreting the controverted passages of Mr. W's critical preface by the purpose and object, which he may be supposed to have intended, rather than by the sense which the words themselves must convey, if they are taken without this allowance.

A person of any taste, who had but studied three or four of Shakspeare's principal plays, would without the name affixed scarcely

⁷³⁴ Southey had been appointed Laureate in 1813. Irish poet, Thomas Moore (1779–1852), was most famous for his oriental verse romance, *Lalla Rookh* (1817), which Coleridge read and disliked on its publication (in a letter to Henry Crabb Robinson of 15 June 1817 he complained: 'why, there are not 3 lines together without some adulteration of common English'; Griggs, *Collected Letters*, 4:740). Of Southey, William Lisle Bowles (1762–1850, discussed in Chapter 1 of the *Biographia*) and Lord Byron (1788–1824) there is more discussion in Chapter 22 below.

⁷³⁵ 'Common language'.

fail to recognize as Shakspeare's, a quotation from any other play, though but of a few lines. A similar peculiarity, though in a less degree, attends Mr. Wordsworth's style, whenever he speaks in his own person; or whenever, though under a feigned name, it is clear that he himself is still speaking, as in the different dramatis personæ of the "RECLUSE".⁷³⁶ Even in the other poems, in which he purposes to be most dramatic, there are few in which it does not occasionally burst forth. The reader might often address the poet in his own words with reference to the persons introduced;

It seems, as I retrace the ballad line by line
That but half of it is theirs, and the better half is thine.⁷³⁷

Who, having been previously acquainted with any considerable portion of Mr. Wordsworth's publications, and having studied them with a full feeling of the author's genius, would not at once claim as Wordsworthian the little poem on the rainbow?

The child is father of the man, &c.⁷³⁸

Or in the "Lucy Gray"?

No mate, no comrade Lucy knew;
She dwelt on a wide moor;
The sweetest thing that ever grew
*Beside a human door.*⁷³⁹

Or in the "Idle Shepherd-boys"?

Along the river's stony marge
The sand-lark chaunts a joyous song;
The thrush is busy in the wood,
And carols loud and strong.
A thousand lambs are on the rock
All newly born! both earth and sky
Keep jubilee, and more than all,

⁷³⁶ Wordsworth planned *The Recluse* as his magnum opus, a 'philosophical poem, containing views of Man, Nature and Society'. His epic autobiography-in-verse, *The Prelude or, Growth of a Poet's Mind* (eventually published after his death in 1850), was to be merely the preface to this much larger project. Three parts were planned, but in the event only a few sections from the first part were written, plus a lengthy excursus from the theme called, appropriately, *The Excursion* (1814).

⁷³⁷ Coleridge adapts these lines from Wordsworth's 'The Pet Lamb' (1800): 'And it seemed, as I retraced the ballad line by line, / That but half of it is hers, and one half of it was mine.'

⁷³⁸ Wordsworth, 'My heart leaps up' (1802), 7.

⁷³⁹ Wordsworth, 'Lucy Gray' (1799), 5-8.

Those boys with their green coronal,
 They never hear the cry,
 That plaintive cry which up the hill
 Comes from the depth of Dungeon Gill.⁷⁴⁰

Need I mention the exquisite description of the Sea Lock in the
 “Blind Highland Boy.” Who but a poet tells a tale in such language to
 the little ones by the fire-side as—

Yet had he many a restless dream
 Both when he heard the eagle’s scream,
 And when he heard the torrents roar,
 And heard the water beat the shore
 Near where their cottage stood.

Beside a lake their cottage stood,
 Not small like our’s a peaceful flood;
 But one of mighty size, and strange
 That rough or smooth is full of change
 And stirring in its bed.

For to this lake by night and day,
 The great sea-water finds its way
 Through long, long windings of the hills,
 And drinks up all the pretty rills;
 And rivers large and strong:

Then hurries back the road it came—
 Returns on errand still the same;
 This did it when the earth was new;
 And this for evermore will do,
 As long as earth shall last.

And with the coming of the tide,
 Come boats and ships that sweetly ride,
 Between the woods and lofty rocks;
 And to the shepherds with their flocks
 Bring tales of distant lands.⁷⁴¹

I might quote almost the whole of his “RUTH”, but take the following
 stanzas:

But as you have before been told,
 This stripling, sportive gay, and bold,

⁷⁴⁰ Wordsworth, ‘The Idle Shepherd-Boys’ (1800), 23–33.

⁷⁴¹ Wordsworth, ‘The Blind Highland Boy’ (1806), 46–70.

And with his dancing crest,
 So beautiful, through savage lands
 Had roam'd about with vagrant bands
 Of Indians in the West.

The wind, the tempest roaring high,
 The tumult of a tropic sky,
 Might well be dangerous food
 For him, a youth to whom was given
 So much of earth, so much of heaven,
 And such impetuous blood.

Whatever in those climes he found
 Irregular in sight or sound,
 Did to his mind impart
 A kindred impulse; seem'd allied
 To his own powers, and justified
 The workings of his heart.

Nor less to feed voluptuous thought,
 The beauteous forms of nature wrought,
 Fair trees and lovely flowers;
 The breezes their own langour lent;
 The stars had feelings, which they sent
 Into those magic bowers.

Yet in his worst pursuits, I ween,
 That sometimes there did intervene
 Pure hopes of high intent:
 For passions, link'd to forms so fair
 And stately, needs must have their share
 Of noble sentiment.⁷⁴²

But from Mr. Wordsworth's more elevated compositions, which already form three-fourths of his works; and will, I trust, constitute hereafter a still larger proportion;—from these, whether in rhyme or blank-verse, it would be difficult and almost superfluous to select instances of a diction peculiarly his own, of a style which cannot be imitated without its being at once recognized, as originating in Mr. Wordsworth. It would not be easy to open on any one of his loftier strains, that does not contain examples of this; and more in proportion as the lines are more excellent, and most like the author. For

⁷⁴² Wordsworth, 'Ruth' (1800), 115–44.

those, who may happen to have been less familiar with his writings, I will give three specimens taken with little choice. The first from the lines on the “BOY OF WINANDER-MERE,”—who

Blew mimic hootings to the silent owls,
 That they might answer him. And they would shout,
 Across the watery vale and shout again
 With long halloos, and screams, and echoes loud
 Redoubled and redoubled, concourse wild
 Of mirth and jocund din. And when it chanc'd,
 That pauses of deep silence mock'd his skill,
Then sometimes in that silence, while he hung
Listening, a gentle shock of mild surprize
Has carried far into his heart the voice
*Of mountain torrents; or the visible scene**
Would enter unawares into his mind
With all its solemn imagery, its rocks,
Its woods, and that uncertain heaven, received
*Into the bosom of the steady lake.*⁷⁴³

* Mr. Wordsworth's having judiciously adopted “*concourse wild*” in this passage for “*a wild scene*” as it stood in the former edition, encourages me to hazard a remark, which I certainly should not have made in the works of a poet less austere in the use of words, than he is, to his own great honor. It respects the propriety of the word, “*scene*,” even in the sentence in which it is retained. DRYDEN, and he only in his more careless verses, was the first as far as my researches have discovered, who for the convenience of rhyme used this word in the vague sense,⁷⁴⁴ which has been since too current even in our best writers, and which (unfortunately, I think) is given as its first explanation in Dr. Johnson's Dictionary, and therefore would be taken by an incautious reader as its proper sense. In Shakspeare and Milton the word is never used without some clear reference, proper or metaphorical, to the theatre. Thus Milton:

Cedar and pine, and fir and branching palm
 A Sylvan *scene*; and as the ranks ascend
 Shade above shade, a woody *theatre*
 Of stateliest view.⁷⁴⁵

I object to any extension of its meaning, because the word is already more equivocal than might be wished; inasmuch as to the limited use, which I recommend, it may still signify two different things; namely, the scenery, and the characters and actions presented on the stage during the presence of particular scenes. It can therefore be preserved from *obscurity* only by keeping the original signification full in the mind. Thus Milton again,

Prepare thee for another scene.

⁷⁴³ Wordsworth, ‘There was a Boy’ (1800), 10–25.

⁷⁴⁴ Coleridge is thinking of (for instance) Dryden's ‘Ode on Brutus’ (1687), 90–1: ‘A marriage since did intervene / With all the solemn, and the sacred scene’; or ‘The Rapture’ (1690), 118–19: ‘This is his lowest Sphere, his Country Scene, / Where Love is humble, and his Fare but mean’.

⁷⁴⁵ *Paradise Lost*, 4:139–42. The following quotation is from *Paradise Lost*, 11:637.

The second shall be that noble imitation of Drayton* (if it was not rather a coincidence) in the “JOANNA.”

When I had gazed perhaps two minutes space,
 Joanna, looking in my eyes, beheld
 That ravishment of mine, and laugh'd aloud.
 The rock, like something starting from a sleep,
 Took up the lady's voice, and laugh'd again!
 That ancient woman seated on *Helm-crag*
 Was ready with her cavern! *Hammar-scar*,
 And the tall steep of SILVER-HOW sent forth
 A noise of laughter: southern LOUGHRIGG heard,
 And FAIRFIELD answered with a mountain tone.
 HELVELLYN far into the clear blue sky
 Carried the lady's voice!—old SKIDDAW blew
 His speaking trumpet!—back out of the clouds
 From GLARAMARA southward came the voice:
 And KIRKSTONE tossed it from his misty head!⁷⁴⁶

The third which is in rhyme I take from the “Song at the feast of Brougham Castle, upon the restoration of Lord Clifford the shepherd to the estates of his ancestors.”

“Now another day is come
 Fitter hope, and nobler doom:
 He hath thrown aside his crook,
 And hath buried deep his book;
Armour resting in the halls
On the blood of Clifford calls:
Quell the Scot, exclaims the lance!
Bear me to the heart of France

* Which COPLAND scarce had spoke, but quickly every hill
 Upon her verge that stands, the neighbouring vallies fill;
 HELVELLION from his height, it through the mountains threw.
 From whom as soon again, the sound DUNBALRASE drew,
 From whose stone-trophied head, it on the WENDROSS went,
 Which tow'rd's the sea again, resounded it to DENT.
 That BROADWATER, therewith within her banks astound,
 In sailing to the sea told it to EGREMOUND,
 Whose buildings, walks, and streets, with echoes loud and long,
 Did mightily commend old COPLAND for her song!
 DRAYTON'S POLYOLBION: *Song XXX*.⁷⁴⁷

⁷⁴⁶ Wordsworth, ‘To Joanna’ (1800), 51–65.

⁷⁴⁷ Michael Drayton (1563–1631) published his topographical poem *Poly-Olbion* in 1612; it was reprinted with a second part – from which Coleridge quotes here – in 1622.

*Is the longing of the shield—
 Tell thy name, thou trembling field!
 Field of death, where'er thou be,
 Groan thou with our victory!
 Happy day, and mighty hour,
 When our shepherd, in his power,
 Mailed and horsed with lance and sword,
 To his ancestors restored,
 Like a re-appearing star,
 Like a glory from afar,
 First shall head the flock of war!"*

Alas! the fervent harper did not know,
 That for a tranquil soul the lay was framed,
 Who, long compelled in humble walks to go
 Was softened into feeling, soothed, and tamed.
 Love had he found in huts where poor men lie:
 His daily teachers had been woods and rills,
*The silence that is in the starry sky,
 The sleep that is among the lonely hills.*⁷⁴⁸

The words themselves in the foregoing extracts, are, no doubt, sufficiently common for the greater part. (But in what poem are they not so? if we except a few misadventurous attempts to translate the arts and sciences into verse?) In the "Excursion" the number of polysyllabic (or what the common people call, *dictionary*) words is more than usually great. And so must it needs be, in proportion to the number and variety of an author's conceptions, [(and his solicitude to express them with precision.)] But are those words *in those places* commonly employed in real life to express the same thought or outward thing? Are they the style used in the ordinary intercourse of spoken words? No! nor are the modes of connections: and still less the breaks and transitions. Would any but a poet—at least could any one without being conscious that he had expressed himself with noticeable vivacity—have described a bird singing loud by, "The thrush is *busy* in the wood?" Or have spoken of boys with a string of club-moss round their rusty hats, as the boys "*with their green coronal?*"—or have translated a beautiful May-day into "*Both earth and sky keep jubilee?*" Or have brought all the different marks and circumstances of a sea-loch before the mind, as the actions of a living and acting power? Or have represented the reflection of the sky in the water, as "*That uncertain*

⁷⁴⁸ Wordsworth, 'Song at the Feast of Brougham Castle' (1807), 138–64. Coleridge's italics.

heaven received into the bosom of the steady lake?” Even the grammatical construction is not unfrequently peculiar; as “The wind, the tempest roaring high, the tumult of a tropic sky, might well be *dangerous food to him*, a youth to whom was given, &c.”⁷⁴⁹ There is a peculiarity in the frequent use of the ἀσυναρτητὸν⁷⁵⁰ (i.e. the omission of the connective particle before the last of several words, or several sentences used grammatically as single words, all being in the same case and governing or governed by the same verb) and not less in the construction of words by apposition (*to him, a youth*). In short, were there excluded from Mr. Wordsworth’s poetic compositions all, that a literal adherence to the theory of his preface *would* exclude, two-thirds at least of the marked beauties of his poetry must be erased. For a far greater number of lines would be sacrificed, than in any other recent poet; because the pleasure received from Wordsworth’s poems being less derived either from excitement of curiosity or the rapid flow of narration, the *striking* passages form a larger proportion of their value. I do not adduce it as a fair criterion of comparative excellence, nor do I even think it such; but merely as matter of fact. I affirm, that from no contemporary writer could so many lines be quoted, without reference to the poem in which they are found, for their own independent weight or beauty. From the sphere of my own experience I can bring to my recollection three persons of no every-day powers and acquirements, who had read the poems of others with more and more unallayed pleasure, and had thought more highly of their authors, as poets; who yet have confessed to me, that from no modern work had so many passages started up anew in their minds at different times, and as different occasions had awakened a meditative mood.

⁷⁴⁹ “The thrush is *busy* in the wood?” . . . the boys “*with their green coronal?*” . . . “*Both earth and sky keep jubilee?*” . . . a sea-loch . . . “*That uncertain heaven received into the bosom of the steady lake?*” . . . “The wind, the tempest roaring high, the tumult of a tropic sky, might well be *dangerous food to him*, a youth to whom was given, &c.” These are from the following Wordsworth poems: ‘The Idle-Shepherd-Boys’, 25, 30, 28–9; ‘There was a Boy’, 24–5; ‘Ruth’, 121–4 (all quoted above).

⁷⁵⁰ ἀσυναρτητος (*asunartētos*, ‘unconnectedness, incoherency’) is a piece of classical metrical nomenclature. Strictly, it refers to verses composed of heterogeneous parts, or of lines in which connective elements are missed out. (‘Corrigi poterat μέν non repugnante metro: versus etenim est ἀσυναρτητος, constans Anapeaesticus Basi et Paraemiaco’ [‘the possible correction to *men* would not offend the metre; since the line is *asunartētos*, as in the anapests of Basus and Paraemiacus’] (‘In carmina Epodica Euripidea Commentarius’, *Classical Journal*, 9 (1814), 300).)

CHAPTER 21

Remarks on the present mode of conducting critical journals

Long have I wished to see a fair and philosophical inquisition into the character of Wordsworth, as a poet, on the evidence of his published works; and a positive, not a comparative, appreciation of their *characteristic* excellencies, deficiencies, and defects. I know no claim that the mere *opinion* of any individual can have to weigh down the *opinion* of the author himself; against the probability of whose parental partiality we ought to set that of his having thought longer and more deeply on the subject. But I should call that investigation fair and philosophical, in which the critic announces and endeavors to establish the principles, which he holds for the foundation of poetry in general, with the specification of these in their application to the different *classes* of poetry. Having thus prepared his canons of criticism for praise and condemnation, he would proceed to particularize the most striking passages to which he deems them applicable, faithfully noticing the frequent or infrequent recurrence of similar merits or defects, and *as* faithfully distinguishing what is characteristic from what is accidental, or a mere flagging of the wing. Then if his premises be rational, his deductions legitimate, and his conclusions justly applied, the reader, and possibly the poet himself, may adopt his judgement in the light of judgement and in the independence of free-agency. If he has erred, he presents his errors in a definite place and tangible form, and holds the torch and guides the way to their detection.

I most willingly admit, and estimate at a high value, the services which the EDINBURGH REVIEW, and others formed afterwards on the same plan, have rendered to society in the diffusion of knowledge.⁷⁵¹ I think the commencement of the Edinburgh Review an

⁷⁵¹ The *Edinburgh Review* had been set up in 1802 as a quarterly journal of literary and political criticism and review. The founders were Francis Jeffrey (1773–1850), Sydney Smith (1771–1845) and Henry Brougham (1778–1868). Smith was the first editor; from 1803 until 1829 Jeffrey edited the periodical. It quickly became one of the most influential magazines in nineteenth-century Britain. It took its motto from Publius Syrus: ‘judex damnatur ubi nocens absolvitur’ [‘let the the judge be condemned should the guilty party go free’] – a reaction against the prevailing sense that literary periodicals were too lenient on bad writing. Accordingly, the *Edinburgh* acquired a reputation for severity in its reviews. In this chapter of the *Biographia* Coleridge is reacting particularly against Jeffrey’s swingeing review of Wordsworth’s *Excursion* (1814), a

important epoch in periodical criticism; and that it has a claim upon the gratitude of the literary republic, and indeed of the reading public at large, for having originated the scheme of reviewing those books only, which are susceptible and deserving of argumentative criticism. Not less meritorious, and far more faithfully and in general far more ably executed, is their plan of supplying the vacant place of the trash or mediocrity, wisely left to sink into oblivion by its own weight, with original essays on the most interesting subjects of the time, religious, or political; in which the titles of the books or pamphlets prefixed furnish only the name and occasion of the disquisition. I do not arraign the keenness, or asperity of its damnatory style, in and for itself, as long as the author is addressed or treated as the mere impersonation of the work then under trial. I have no quarrel with them on this account, as long as no personal allusions are admitted, and no re-commitment (for new trial) of juvenile performances, that were published, perhaps forgotten, many years before the commencement of the review: since for the forcing back of such works to public notice no motives are easily assignable, but such as are furnished to the critic by his own personal malignity; or what is still worse, by a *habit* of malignity in the form of mere wantonness.

No private grudge they need, no personal spite:
 The *viva sectio* is its own delight!
 All enmity, all envy, they disclaim,
 Disinterested thieves of our good name:
 Cool, sober murderers of their neighbour's fame!

S. T. C.⁷⁵²

Every censure, every sarcasm respecting a publication which the critic, with the criticised work before him, can make good, is the

critique that begins, famously, with the line: 'This will never do'. Coleridge himself published one review in the *Edinburgh* (of Thomas Clarkson's *History of the Abolition of the Slave Trade*; *Edinburgh Review*, 12 (July 1808), 355–79). He wrote to Jeffrey in May of the same year, complaining that his juvenilia had been dragged back out for negative review, the supposed injustice of which is also argued in this paragraph. 'Without knowing me you have been, perhaps rather unwarrantly, severe on my morals and understanding – inasmuch as you have, I understand – for I have not seen the Reviews, frequently introduced *my* name when I had never brought any publication within your court – With one slight exception – a shilling pamphlet [*Conciones ad Populum*] that never obtained the least notice – I have not published any thing with my name, or known to be mine, for 13 years – surely, I might quote against you the complaint of Job as to those who brought against him "the iniquities of his Youth" . . . ' (Griggs, *Collected Letters*, 3:116–17).

⁷⁵² It seems that Coleridge wrote this poem specifically for the *Biographia*. 'Viva sectio' is more commonly known today as 'vivisection'.

critic's right. The writer is authorized to reply, but not to complain. Neither can anyone prescribe to the critic, how soft or how hard; how friendly, or how bitter, shall be the phrases which he is to select for the expression of such reprehension or ridicule. The critic must know, what effect it is his object to produce; and with a view to this effect must he weigh his words. But as soon as the critic betrays, that he knows more of his author, than the author's publications could have told him; as soon as from this more intimate knowledge, elsewhere obtained, he avails himself of the slightest trait *against* the author; his censure instantly becomes personal injury, his sarcasms personal insults. He ceases to be a CRITIC, and takes on him the most contemptible character to which a rational creature can be degraded, that of a gossip, backbiter, and pasquillant:⁷⁵³ but with this heavy aggravation, that he steals the unquiet, the deforming passions of the World into the Museum; into the very place which, next to the chapel and oratory, should be our sanctuary, and secure place of refuge; offers abominations on the altar of the muses; and makes its sacred paling the very circle in which he conjures up the lying and prophane spirit.

This determination of unlicensed personality, and of permitted and legitimate censure (which I owe in part to the illustrious LESSING, himself a model of acute, spirited, sometimes stinging, but always argumentative and honorable, criticism) is beyond controversy the true one: and though I would not myself exercise all the rights of the latter, yet, let but the former be excluded, I submit myself to its exercise in the hands of others, without complaint and without resentment.

Let a communication be formed between any number of learned men in the various branches of science and literature; and whether the president and central committee be in London, or Edinburgh, if only they previously lay aside their individuality, and pledge themselves inwardly as well as ostensibly, to administer judgement according to a constitution and code of laws; and if by grounding this code on the two-fold basis of universal morals and philosophic reason, independent of all foreseen application to particular works and authors, they obtain the right to speak each as the representative of their body corporate; they shall have honor and good wishes from me, and I shall accord to them their fair dignities, though

⁷⁵³ This portion of the paragraph (except for the second sentence, 'the writer is authorized to reply, but not to complain', which is Coleridge's own) including the peculiar word 'pasquillant' – meaning 'satirist or lampooner', from the German 'Pasquill' [libel] – is translated directly from Lessing's *Briefe, antiquarischen Inhalts* (in *Sämmtliche Schriften* (1784–96), 12:160–1). Coleridge acknowledges this fact in the following paragraph.

self-assumed, not less cheerfully than if I could enquire concerning them in the herald's office, or turn to them in the book of peerage. However loud may be the outcries for prevented or subverted reputation, however numerous and impatient the complaints of merciless severity and insupportable despotism, I shall neither feel, nor utter ought but to the defence and justification of the critical machine. Should any literary Quixote find himself provoked by its sounds and regular movements, I should admonish him with Sancho Panza, that it is no giant but a windmill; there it stands on its own place, and its own hillock, never goes out of its way to attack any one, and to none and from none either gives or asks assistance. When the public press has poured in any part of its produce between its mill-stones, it grinds it off, one man's sack the same as another, and with whatever wind may happen to be then blowing. All the two-and-thirty winds are alike its friends.⁷⁵⁴ Of the whole wide atmosphere it does not desire a single finger-breadth more than what is necessary for its sails to turn round in. But this space must be left free and unimpeded. Gnats, beetles, wasps, butterflies, and the whole tribe of ephemerals and insignificants, may flit in and out and between; may hum, and buzz, and jarr; may shrill their tiny pipes, and wind their puny horns, unchastised and unnoticed. But idlers and bravadoes of larger size and prouder show must beware, how they place themselves within its sweep. Much less may they presume to lay hands on the sails, the strength of which is neither greater nor less than as the wind is, which drives them round. Whomsoever the remorseless arm slings aloft, or whirls along with it in the air, he has himself alone to blame; though when the same arm throws him from it, it will more often double than break the force of his fall.

Putting aside the too manifest and too frequent interference of NATIONAL PARTY, and even PERSONAL predilection or aversion; and reserving for deeper feelings those worse and more criminal intrusions into the sacredness of private life, which not seldom merit legal rather than literary chastisement, the two principal objects and occasions which I find for blame and regret in the conduct of the review in question are: first, its unfaithfulness to its own announced and excellent plan, by subjecting to criticism works neither indecent nor immoral, yet of such trifling importance even in point of size and, according to the critic's own verdict, so devoid of all merit, as must

⁷⁵⁴ This many because that's how many compass points there are. Cf. Sterne, *Sentimental Journey* (1768), 138: 'miserable man! what wind in the two-and-thirty points of the whole compass can blow unto thee, as it does to the rest of thy fellow creatures, good!'

excite in the most candid mind the suspicion, either that dislike or vindictive feelings were at work; or that there was a cold prudential pre-determination to increase the sale of the Review by flattering the malignant passions of human nature. That I may not myself become subject to the charge, which I am bringing against others, by an accusation without proof, I refer to the article on Dr. Rennell's sermon in the very first number of the Edinburgh Review as an illustration of my meaning.⁷⁵⁵ If in looking through all the succeeding volumes the reader should find this a solitary instance, I must submit to that painful forfeiture of esteem, which awaits a groundless or exaggerated charge.

The second point of objection belongs to this review only in common with all other works of periodical criticism; at least, it applies in common to the general system of all, whatever exception there may be in favor of particular articles. Or if it attaches to the Edinburgh Review, and to its only corival (the QUARTERLY)⁷⁵⁶ with any peculiar force, this results from the superiority of talent, acquirement, and information which both have so undeniably displayed; and which doubtless deepens the regret though not the blame. I am referring to the substitution of assertion for argument; to the frequency of arbitrary and sometimes petulant verdicts, not seldom unsupported even by a single quotation from the work condemned, which might at least have explained the critic's meaning, if it did not prove the justice of his sentence. Even where this is not the case, the extracts are too often made without reference to any general grounds or rules from

⁷⁵⁵ 'Article IX: *Discourses on Various Subjects*. By Thomas Rennel', *Edinburgh Review*, 1 (1802), 83–90: 'We have no modern sermons in the English language, that can be considered as very eloquent . . . we must wade through many a barren page, in which the weary Christian can descry nothing all around him, but a dreary expanse of trite sentiments, and languid words . . . We had great hopes, that Dr Rennel's Sermons would have proved an exception to the character we have given of sermons in general; and we have read through his present volume, with a conviction, rather that he has misapplied, than that he wants, talents for pulpit eloquence . . . Dr Rennel is apt to put on the appearance of a holy bully, an evangelical swaggerer, as if he could carry his point against infidelity by big words and strong abuse, and kick and cuff men into Christians. It is a very easy thing to talk about the shallow impostures, and the silly ignorant sophisms of Voltaire, Rousseau, Condorcet, D'Alembert, and Volney, and to say that Hume is not worth answering. This affectation of contempt will not do.' It is possible that this last sentence, echoed by Jeffrey in his famous review of *The Excursion*, provides one reason why Coleridge singles this piece out for his dispraise here.

⁷⁵⁶ The *Quarterly Review* was set up in 1809 by a group comprising liberal Tory George Canning, publisher John Murray and Walter Scott, among others. It was founded specifically to counter the influence on public opinion of the Whiggish *Edinburgh Review*. Its first editor was William Gifford (1756–1826). For decades, the *Edinburgh* and the *Quarterly* were the two most important periodicals of the age.

which the faultiness or inadmissibility of the qualities attributed may be deduced; and without any attempt to show, that the qualities *are* attributable to the passage extracted. I have met with such extracts from Mr. Wordsworth's poems, annexed to such assertions, as led me to imagine, that the reviewer, having written his critique before he had read the work, had then *pricked with a pin* for passages, wherewith to illustrate the various branches of his preconceived opinions. By what principle of rational choice can we suppose a critic to have been directed (at least in a christian country, and himself, we hope, a christian) who gives the following lines, portraying the fervor of solitary devotion excited by the magnificent display of the Almighty's works, as a proof and example of an author's tendency to *downright ravings*, and absolute unintelligibility?

O then what soul was his, when on the tops
 Of the high mountains he beheld the sun
 Rise up, and bathe the world in light! He looked—
 Ocean and earth, the solid frame of earth,
 And ocean's liquid mass, beneath him lay
 In gladness and deep joy. The clouds were touch'd,
 And in their silent faces did he read
 Unutterable love! Sound needed none,
 Nor any *voice* of joy: his spirit drank
 The spectacle! sensation, soul, and form,
 All melted into him. They swallowed up
 His animal being: in them did he live,
 And by them did he live: they were his life.

(EXCURSION)⁷⁵⁷

Can it be expected, that either the author or his admirers, should be induced to pay any serious attention to decisions which prove nothing but the pitiable state of the critic's own taste and sensibility? On opening the Review they see a favorite passage, of the force and truth of which they had an intuitive certainty in their own inward experience confirmed, if confirmation it could receive, by the sympathy of their most enlightened friends; some of whom perhaps, even in the world's opinion, hold a higher intellectual rank than the critic himself would presume to claim. And this very passage they find selected, as the characteristic effusion of a mind *deserted by reason*; as furnishing evidence that the writer was raving, or he could not have thus strung

⁷⁵⁷ Coleridge quotes *Excursion*, 1:219–31. Jeffrey, in his review, quoted an overlapping but not identical passage (1:224–39), calling it 'the beginning of the raving fit'.

words together without sense or purpose! No diversity of taste seems capable of explaining such a contrast in judgement.

That I had *over-rated* the merit of a passage or poem, that I had erred concerning the *degree* of its excellence, I might be easily induced to believe or apprehend. But that lines, the sense of which I had analysed and found consonant with all the best convictions of my understanding; and the imagery and diction of which had collected round those convictions my noblest as well as my most delightful feelings; that I should admit such lines to be mere nonsense or lunacy, is too much for the most ingenious *arguments* to effect. But that such a revolution of taste should be brought about by a few broad assertions, seems little less than impossible. On the contrary, it would require an effort of charity not to dismiss the criticism with the aphorism of the wise man, in animam malevolam sapientia haud intrare potest.⁷⁵⁸

What then if this very critic should have cited a large number of single lines and even of long paragraphs, which he himself acknowledges to possess eminent and original beauty? What if he himself has owned, that beauties as great are scattered in abundance throughout the whole book? And yet, though under this impression, should have commenced his critique in vulgar exultation with a prophecy meant to secure its own fulfilment? With a “THIS WON’T DO!” What? if after such acknowledgements extorted from his own judgement he should proceed from charge to charge of tameness, and raving; flights and flatness; and at length, consigning the author to the house of incurables, should conclude with a strain of rudest contempt evidently grounded in the distempered state of his own moral associations? Suppose too all this done without a single leading principle established or even announced, and without any one attempt at argumentative deduction, though the poet had presented a more than usual opportunity for it, by having previously made public his own principles of judgement in poetry, and supported them by a connected train of reasoning!

The office and duty of the poet is to select the most dignified as well as

The happiest, gayest, attitude of things.⁷⁵⁹

The reverse, for in all cases a reverse is possible, is the appropriate business of burlesque and travesty, a predominant taste for which has

⁷⁵⁸ ‘Wisdom cannot enter into a malevolent soul’. Coleridge adapts a line from the Biblical apochrypha, ‘The Wisdom of Solomon’ 1:4: ‘Quoniam in malevolam animam non introibit sapientia, nec habitabit in corpore subdito peccatis’ [‘For into a malicious soul wisdom shall not enter; nor dwell in the body that is subject unto sin’].

⁷⁵⁹ Mark Akenside, *The Pleasures of Imagination* (1744), 1:30.

been always deemed a mark of a low and degraded mind. When I was at Rome, among many other visits to the tomb of Julius II, I went thither once with a Prussian artist, a man of genius and great vivacity of feeling. As we were gazing on Michael Angelo's MOSES, our conversation turned on the horns and beard of that stupendous statue; of the necessity of each to support the other; of the super-human effect of the former, and the necessity of the existence of both to give a harmony and *integrity* both to the image and the feeling excited by it. Conceive them removed, and the statue would become *un-natural*, without being *super-natural*. We called to mind the horns of the rising sun, and I repeated the noble passage from Taylor's Holy Dying.⁷⁶⁰ That horns were the emblem of power and sovereignty among the Eastern nations, and are still retained as such in Abyssinia;⁷⁶¹ the Achelous of the ancient Greeks;⁷⁶² and the probable ideas and feelings, that originally suggested the mixture of the human and the brute form in the figure, by which they realized the idea of their mysterious Pan, as representing intelligence blended with a darker power, deeper,

⁷⁶⁰ 'But as when the Sun approaches towards the gates of the morning, he first opens a little eye of Heaven, and sends away the spirits of darknesse, and gives light to a cock, and calls up the lark to Mattins, and by and by gilds the fringes of a cloud and peeps over the Eastern hills, thrusting out his golden horns, like those which decked the browes of Moses when he was forced to wear a vail, because himself had seen the face of God; and still while a man tells the story, the sun gets up higher, till he shows a fair face and a full light.' Jeremy Taylor, *The Rule and Exercises of Holy Dying* (1651), 1:3:2). There are several explanations for Michelangelo sculpting horns on the head of his celebrated statue of Moses, in the Church of San Pietro, Rome. The most widely believed one is that the Vulgate Latin Bible fudged the translation of the scene of Moses descending the mountain, confusing the Hebrew *kāran* (to shine), used to describe Moses's head, with a similar-sounding word, *keren* (horns). Other explanations, of the sort that Coleridge discusses in this paragraph, were widely debated in the eighteenth century.

⁷⁶¹ 'The horn was an emblem of power; and the metaphor was originally taken from beasts, such as the urus, wild ox, buffalo, or perhaps the rhinoceros, who were perceived to have so much power in their horns. Hence the horn was frequently worn on crowns and helmets, as is evident on ancient coins; and to this day, it is an appendage to the diadem of the kings and chiefs of Abyssinia . . . This, I apprehend, like all other of their usages, is taken from the Hebrews; and the several allusions made in Scripture to it arise from this.' (Adam Clark (ed.), *The Holy Bible: Containing the Old and New Testaments, with a Commentary and Critical Notes* (1811), 27:15)

⁷⁶² 'ACHELOUS, son of Oceanus, and Terra, wrestled with Hercules for no less a prize than Deianira, daughter of king Oeneus, who was betrothed to them both, but as Achelous had the power of assuming all shapes, the contest was long dubious: first, he turned himself into a serpent, then into a bull; but Hercules plucking one of his horns off, forced him to submit. Achelous purchased his horn by giving in exchange for it the horn of Amalthea, daughter of Harmodius, which became the cornucopia, or horn of plenty. This, Hercules having filled with a variety of fruits, consecrated to Jupiter.' (John Bell, *Bell's New Pantheon; Or, Historical Dictionary of the Gods, Demi-gods, Heroes and Fabulous Personages of Antiquity* (2 vols, 1790), 1:5)

mightier, and more universal than the conscious intellect of man; than intelligence;—all these thoughts and recollections passed in procession before our minds. My companion who possessed more than his share of the hatred, which his countrymen bore to the French, had just observed to me, “*a Frenchman, Sir! is the only animal in the human shape, that by no possibility can lift itself up to religion or poetry:*” When, lo! two French officers of distinction and rank entered the church! *Mark you,* whispered the Prussian, “*the first thing, which those scoundrels—will notice (for they will begin by instantly noticing the statue in parts, without one moment’s pause of admiration impressed by the whole) will be the horns and the beard. And the associations, which they will immediately connect with them will be those of a HE-GOAT and a CUCKOLD.*” Never did man guess more luckily. Had he inherited a portion of the great legislator’s prophetic powers, whose statue we had been contemplating, he could scarcely have uttered words more coincident with the result: for even as he had said, so it came to pass.

In the EXCURSION the poet has introduced an old man, born in humble but not abject circumstances, who had enjoyed more than usual advantages of education, both from books and from the more awful discipline of nature. This person he represents, as having been driven by the restlessness of fervid feelings, and from a craving intellect, to an itinerant life; and as having in consequence passed the larger portion of his time, from earliest manhood, in villages and hamlets from door to door,

A vagrant merchant bent beneath his load.⁷⁶³

Now whether this be a character appropriate to a lofty didactic poem, is perhaps questionable. It presents a fair subject for controversy; and the question is to be determined by the congruity or incongruity of such a character with what shall be proved to be the essential constituents of poetry. But surely the critic who, passing by all the opportunities which such a mode of life would present to such a man; all the advantages of the liberty of nature, of solitude, and of solitary thought; all the varieties of places and seasons, through which his track had lain, with all the varying imagery they bring with them; and lastly, all the observations of men,

Their manners, their enjoyment and pursuits,
Their passions and their feelings⁷⁶⁴

⁷⁶³ Wordsworth, *Excursion*, 1:335.

⁷⁶⁴ Wordsworth, *Excursion*, 1:354–5.

which the memory of these yearly journies must have given and recalled to such a mind—the critic, I say, who from the multitude of possible associations should pass by all these in order to fix his attention exclusively on *the pin-papers*, and *stay-tapes*, which *might* have been among the wares of his pack;⁷⁶⁵ this critic in my opinion cannot be thought to possess a much higher or much healthier state of moral feeling, than the FRENCHMEN above recorded.

⁷⁶⁵ Coleridge is referring here to the end of Jeffrey's review of the *Excursion*: 'Why should Mr. Wordsworth have made his hero a superannuated Pedlar? What but the most wretched and provoking perversity of taste and judgment, could induce any one to place his chosen advocate of wisdom and virtue in so absurd and fantastic a condition? Did Mr. Wordsworth really imagine, that his favorite doctrines were likely to gain any thing in point of effect or authority by being put into the mouth of a person accustomed to higgle about tape, or brass sleeve-buttons?' (*Edinburgh Review*, 24 (1814), 29–30)

CHAPTER 22

The characteristic defects of Wordsworth's poetry, with the principles from which the judgement, that they are defects, is deduced—Their proportion to the beauties—For the greatest part characteristic of his theory only.

If Mr. Wordsworth have set forth principles of poetry which his arguments are insufficient to support, let him and those who have adopted his sentiments be set right by the confutation of those arguments, and by the substitution of more philosophical principles. And still let the due credit be given to the portion and importance of the truths, which are blended with his theory: truths, the too exclusive attention to which had occasioned its errors, by tempting him to carry those truths beyond their proper limits. If his mistaken theory have at all influenced his poetic compositions, let the effects be pointed out, and the instances given. But let it likewise be shewn, how far the influence has acted; whether diffusively, or only by starts; whether the number and importance of the poems and passages thus infected be great or trifling compared with the sound portion; and lastly, whether they are inwoven into the texture of his works, or are loose and separable. The result of such a trial would evince beyond a doubt, what it is high time to announce decisively and aloud, that the *supposed* characteristics of Mr. Wordsworth's poetry, whether admired or reprobated; whether they are simplicity or simpleness; faithful adherence to essential nature, or wilful selections from human nature of its meanest forms and under the least attractive associations; are as little the *real* characteristics of his poetry at large, as of his genius and the constitution of his mind.

In a comparatively small number of poems, he chose to try an experiment; and this experiment we will suppose to have failed. Yet even in these poems it is impossible not to perceive, that the natural *tendency* of the poet's mind is to great objects and elevated conceptions. The poem entitled "Fidelity" is for the greater part written in language, as unraised and naked as any perhaps in the two volumes.⁷⁶⁶ Yet take the following stanza and compare it with the preceding stanzas of the same poem.

⁷⁶⁶ *Poems* (1815) – in which this poem first appeared – was published in two volumes.

There sometimes does a leaping fish
 Send through the tarn a lonely cheer;
 The crags repeat the Raven's croak
 In symphony austere;
 Thither the rainbow comes—the cloud,
 And mists that spread the flying shroud;
 And sun-beams; and the sounding blast,
 That if it could would hurry past,
 But that enormous barrier binds it fast.⁷⁶⁷

Or compare the four last lines of the concluding stanza with the former half:

Yet proof was plain that since the day
 On which the traveller thus had died,
 The dog had watch'd about the spot,
 Or by his master's side:
How nourish'd there for such long time
He knows who gave that love sublime,
And gave that strength of feeling great
*Above all human estimate.*⁷⁶⁸

Can any candid and intelligent mind hesitate in determining, which of these best represents the tendency and native character of the poet's genius? Will he not decide that the one was written because the poet *would* so write, and the other because he could not so entirely repress the force and grandeur of his mind, but that he must in some part or other of *every* composition write otherwise? In short, that his only disease is the being out of his element; like the swan, that having amused himself, for a while, with crushing the weeds on the river's bank, soon returns to his own majestic movements on its reflecting and sustaining surface. Let it be observed, that I am here supposing the imagined judge, to whom I appeal, to have already decided against the poet's theory, as far as it is different from the principles of the art, generally acknowledged.

I cannot here enter into a detailed examination of Mr. Wordsworth's works; but I will attempt to give the main results of my own judgment, after an acquaintance of many years, and repeated perusals. And though, to appreciate the defects of a great mind it is necessary to understand previously its characteristic excellences, yet I have already expressed myself with sufficient fulness, to preclude most of the ill

⁷⁶⁷ Wordsworth, 'Fidelity' (1815), 25–33.

⁷⁶⁸ Wordsworth, 'Fidelity' (1815), 58–65. Coleridge's emphasis.

effects that might arise from my pursuing a contrary arrangement. I will therefore commence with what I deem the prominent *defects* of his poems hitherto published.

The first *characteristic, though only occasional* defect, which I appear to myself to find in these poems is the INCONSTANCY of the *style*. Under this name I refer to the sudden and unprepared transitions from lines or sentences of peculiar felicity (at all events striking and original) to a style, not only unimpassioned but undistinguished. He sinks too often and too abruptly to that style, which I should place in the second division of language, dividing it into the three species; *first*, that which is peculiar to poetry; *second*, that which is only proper in prose; and *third*, the neutral or common to both. There have been works, such as Cowley's essay on Cromwell, in which prose and verse are intermixed (not as in the Consolation of Boetius, or the Argenis of Barclay,⁷⁶⁹ by the insertion of poems supposed to have been spoken or composed on occasions previously related in prose, but) the poet passing from one to the other as the nature of the thoughts or his own feelings dictated. Yet this mode of composition does not satisfy a cultivated taste. There is something unpleasant in the being thus obliged to alternate states of feeling so dissimilar, and this too in a species of writing, the pleasure from which is in part derived from the preparation and previous expectation of the reader. A portion of that awkwardness is felt which hangs upon the introduction of songs in our modern comic operas; and to prevent which the judicious Metastasio⁷⁷⁰ (as to whose exquisite *taste* there can be no hesitation, whatever doubts may be entertained as to his poetic *genius*) uniformly placed the ARIA at the end of the scene, at the same time that he almost always raises and impassions the style of the recitative immediately preceding. Even in real life, the difference is great and evident between words used as the *arbitrary marks* of thought, our smooth market-coin of intercourse with the image and superscription worn out by currency; and those which convey pictures either borrowed from *one* outward object to enliven

⁷⁶⁹ Three works that mix prose and poetry: (1) Abraham Cowley's essay, 'A Discourse by way of Vision, concerning the Government of Oliver Cromwell' (1681); (2) Boetius's *Consolatio Philosophiae* ['The Consolation of Philosophy'] (c.524); (3) John Barclay's *Argenis* (1621).

⁷⁷⁰ Pietro Antonio Domenico Trapassi (1698–1782), dubbed 'Metastasio' ('the transformed one', a version of his surname) by his adoptive father and teacher, G. V. Gravina (1664–1718), head of the Arcadian Academy. He went on to write a great deal of poetry, opera libretti and other things. His operas were popular in Britain throughout the eighteenth century, and Charles Burney had recently published a three-volume biography of him: *Memoirs of the life and writings of the Abate Metastasio: In which are incorporated Translations of his Principal Letters* (1796).

and particularize some *other*; or used allegorically to body forth the inward state of the person speaking; or such as are at least the exponents of his peculiar turn and unusual extent of faculty. So much so indeed, that in the social circles of private life we often find a striking use of the latter put a stop to the general flow of conversation, and by the excitement arising from concentrated attention produce a sort of damp and interruption for some minutes after. But in the perusal of works of literary *art*, we *prepare* ourselves for such language; and the business of the writer, like that of a painter whose subject requires unusual splendor and prominence, is so to raise the lower and neutral tints, that what in a different style would be the *commanding* colors, are here used as the means of that gentle *degradation* requisite in order to produce the effect of a *whole*. Where this is not atchieved in a poem, the metre merely reminds the reader of his claims in order to disappoint them; and where this defect occurs frequently, his feelings are alternately startled by anticlimax and hyperclimax.

I refer the reader to the exquisite stanzas cited⁷⁷¹ for another purpose from the blind Highland Boy; and then annex as being in my opinion instances of this *disharmony* in style the two following:

And one, the rarest, was a shell,
Which he, poor child, had studied well:
The shell of a green turtle, thin
And hollow;—you might sit therein,
It was so wide, and deep.

Our Highland Boy oft visited
The house which held this prize, and led
By choice or chance did thither come
One day, when no one was at home,
And found the door unbarred.⁷⁷²

Or page 172, vol. I.⁷⁷³

'Tis gone forgotten, *let me do*
My best. There was a smile or two—
I can remember them, I see
The smiles worth all the world to me.
Dear Baby, I must lay thee down:
Thou troublest me with strange alarms!

⁷⁷¹ In Chapter 20, above.

⁷⁷² Wordsworth, 'The Blind Highland Boy' (1815), 116–20.

⁷⁷³ From this point on, Coleridge includes page and volume references to the first edition of Wordsworth's *Poems* (2 vols, 1815).

Smiles hast thou, sweet ones of thine own;
 I cannot keep thee in my arms,
 For they confound me: *as it is*,
 I have forgot those smiles of his!⁷⁷⁴

Or page 269, vol. I.

Thou hast a nest, for thy love and thy rest,
 And though little troubled with sloth
 Drunken lark! thou would'st be loth
 To be such a traveller as I.

Happy, happy liver

With a soul as strong as a mountain river

Pouring out praise to th' Almighty giver!

Joy and jollity be with us both,
 Hearing thee or else some other,

As merry a brother

I on the earth will go plodding on
 By myself chearfully till the day is done.⁷⁷⁵

The incongruity, which I appear to find in this passage, is that of the two noble lines in italics with the preceding and following. So vol. II, page 30.

Close by a pond, upon the further side
 He stood alone; a minute's space I guess,
 I watch'd him, he continuing motionless;
 To the pool's further margin then I drew;
 He being all the while before me full in view.⁷⁷⁶

Compare this with the repetition of the same image, the next stanza but two.

And still as I drew near with gentle pace,
 Beside the little pond or moorish flood
 Motionless as a cloud the old man stood;
 That heareth not the loud winds when they call
 And moveth altogether, if it move at all.⁷⁷⁷

Or lastly, the second of the three following stanzas, compared both with the first and the third.

⁷⁷⁴ Wordsworth, 'The Emigrant Mother' (1807), 55–64.

⁷⁷⁵ Wordsworth, 'To a Skylark' (1807), 18–29; Coleridge's emphasis.

⁷⁷⁶ Wordsworth, 'Resolution and Independence' (1807), 59–63.

⁷⁷⁷ Wordsworth, 'Resolution and Independence' (1807), 80–4.

My former thoughts returned, the fear that kills;
 And hope that is unwilling to be fed;
 Cold, pain, and labour, and all fleshly ills;
 And mighty poets in their misery dead.
 But now, perplex'd by what the old man had said,
 My question eagerly did I renew,
 How is it that you live, and what is it you do?

He with a smile did then his words repeat;
 And said, that, gathering leeches far and wide
 He travelled; stirring thus about his feet
 The waters of the ponds where they abide.
 "Once I could meet with them on every side,
 But they have dwindled long by slow decay;
 Yet still I persevere, and find them where I may."

While he was talking thus, the lonely place
 The old man's shape, and speech, all troubled me:
 In my mind's eye I seemed to see him pace
 About the weary moors continually,
 Wandering about alone and silently.⁷⁷⁸

Indeed this fine poem is *especially* characteristic of the author. There is scarce a defect or excellence in his writings of which it would not present a specimen. But it would be unjust not to repeat that this defect is only occasional. From a careful reperusal of the two volumes of poems, I doubt whether the objectionable passages would amount in the whole to one hundred lines; not the eighth part of the number of pages. In the EXCURSION the feeling of incongruity is seldom excited by the diction of any passage considered in itself, but by the sudden superiority of some other passage forming the context.

The second defect I could generalize with tolerable accuracy, if the reader will pardon an uncouth and new coined word. There is, I should say, not seldom a *matter-of-factness* in certain poems. This may be divided into, *first*, a laborious minuteness and fidelity in the representation of objects, and their positions, as they appeared to the poet himself; *secondly*, the insertion of accidental circumstances, in order to the full explanation of his living characters, their dispositions and actions; which circumstances might be necessary to establish the probability of a statement in real life, where nothing is taken for granted

⁷⁷⁸ 'Resolution and Independence' (1807), 120-38.

by the hearer, but appear superfluous in poetry, where the reader is willing to believe for his own sake. To this *accidentality*, I object, as contravening the essence of poetry, which Aristotle pronounces to be σπουδαιότατον καὶ φιλοσοφικώτατον γένος,⁷⁷⁹ the most intense, weighty and philosophical product of human art; adding, as the *reason*, that it is the most catholic and abstract. The following passage from Davenant's prefatory letter to Hobbs well expresses this truth. "When I considered the actions which I meant to describe (those inferring the persons) I was again persuaded rather to choose those of a former age, than the present; and in a century so far removed, as might preserve me from their improper examinations, who know not the requisites of a poem, nor how much pleasure they lose (and even the pleasures of heroic poesy are not unprofitable) who take away the liberty of a poet, and fetter his feet in the shackles of an historian. For why should a poet doubt in story to mend the intrigues of fortune by more delightful conveyances of probable fictions, because austere historians have entered into bond to truth? An obligation, which were in poets as foolish and unnecessary, as is the bondage of false martyrs, who lie in chains for a mistaken opinion. *But by this I would imply, that truth, narrative and past is the idol of historians (who worship a dead thing) and truth operative, and by effects continually alive, is the mistress of poets, who hath not her existence in matter, but in reason.*"⁷⁸⁰

For this minute accuracy in the painting of local imagery, the lines in the EXCURSION, p. 96, 97, and 98,⁷⁸¹ may be taken, if not as a striking instance yet as an illustration of my meaning. It must be some strong motive (as, for instance, that the description was necessary to the intelligibility of the tale) which could induce me to describe in a number of verses what a draftsman could present to the eye with incomparably greater satisfaction by half a dozen strokes of his pencil, or the painter with as many touches of his brush. Such descriptions too often occasion in the mind of a reader, who is determined to understand his author, a feeling of labor, not very dissimilar to that, with which he would construct a diagram, line by line, for a long geometrical proposition. It seems to be like taking the pieces of a

⁷⁷⁹ 'The most serious and philosophical matter'; Aristotle's *Poetics*, 1451b. The passage from which Coleridge has mined, and adapted, this phrase is as follows: 'Διὸ καὶ φιλοσοφώτερον καὶ σπουδαιότερον ποιήσις ἱστορίας ἐστίν· ἢ μὲν γὰρ ποιήσις μᾶλλον τὰ καθόλου, ἢ δ' ἱστορία τὰ καθ' ἕκαστον λέγει.' ['This is the reason poetry is a more philosophical and serious business than history, because poetry works towards general truths while history deals in particular facts.']

⁷⁸⁰ William Davenant, *Preface Before Gondibert* (1650), 13–14.

⁷⁸¹ That is, *Excursion*, Book 3, lines 23–73.

dissected map out of its box. We first look at one part, and then at another, then join and dove-tail them; and when the successive acts of attention have been completed, there is a retrogressive effort of mind to behold it as a whole. The Poet should paint to the imagination, not to the fancy; and I know no happier case to exemplify the distinction between these two faculties. Master-pieces of the former mode of poetic painting abound in the writings of Milton, ex. gr.

The fig tree, not that kind for fruit renown'd,
 But such as at this day to Indians known
 In Malabar or Decan, spreads her arms
 Branching so broad and long, that in the ground
 The bended twigs take root, *and daughters grow*
About the mother-tree, a pillar'd shade
High over-arched and ECHOING WALKS BETWEEN:
There oft the Indian Herdsman shunning heat,
Shelters in cool, and tends his pasturing herds
At loop holes cut through thickest shade.

MILTON, P. L. 9, 1100.⁷⁸²

This is *creation* rather than *painting*, or if painting, yet such, and with such co-presence of the whole picture flash'd at once upon the eye, as the sun paints in a camera obscura. But the poet must likewise understand and command what Bacon calls the *vestigia communia* of the senses, the latency of all in each, and more especially as by a magical *penna duplex*, the excitement of vision by sound and the exponents of sound.⁷⁸³ Thus, "THE ECHOING WALKS BETWEEN," may be almost

⁷⁸² Milton, *Paradise Lost*, 9:1101–10. Coleridge's emphasis.

⁷⁸³ The 'penna duplex' was a recent invention by Ralph Wedgwood: '*Mr Wedgwood's (Oxford Street) for an Apparatus for producing several Original Writings, or Drawings, at one time.* The principle of this invention consists in so disposing of two or more sheets of paper, or other writing materials, so as that they may be written upon at once with double pointed pens, or with two pens or styles so combined, as to be held in the hand, as a pen is commonly held . . . When the *penna-duplex* is moved in the act of writing, the two points thereof moving in parallel directions, they necessarily produce two exact facsimiles' (*Monthly Magazine*, 28 (1809), 315). The reference to Bacon is harder to get to the bottom of. Engell and Bate point to a notebook entry, probably from 1809, in which Coleridge refers to 'Lord Bacon's *impression communis* – *unum vestigium in sensu varios* [common impression – one trace (or 'print') in various senses]' (*Notebooks*, 3:3587; Engell and Bate, *Biographia Literaria*, 2:128), adding that 'the reference in Bacon has not been found'. But conceivably Coleridge is referring not to Francis but to Roger Bacon (1214–94) – not, that is, the 'Lord' but the Friar – who in his *Opus Majus* (1267) discusses the 'sensus communis' in which many things are brought into unity. This 'sensus communis' mediates the myriad outward sense-im-

said to reverse the fable in tradition of the head of Memnon, in the Egyptian statue.⁷⁸⁴ Such may be deservedly entitled the *creative words* in the world of imagination.

The second division respects an apparent minute adherence to *matter-of-fact* in character and incidents; a *biographical* attention to probability, and an *anxiety* of explanation and retrospect. Under this head I shall deliver, with no feigned diffidence, the results of my best reflection on the great point of controversy between Mr. Wordsworth, and his objectors; namely, on THE CHOICE OF HIS CHARACTERS. I have already declared, and, I trust justified, my utter dissent from the mode of argument which his critics have hitherto employed. To *their* question, why did you chuse such a character, or a character from such a rank of life? the Poet might in my opinion fairly retort: why, with the conception of my character did you make wilful choice of mean or ludicrous associations not furnished by me, but supplied from your own sickly and fastidious feelings? How was it, indeed, probable, that such arguments could have any weight with an author, whose plan, whose guiding principle, and main object it was to attack and subdue that state of association, which leads us to place the chief value on those things on which man DIFFERS from man, and to forget or disregard the high dignities, which belong to HUMAN NATURE, the sense and the feeling, which *may* be, and *ought* to be, found in *all* ranks? The feelings with which, as christians, we contemplate a mixed congregation rising or kneeling before their common maker: Mr. Wordsworth would have us entertain at *all* times as men, and as readers; and by the excitement of this lofty, yet prideless impartiality in *poetry*, he might hope to have encouraged its continuance in *real life*. The praise of good

pressions. The *Opus Majus* also discusses the fundamentally spiritual circumstances in which single impressions (*vestigia*) may be processed out of many sources: 'sicut de coelestibus activis, quia in illis relucet unum vestigium contrarietatis elementaris' ['thus it is with heavenly agents, because in them is reflected the single imprint of various contrary elements'] (William Bowyer (ed.), *Fratris Rogeri Bacon Opus Majus* (1733), 425). It is possible that Coleridge, jotting down his thoughts, assumed one Bacon to be the other, although in fact the passage in the *Biographia* doesn't specify which Bacon is being discussed.

⁷⁸⁴ The statue of the Egyptian king Memnon was reputed to emit sounds when the rays of the rising sun first touched it. 'Pausanias saies, that not far from *Thebes*, and the *Syringes*, is a colossal vocal Statue in a sitting Posture. Many say it is the Statue of *Memnon*, who came from *AEthiopia* into *Egypt* . . . *Pliny* saies that this vocal Statue was erected in the Temple of *Serapis* at *Thebes*. Now *Serapis* was the Sun, the most adored *Egyptian* Deity; whence we may infer, that this vocal Statue was a colossal Image, consecrated to the Sun: and it was placed with the Face towards the Sun-rising, and was reported to utter a Voice or Sound when the Sun-Beams struck upon it, saluting as it were the celestial Deity.' (John Jackson, *Chronological Antiquities: or, The antiquities and chronology of the most Ancient Kingdoms* (1752), 396)

men be his! In real life, and, I trust, even in my imagination, I honor a virtuous and wise man, without reference to the presence or absence of artificial advantages. Whether in the person of an armed baron, a laurel'd bard &c.⁷⁸⁵ or of an old pedlar, or still older leach-gatherer, the same qualities of head and heart must claim the same reverence. And even in poetry I am not conscious that I have ever suffered my feelings to be disturbed or offended by any thoughts or images, which the poet himself has not presented.

But yet I object nevertheless, and for the following reasons. First, because the object in view, as an *immediate* object, belongs to the moral philosopher, and would be pursued, not only more appropriately, but in my opinion with far greater probability of success, in sermons or moral essays, than in an elevated poem. It seems, indeed, to destroy the main fundamental distinction, not only between a *poem* and *prose*, but even between philosophy and works of fiction, inasmuch as it proposes *truth* for its immediate object, instead of *pleasure*. Now till the blessed time shall come, when truth itself shall be pleasure, and both shall be so united, as to be distinguishable in words only, not in feeling, it will remain the poet's office to proceed upon that state of association, which actually exists as *general*; instead of attempting first to *make* it what it ought to be, and then to let the pleasure follow. But here is unfortunately a small *Hysteron-Proteron*.⁷⁸⁶ For the communication of pleasure is the introductory means by which alone the poet must expect to moralize his readers. Secondly: though I were to admit, for a moment, *this* argument to be groundless: yet how is the moral effect to be produced, by merely attaching the name of some low profession to powers which are *least* likely, and to qualities which are assuredly not *more* likely, to be found in it? The poet, speaking in his own person, may at once delight and improve us by sentiments, which teach us the independence of goodness, of wisdom, and even of genius, on the favors of fortune. And having made a due reverence

⁷⁸⁵ A reference to a poem by Frances Brooke (1745–79), 'Ode to Fame' (1783), in which Queen Elizabeth is surrounded by her worthies: 'The Statesman wise, the letter'd Sage, / The laurel'd Bard, the chieftain plain'.

⁷⁸⁶ 'The latter one first'. ὕστερον πρότερον is a common figure from classical rhetoric: '*Hysteron Proteron* is when that is put in the former part of the sentence, which, according to the sense, should be in the latter; as, Valet atque vivit, *for* vivit atque valet, Terence' (Alexander Adam, *The Rudiments of Latin Grammar* (1806), 215). Bearing in mind Coleridge's interest in 'Irish bulls' (see Chapter 4, above), it can be noted that these were seen as proceeding by a process of hysteron-proteron: 'We could find apologies for every devisable species of irish bulls; but, in mercy, I will select only the oxymoron, as it is a favorite with irish orators. In the oxymoron contradictions meet . . . and *hysteron proteron* allows it sometimes to put the cart before the horse' (Richard and Maria Edgeworth, *Essay on Irish Bulls* (1803), 220).

before the throne of Antonine, he may bow with equal awe before Epictetus⁷⁸⁷ among his fellow-slaves—

-----and rejoice

In the plain presence of his dignity.⁷⁸⁸

Who is not at once delighted and improved, when the POET Wordsworth himself exclaims,

O many are the poets that are sown
 By Nature; men endowed with highest gifts,
 The vision send the faculty divine,⁷⁸⁹
 Yet wanting the accomplishment of verse,
 Nor having e'er, as life advanced, been led
 By circumstance to take unto the height
 The measure of themselves, these favor'd beings,
 All but a scatter'd few, live out their time,
 Husbanding that which they possess within,
 And go to the grave, unthought of. Strongest minds
 Are often those of whom the noisy world
 Hears least.

EXCURSION, B. 1.⁷⁹⁰

To use a colloquial phrase, such sentiments, in such language, do one's heart good; though I for my part, have not the fullest faith in the *truth* of the observation. On the contrary I believe the instances to be exceedingly rare; and should feel almost as strong an objection to introduce such a character in a poetic fiction, as a pair of black swans on a lake, in a fancy-landscape. When I think how many, and how much better books than Homer, or even than Herodotus, Pindar or Eschylus, could have read, are in the power of almost every man, in a country where almost every man is instructed to read and write; and how restless, how difficultly hidden, the powers of genius are; and yet find even in situations the most favorable, according to

⁷⁸⁷ Marcus Aurelius Antoninus (121–80 AD), Roman emperor and Stoic philosopher; and Epictetus (55–135 AD), a generation older and a slave. Despite their difference in social status, both were equally respected as Stoic thinkers and virtuous individuals. Voltaire talks of their equivalence: 'Marc-Aurèle, aussi grand peut-etre sur le trône de l'empire qu'Épictète dans l'esclavage' (Voltaire, *Dictionnaire Philosophique* (1764), 'Polythéisme').

⁷⁸⁸ Wordsworth, *Excursion* (1814), 1:79–80.

⁷⁸⁹ 1847 corrected this typo – it should, of course, be ' . . . vision and . . . '. Given the importance of this line to Coleridge (this is the third time the *Biographia* quotes it), it is odd that he makes this error.

⁷⁹⁰ Wordsworth, *Excursion* (1814), 1:81–4, 90–7.

Mr. Wordsworth, for the formation of a pure and poetic language; in situations which ensure familiarity with the grandest objects of the imagination; but *one* BURNS, among the shepherds of *Scotland*, and not a single poet of humble life among those of *English* lakes and mountains; I conclude, that POETIC GENIUS is not only a very delicate but a very rare plant.

But be this as it may, the feelings with which,

I think of CHATTERTON, the marvellous boy,
The sleepless soul, that perish'd in his pride:
Of BURNS, who walk'd in glory and in joy
Behind his plough upon the mountain-side—⁷⁹¹

are widely different from those with which I should read a *poem*, where the author, having occasion for the character of a poet and a philosopher in the fable of his narration, had chosen to make him a *chimney-sweeper*; and then, in order to remove all doubts on the subject, had *invented* an account of his birth, parentage and education, with all the strange and fortunate accidents which had concurred in making him at once poet, philosopher, and sweep!⁷⁹² Nothing, but biography, can justify this. If it be admissible even in a *Novel*, it must be one in the manner of De Foe's, that were meant to pass for histories, not in the manner of Fielding's: in the life of Moll Flanders, or Colonel Jack, not in a Tom Jones, or even a Joseph Andrews.⁷⁹³ Much less then can it be legitimately introduced in a *poem*, the characters of which, amid the strongest individualization, must still remain representative. The precepts of Horace, on this point, are grounded on the nature both of poetry and of the human mind.⁷⁹⁴ They are not more peremptory,

⁷⁹¹ Wordsworth, 'Resolution and Independence' (1815), 43–6. Thomas Chatterton (1752–70), a talented poet who forged some medieval poetry, was caught and committed suicide by poison some months before his eighteenth birthday. Robert Burns (1759–96), the famous Scots poet, worked as a farm labourer, and afterwards a farmer (rather than a shepherd) before enjoying success with his writing.

⁷⁹² Coleridge is probably referring to William Holloway's *The Chimney-Sweeper's Complaint; a Poetic Tale* (1806), in which the preternaturally articulate young sweep, though a poor orphan, is supplied with just such an account of parentage and education: 'Books were my joy; and much I read, / With pleasure and with pride; / And still our neighbours' humble shelves / The daily feast supplied.' (Holloway, *Chimney-Sweeper's Complaint* (1806), 8–10)

⁷⁹³ Defoe's *The Fortunes and Misfortunes of the Famous Moll Flanders* (1722) and *The History and Remarkable Life Of the truly Honourable Col. Jacke, commonly call'd Col. Jack* (1722) are both novels that style themselves 'true histories'; Fielding's *The History of Tom Jones, a Foundling* (1745) and *The History of the Adventures of Joseph Andrews and of his Friend Mr. Abraham Adams* (1742) are open about their fictional status.

⁷⁹⁴ Horace's *Ars Poetica* (c.18 BC) contains a great many 'precepts' about the need for poetry to have a sense of propriety, plausibility and representativity. 'Qui variare cupit rem

than wise and prudent. For in the first place a deviation from them perplexes the reader's feelings, and all the circumstances which are feigned in order to make such accidents less improbable, divide and disquiet his faith, rather than aid and support it. Spite of all attempts, the fiction *will* appear, and unfortunately not as *fictitious* but as *false*. The reader not only *knows*, that the sentiments and language are the poet's own, and his own too in his *artificial* character, *as poet*; but by the fruitless endeavours to make him think the contrary, he is not even suffered to *forget* it. The effect is similar to that produced by an epic poet, when the fable and the characters are *derived* from Scripture history, as in the *Messiah* of Klopstock, or in *Cumberland's Calvary*.⁷⁹⁵ and not merely *suggested* by it as in the *Paradise Lost* of Milton. That *illusion*, contradistinguished from *delusion*, that *negative* faith, which simply permits the images presented to work by their own force, without either denial or affirmation of their real existence by the judgment, is rendered impossible by their immediate neighbourhood to words and facts of known and absolute truth. A faith, which transcends even historic belief, must absolutely *put out* this mere poetic Analogon of faith, as the summer sun is said to extinguish our household fires, when it shines full upon them. What would otherwise have been yielded to as pleasing fiction, is repelled as revolting falsehood. The effect produced in this latter case by the solemn belief of the reader, is in a less degree brought about in the instances, to which I have been objecting, by the baffled attempts of the author to *make* him believe.

Add to all the foregoing the seeming uselessness both of the project and of the anecdotes from which it is to derive support. Is there one

prodigialiter unam, delphinum silvis appingit, fluctibus aprum' ['he who tries monstrously to vary what should be a unity is like a painter putting a dolphin in the forest, or a boar amongst the waves'] (29–30); 'Descriptas servare vices operumque colores / cur ego si nequeo ignoroque poeta salutor?' ['If I fail to comprehend and keep to these well-established sorts and variations of poetic form, then why call me a poet at all?'] (86–7).

⁷⁹⁵ Richard Cumberland (1732–1811) enjoyed success as a dramatist, but his blank verse epic, *Calvary: or the Death of Christ* (1792), is a dull, underpowered piece of sub-Miltonic pastiche. *Der Messias* (1748–73) is the major work of German poet Friedrich Gottlieb Klopstock (1724–1803) – a 19,485-line religious epic that has been respected by some but actively admired by few. 'A pious taste is not often associated with a disposition to yawn, but is indeed usually cultivated as a defence against tedium, and is humbly contented with a mediocrity of interest; yet piety itself must stretch and writhe under the load of tautologous inanities which are repeated throughout Klopstock's *Messiah*, in endless litany, by souls of the living and of the dead, by saints, seraphs, cherubs, and angels. Like the singing-master of a Methodist-meeting, instead of giving us the effect of praise in unison, Klopstock calls out one by one his intended choir, and compels the stunned and reluctant hearer to remark the proficiency of each, in countless individual succession.' (*Monthly Review*, 73 (1803), 357)

word for instance, attributed to the pedlar in the EXCURSION, characteristic of a *pedlar*? One sentiment, that might not more plausibly, even without the aid of any previous explanation, have proceeded from any wise and beneficent old man, of a rank or profession in which the language of learning and refinement are natural and to be expected? Need the rank have been at all particularized, where nothing follows which the knowledge of that rank is to explain or illustrate? When on the contrary this information renders the man's language, feelings, sentiments, and information a riddle, which must itself be solved by episodes of anecdote? Finally when this, and this alone, could have induced a genuine *poet* to inweave in a poem of the loftiest style, and on subjects the loftiest and of most universal interest, such minute matters of fact, (not unlike those furnished for the obituary of a magazine by the friends of some obscure *ornament of society lately deceased* in some obscure town,)] as

Among the hills of Athol he was born.
 There on a small hereditary farm,
 An unproductive slip of rugged ground,
 His Father dwelt; and died in poverty:
 While he, whose lowly fortune I retrace,
 The youngest of three sons, was yet a babe,
 A little one—unconscious of their loss.
 But 'ere he had outgrown his infant days
 His widowed mother, for a second mate,
 Espoused the teacher of the Village School;
 Who on her offspring zealously bestowed
 Needful instruction.

 From his sixth year, the Boy of whom I speak,
 In summer, tended cattle on the hills;
 But through the inclement and the perilous days
 Of long-continuing winter, he repaired
 To his step-father's school.—&c.⁷⁹⁶

For all the admirable passages interposed in this narration, might, with trifling alterations, have been far more appropriately, and with far greater verisimilitude, told of a poet in the character of a poet; and without incurring another defect which I shall now mention, and a sufficient illustration of which will have been here anticipated.

⁷⁹⁶ Wordsworth, *Excursion* (1814), 112–23, 134–8.

Third; an undue predilection for the *dramatic* form in certain poems, from which one or other of two evils result. Either the thoughts and diction are different from that of the poet, and then there arises an incongruity of style; or they are the same and indistinguishable, and then it presents a species of ventriloquism, where two are represented as talking, while in truth one man only speaks.

The fourth class of defects is closely connected with the former; but yet are such as arise likewise from an intensity of feeling disproportionate to *such* knowledge and value of the objects described, as can be fairly anticipated of men in general, even of the most cultivated classes; and with which therefore few only, and those few particularly circumstanced, can be supposed to sympathize: In this class, I comprize occasional prolixity, repetition, and an eddying, instead of progression, of thought. As instances, see pages 27, 28, and 62 of the *Poems*, vol. I. and the first eighty lines of the Sixth Book of the *Excursion*.⁷⁹⁷

Fifth and last; thoughts and images too great for the subject. This is an approximation to what might be called *mental* bombast, as distinguished from verbal: for, as in the latter there is a disproportion of the expressions to the thoughts so in this there is a disproportion of thought to the circumstance and occasion. This, by the bye, is a fault of which none but a man of genius is capable. It is the awkwardness and strength of Hercules with the distaff of Omphale.⁷⁹⁸

It is a well known fact, that bright colours in motion both make and leave the strongest impressions on the eye. Nothing is more likely too, than that a vivid image or visual spectrum, thus originated, may become the link of association in recalling the feelings and images that had accompanied the original impression. But if we describe this in such lines, as

They flash upon that inward eye,
Which is the bliss of solitude!⁷⁹⁹

in what words shall we describe the joy of retrospection, when the images and virtuous actions of a whole well-spent life, pass before

⁷⁹⁷ Pages 27 and 28 of the first volume of Wordsworth's *Poems* (1814) contains 'Anecdote for Fathers', stanzas 4–13. Page 62 of the first volume is blank. It has been suggested that Coleridge meant page 62 of the *second* volume, 'Song at the Feast of Brougham Castle', lines 80–103.

⁷⁹⁸ Omphale was Queen of Lydia in Asia Minor; Hercules was punished by the Delphic Oracle (for accidentally killing a prince called Iphitus) by being bound over as a slave to Omphale for a year. The queen made the hero wear a dress and spin with the distaff like a woman.

⁷⁹⁹ Wordsworth, 'I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud' (1807), 21–2.

that conscience which is indeed the *inward* eye: which is indeed “*the bliss of solitude?*” Assuredly we seem to sink most abruptly, not to say burlesquely, and almost as in a *medley*, from this couplet to—

And then my heart with pleasure fills,
And dances with the *daffodils*.

Vol. I. p. 320.⁸⁰⁰

The second instance is from Vol. II. page 12, where the poet having gone out for a day’s tour of pleasure, meets early in the morning with a knot of *gypsies*, who had pitched their blanket-tents and straw-beds, together with their children and asses, in some field by the road-side. At the close of the day on his return our tourist found them in the same place. “Twelve hours,” says he,

Twelve hours, twelve bounteous hours, are gone while I
Have been a traveller under open sky,
Much witnessing of change and cheer,
Yet as I left I find them here!⁸⁰¹

Whereat the poet, without seeming to reflect that the poor tawny wanderers might probably have been tramping for weeks together through road and lane, over moor and mountain, and consequently must have been right glad to rest themselves, their children and cattle, for one whole day; and overlooking the obvious truth, that such repose might be quite as necessary for *them*, as a walk of the same continuance was pleasing or healthful for the more fortunate poet; expresses his indignation in a series of lines, the diction and imagery of which would have been rather above, than below the mark, had they been applied to the immense empire of China improgressive for thirty centuries:

The weary SUN betook himself to rest,
—Then issued VESPER from the fulgent west,
Outshining, like a visible God,
The glorious path in which he trod!
And now ascending, after one dark hour,
And one night’s diminution of her power,
Behold the mighty MOON! this way
She looks, as if at them—but they
Regard not her:—oh, better wrong and strife,
Better vain deeds or evil than such life!

⁸⁰⁰ ‘I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud’, 23–4.

⁸⁰¹ Wordsworth, ‘Gipsies’ (1807), 9–12.

The silent HEAVENS have goings on:
The STARS have tasks!—but *these* have none!⁸⁰²

The last instance of this defect, (for I know no other than these already cited) is from the Ode, page 351. Vol. II. where, speaking of a child, “a six year’s darling of a pigmy size,” he thus addresses him:

Thou best philosopher, who yet dost keep
Thy heritage! Thou eye among the blind,
That, deaf and silent, read’st the eternal deep,
Haunted for ever by the Eternal Mind—
Mighty Prophet! Seer blest!
On whom those truths do rest,
Which we are toiling all our lives to find!
Thou, over whom thy immortality
Broods like the day, a master o’er the slave.
A presence that is not to be put by!⁸⁰³

Now here, not to stop at the daring spirit of metaphor which connects the epithets “deaf and silent,” with the apostrophized *eye*: or (if we are to refer it to the preceding word, philosopher) the faulty and equivocal syntax of the passage; and without examining the propriety of making a “master *brood* o’er a slave,” or the *day* brood *at all*; we will merely ask, what does all this mean? In what sense is a child of that age a *philosopher*? In what sense does he *read* “the eternal deep?” In what sense is he declared to be “*for ever haunted* by the Supreme Being? or so inspired as to deserve the splendid titles of a *mighty prophet*, a *blessed seer*? By reflection? by knowledge? by conscious intuition? or by *any* form or modification of consciousness?” These would be tidings indeed; but such as would pre-suppose an immediate revelation to the inspired communicator, and require miracles to authenticate his inspiration. Children at this age give us no such information of themselves; and at what time were we dipt in the Lethe, which has produced such utter oblivion of a state so godlike? There are many of us that still possess some remembrances, more or less distinct, respecting themselves at six years old; pity that the worthless straws only should float, while treasures, compared with which all the mines of Golconda and Mexico were but straws, should be absorbed by some unknown gulf into some unknown abyss.

But if this be too wild and exorbitant to be suspected as having been the poet’s meaning; if these mysterious gifts, faculties, and operations,

⁸⁰² ‘Gipsies’, 13–24.

⁸⁰³ Wordsworth, ‘Ode: Intimations of Immortality’ (1807), 110–19.

are *not* accompanied with consciousness; who *else* is conscious of them? or how can it be called the child, if it be no part of the child's conscious being? For aught I know, the thinking Spirit within me may be *substantially* one with the principle of life, and of vital operation. For aught I know, it might be employed as a secondary agent in the marvellous organization and organic movements of my body. But, surely, it would be strange language to say, that *I* construct my *heart!* or that *I* propel the finer influences through my *nerves!* or that *I* compress my brain, and draw the curtains of sleep round my own eyes! SPINOZA and BEHMEN were, on different systems, both Pantheists; and among the ancients there were philosophers, teachers of the EN KAI PAN,⁸⁰⁴ who not only taught, that God was All, but that this All constituted God.⁸⁰⁵ Yet not even these would confound the *part*, as a part, with the Whole, as the whole. Nay, in no system is the distinction between the individual and God, between the Modification, and the one only Substance, more sharply drawn, than in that of SPINOZA. JACOBI indeed relates of LESSING, that, after a conversation with him at the house of the poet, GLEIM, (the Tyrtæus and Anacreon of the German Parnassus) in which conversation L. had avowed privately to Jacobi his reluctance to admit any *personal* existence of the Supreme Being, or the *possibility* of personality except in a finite Intellect, and while they were sitting at table, a shower of rain came on unexpectedly.⁸⁰⁶ Gleim expressed his regret at the circumstance, because they had meant to drink their wine in the garden: upon which Lessing in one of his half-earnest, half-joking moods, nodded to Jacobi, and said, "It is *I*, perhaps, that am doing *that*," i.e. *raining!* and J. answered, "or perhaps *I*;" Gleim contented himself with staring at them both, without asking for any explanation.

⁸⁰⁴ 'One and Everything'.

⁸⁰⁵ In Chapter 12 Coleridge mentions Parmenides and Plotinus with specific reference to this theo-philosophy of 'the One and the All'. The Greek EN KAI PAN ('en kai pan') rarely appears in early Greek philosophers, but after it was used in a published dialogue between Jacobi and Lessing in 1789 it became widely cited as a thumbnail phrase indicating Pantheism.

⁸⁰⁶ Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi (1743–1819) was an influential anti-Enlightenment philosopher. He coined the phrase 'nihilism' to summarise what he saw as wrong with the drift of eighteenth-century thought, and proposed, in its place, 'Glaube' or 'faith'. His conversations with thinker and poet Gotthold Lessing (1729–81) about Spinozism and philosophy more generally eventually led to the publication of a series of letters, *Briefe über die Lehre Spinozas* (1785; 2nd edn, much enlarged, 1789). Coleridge owned a copy, and quotes the anecdote cited in this paragraph from it. Johann Wilhelm Ludwig Gleim (2 April 1719–18 February 1803) wrote both 'Anakreontiker' and 'preussisch-patriotische Lyriker' – that is, both amiable poems in the style of the sixth-century BC Greek poet Anacreon, and patriotic lyrics and hymns more redolent of the seventh-century BC martial poet Tyrtraeus.

So with regard to this passage. In what sense can the magnificent attributes, above quoted, be appropriated to a *child*, which would not make them equally suitable to a *bee*, or a *dog*, or a *field of corn*: or even to a ship, or to the wind and waves that propel it? The omnipresent Spirit works equally in *them*, as in the child; and the child is equally unconscious of it as they. It cannot surely be, that the four lines, immediately following, are to contain the explanation?

To whom the grave
Is but a lonely bed without the sense or sight
Of day or the warm light,
A place of thought where we in waiting lie.⁸⁰⁷

Surely, it cannot be that this wonder-rousing apostrophe is but a comment on the little poem of “We are Seven?” that the whole meaning of the passage is reducible to the assertion, that a *child*, who by the bye at six years old would have been better instructed in most christian families, has no other notion of death than that of lying in a dark, cold place? And still, I hope, not as *in a place of thought!* not the frightful notion of lying *awake* in his grave! The analogy between death and sleep is too simple, too natural, to render so horrid a belief possible for children; even had they not been in the habit, as all christian children are, of hearing the latter term used to express the former. But if the child’s belief be only, that “he is not dead, but sleepeth:”⁸⁰⁸ wherein does it differ from that of his father and mother, or any other adult and instructed person? To form an idea of a thing’s becoming nothing; or of nothing becoming a thing; is impossible to all finite beings alike, of whatever age, and however educated or uneducated. Thus it is with splendid paradoxes in general. If the words are taken in the common sense, they convey an absurdity; and if, in contempt of dictionaries and custom, they are so interpreted as to avoid the absurdity, the meaning dwindles into some bald truism. Thus you must at once understand the words *contrary* to their common import, in order to arrive at any *sense*; and *according* to their common import, if you are to receive from them any feeling of *sublimity* or *admiration*.

Though the instances of this defect in Mr. Wordsworth’s poems are so few, that for themselves it would have been scarcely just to attract the reader’s attention toward them; yet I have dwelt on it, and perhaps the more for this very reason. For being so very few,

⁸⁰⁷ Wordsworth, ‘Ode: Intimations of Immortality’ (1807), 120–3.

⁸⁰⁸ ‘And all wept, and bewailed her: but he said, Weep not; she is not dead, but sleepeth. And they laughed him to scorn, knowing that she was dead’ (Luke 8:52).

they cannot sensibly detract from the reputation of an author, who is even characterized by the number of profound truths in his writings, which will stand the severest analysis; and yet few as they are, they are exactly those passages which his *blind* admirers would be most likely, and best able, to imitate. But WORDSWORTH, where he is indeed Wordsworth, may be mimicked by Copyists, he may be plundered by Plagiarists; but he cannot be imitated, except by those who are not born to be imitators. For without his depth of feeling and his imaginative power his *Sense* would want its vital warmth and peculiarity; and without his strong sense, his *mysticism* would become *sickly*—mere fog, and dimness!

To these defects which, as appears by the extracts, are only occasional, I may oppose with far less fear of encountering the dissent of any candid and intelligent reader, the following (for the most part correspondent) excellencies. First, an austere purity of language both grammatically and logically; in short a perfect appropriateness of the words to the meaning. Of how high value I deem this, and how particularly estimable I hold the example at the present day, has been already stated: and in part too the reasons on which I ground both the moral and intellectual importance of habituating ourselves to a strict accuracy of expression. It is noticeable, how limited an acquaintance with the masterpieces of art will suffice to form a correct and even a sensitive taste, where none but master-pieces have been seen and admired: while on the other hand, the most correct notions, and the widest acquaintance with the works of excellence of all ages and countries, will not perfectly secure us against the contagious familiarity with the far more numerous offspring of tastelessness or of a perverted taste. If this be the case, as it notoriously is, with the arts of music and painting, much more difficult will it be, to avoid the infection of multiplied and daily examples in the practice of an art, which uses words, and words only, as its instruments. In poetry, in which every line, every phrase, may pass the ordeal of deliberation and deliberate choice, it is possible, and barely possible, to attain that ultimatum which I have ventured to propose as the infallible test of a blameless style; namely; its *untranslatableness* in words of the same language without injury to the meaning. Be it observed, however, that I include in the *meaning* of a word not only its correspondent object, but likewise all the associations which it recalls. For language is framed to convey not the object alone but likewise the character, mood and intentions of the person who is representing it. In poetry it *is* practicable to preserve the diction uncorrupted by the affectations and misappropriations, which promiscuous authorship, and reading

not promiscuous only because it is disproportionally most conversant with the compositions of the day, have rendered general. Yet even to the poet, composing in his own province, it is an arduous work: and as the result and pledge of a watchful good sense, of fine and luminous distinction, and of complete self-possession, may justly claim all the honor which belongs to an attainment equally difficult and valuable, and the more valuable for being rare. It is at *all* times the proper food of the understanding; but in an age of corrupt eloquence it is both food and antidote.⁸⁰⁹

In prose I doubt whether it be even possible to preserve our style wholly unalloyed by the vicious phraseology which meets us every where, from the sermon to the newspaper, from the harangue of the legislator to the speech from the convivial chair, announcing a *toast* or sentiment. Our chains rattle, even while we are complaining of them. The poems of Boetius rise high in our estimation when we compare them with those of his contemporaries, as Sidonius Apollinaris, &c.⁸¹⁰ They might even be referred to a purer age, but that the prose, in which they are set, as jewels in a crown of lead or iron, betrays the true age of the writer. Much however may be effected by education. I believe not only from grounds of reason, but from having in great measure assured myself of the fact by actual though limited experience, that to a youth led from his first boyhood to investigate the meaning of every word and the reason of its choice and position, Logic presents itself as an old acquaintance under new names.

On some future occasion, more especially demanding such disquisition, I shall attempt to prove the close connection between veracity and habits of mental accuracy; the beneficial after-effects of verbal

⁸⁰⁹ ‘Corrupt Eloquence’ is the standard eighteenth-century manner of rendering the title of Tacitus’s *Dialogus de oratoribus* (102 AD) – see, for example, Arthur Murphy’s *Tacitus’ Dialogue Concerning Oratory, or the Causes of Corrupt Eloquence* (Vol. 7 of *The Works of Cornelius Tacitus*, 8 vols, 1805). Tacitus’s is a work with which Coleridge’s *Biographia* has more than a passing similarity. In the second of ‘Satyrane’s Letters’ below, Coleridge recalls ‘Englishing’ this dialogue for the benefit of his wife.

⁸¹⁰ Though he is best known as a writer of prose, Boethius’s *Consolatio Philosophiae* [‘The Consolation of Philosophy’] (c.524) includes various poems. Gaius Sollius Apollinaris Sidonius (also known as Saint Sidonius Apollinaris, c.430–89) was an important bishop of Catholic Gaul, as well as a poet and a diplomat. He is a more obscure figure than Boethius, but Coleridge’s assessment of his poetry here seems a little harsh; although it is true that Sidonius was more read for his content than his style: ‘The virtues and the talents of Sidonius Apollinaris caused him to be deemed the ornament of the age . . . The muse of Sidonius was sometimes grave, and often playful; but of his poems it has been remarked, that they are not recommended so much by their classical purity, or the harmony of their versification, as by accounts of peculiar usages, interesting facts, personal characters, and amusing anecdotes’ (Joseph Berrington, *A Literary History of the Middle Ages* (1814), 64). Coleridge had bought a copy of Sidonius’s works in 1796.

precision in the preclusion of fanaticism, which masters the feelings more especially by indistinct watch-words; and to display the advantages which language alone, at least which language with incomparably greater ease and certainty than any other means, presents to the instructor of impressing modes of intellectual energy so constantly, so imperceptibly, and as it were by such elements and atoms, as to secure in due time the formation of a second nature. When we reflect, that the cultivation of the judgment is a positive command of the moral law, since the reason can give the *principle* alone, and the conscience bears witness only to the *motive*, while the application and effects must depend on the judgment: when we consider, that the greater part of our success and comfort in life depends on distinguishing the similar from the same, that which is peculiar in each thing from that which it has in common with others, so as still to select the most probable, instead of the merely possible or positively unfit, we shall learn to value earnestly and with a practical seriousness a mean, already prepared for us by nature and society, of teaching the young mind to think well and wisely by the same unremembered process and with the same never forgotten results, as those by which it is taught to speak and converse. Now how much warmer the interest is, how much more genial the feelings of reality and practicability, and thence how much stronger the impulses to imitation are, which a *contemporary* writer, and especially a contemporary *poet*, excites in youth and commencing manhood, has been treated of in the earlier pages of these sketches. I have only to add, that all the praise which is due to the exertion of such influence for a purpose so important, joined with that which must be claimed for the infrequency of the same excellence in the same perfection, belongs in full right to Mr. WORDSWORTH. I am far however from denying that we have poets whose *general* style possesses the same excellence, as Mr. Moore, Lord Byron, Mr. Bowles, and in all his later and more important works our laurel-honoring Laureate.⁸¹¹ But there are none, in whose works I do not appear to myself to find *more* exceptions, than in those of Wordsworth. Quotations or specimens would here be wholly out of place, and must be left for the critic who doubts and would invalidate the justice of this eulogy so applied.

The second characteristic excellence of Mr. W's work is: a correspondent weight and sanity of the Thoughts and Sentiments,—won, not from books; but—from the poet's own meditative observation. They are *fresh* and have the dew upon them. His muse,

⁸¹¹ Southey.

at least when in her strength of wing, and when she hovers aloft in her proper element,

Makes audible a linked lay of truth,
 Of truth profound a sweet continuous lay,
 Not learnt, but native, her own natural notes!
 S.T.C.⁸¹²

Even throughout his smaller poems there is scarcely one, which is not rendered valuable by some just and original reflection.

See page 25, vol. 2nd:⁸¹³ or the two following passages in one of his humblest compositions.

O Reader! had you in your mind
 Such stores as silent thought can bring,
 O gentle Reader! you would find
 A tale in every thing.⁸¹⁴

and

I've heard of hearts unkind, kind deeds
 With coldness still returning:
 Alas! the gratitude of men
 Has oftener left *me* mourning.⁸¹⁵

or in a still higher strain the six beautiful quatrains, page 134.

Thus fares it still in our decay:
 And yet the wiser mind
 Mourns less for what age takes away
 Than what it leaves behind.

The Blackbird in the summer trees,
 The Lark upon the hill,
 Let loose their carols when they please,
 Are quiet when they will.

With nature never do *they* wage
 A foolish strife; they see
 A happy youth, and their old age
 Is beautiful and free!

But we are pressed by heavy laws;
 And often, glad no more,

⁸¹² Coleridge, 'To William Wordsworth' (1807), 58–60.

⁸¹³ Wordsworth, 'Star Gazers' (1807).

⁸¹⁴ Wordsworth, 'Simon Lee' (1798), 73–6.

⁸¹⁵ 'Simon Lee', 101–4; Coleridge's italics.

We wear a face of joy, because
We have been glad of yore.

If there is one, who need bemoan
His kindred laid in earth,
The household hearts that were his own,
It is the man of mirth.

My days, my Friend, are almost gone,
My life has been approved,
And many love me; but by none
Am I enough beloved.⁸¹⁶

or the sonnet on Buonaparte, page 202, vol. 2; or finally (for a volume would scarce suffice to exhaust the instances,) the last stanza of the poem on the withered Celandine, vol. 2, p. 312.

To be a prodigal's favorite—then, worse truth,
A miser's pensioner—behold our lot!
Oh man! that from thy fair and shining youth
Age might but take the things, youth needed not.⁸¹⁷

Both in respect of this and of the former excellence, Mr. Wordsworth strikingly resembles Samuel Daniel, one of the golden writers of our golden Elizabethian age, now most causelessly neglected: Samuel Daniel, whose diction bears no mark of time, no distinction of age which has been, and as long as our language shall last, will be so far the language of the to-day and for ever, as that it is more intelligible to us, than the transitory fashions of our own particular age. A similar praise is due to his sentiments. No frequency of perusal can deprive them of their freshness. For though they are brought into the full daylight of every reader's comprehension; yet are they drawn up from depths which few in any age are privileged to visit, into which few in any age have courage or inclination to descend. If Mr. Wordsworth is not equally with Daniel alike intelligible to all readers of average understanding in all passages of his works, the comparative difficulty does not arise from the greater impurity of the ore, but from the nature and uses of the metal. A poem is not necessarily obscure, because it does not aim to be popular. It is enough, if a work be perspicuous to those for whom it is written, and,

Fit audience find, though few.⁸¹⁸

⁸¹⁶ Wordsworth, 'The Fountain' (1800), 33–56.

⁸¹⁷ Wordsworth, 'The Small Celandine' (1804), 21–4.

⁸¹⁸ Milton, *Paradise Lost*, 7:31.

To the “Ode on the intimations of immortality from recollections of early childhood” the poet might have prefixed the lines which Dante addresses to one of his own Canzoni—

Canzon, io credo, che saranno radi
 Che tua ragione intendan bene:
 Tanto lor sei faticoso ed alto.

O lyric song, there will be few, think I,
 Who may thy import understand aright:
 Thou art for *them* so arduous and so high!⁸¹⁹

But the ode was intended for such readers only as had been accustomed to watch the flux and reflux of their inmost nature,⁸²⁰ to venture at times into the twilight realms of consciousness, and to feel a deep interest in modes of inmost being, to which they know that the attributes of time and space are inapplicable and alien, but which yet can not be conveyed, save in symbols of time and space. For such readers the sense is sufficiently plain, and they will be as little disposed to charge Mr. Wordsworth with believing the platonic pre-existence in the ordinary interpretation of the words, as I am to believe, that Plato himself ever meant or taught it.

Πολλα οἱ ὑπ' ἀγκῶ
 —νος ὠκέα βέλη
 Ἐνδον εντι φαρέτρας
 Φωνᾶντα συνετοῖσιν· ἐς
 Δὲ τὸ παν ερμηνέως
 Χατίζει. Σοφὸς ὁ πολ-
 —λα εἰδὼς φυᾶ·
 Μαθόντες δὲ, λάβροι
 Παγγλωσσία, κόρακες ὡς
 Ἄκραντα γαρύετον
 Διὸς πρὸς ὄρνιχα θεῖον.⁸²¹

⁸¹⁹ Dante, *Convivio* (c.1305), Canzone 1, 53–4. Coleridge’s translation.

⁸²⁰ This refers to Wordsworth’s Preface to *Lyrical Ballads*: ‘each of these poems has a purpose . . . to follow the fluxes and refluxes of the mind when agitated by the great and simple affections of our nature’.

⁸²¹ Pindar’s second Olympian Ode (modern lineation 2:83–8; older texts split the lines into shorter units, as Coleridge does here). Coleridge adapts the person from first to third to make the words applicable to Wordsworth; here, suitably (therefore) adjusted, is Gilbert West’s 1749 translation of the lines:

Yet in his well stored quiver remain
 Arrows to supply
 With copious argument his moral strain,

Third (and wherein he soars far above Daniel) the sinewy strength and originality of single lines and paragraphs: the frequent *curiosa felicitas*⁸²² of his diction, of which I need not here give specimens, having anticipated them in a preceding page. This beauty, and as eminently characteristic of Wordsworth's poetry, his rudest assailants have felt themselves compelled to acknowledge and admire.

Fourth; the perfect truth of nature in his images and descriptions as taken immediately from nature, and proving a long and genial intimacy with the very spirit which gives the physiognomic expression to all the works of nature. Like a green field reflected in a calm and perfectly transparent lake, the image is distinguished from the reality only by its greater softness and lustre. Like the moisture or the polish on a pebble, genius neither distorts nor false-colours its objects; but on the contrary brings out many a vein and many a tint, which escape the eye of common observation, thus raising to the rank of gems what had been often kicked away by the hurrying foot of the traveller on the dusty high road of custom.

Let me refer to the whole description of skating, vol. I. page 42 to 47, especially to the lines

So through the darkness and the cold we flew,
 And not a voice was idle: with the din
 Meanwhile the precipices rang aloud;
 The leafless trees and every icy crag
 Tinkled like iron; while the distant hills
 Into the tumult sent an alien sound
 Of melancholy, not unnoticed, while the stars
 Eastward were sparkling clear, and in the west
 The orange sky of evening died away.⁸²³

Whose mystic sense the wise alone descry,
 Still to the vulgar sounding harsh and vain,
 He only, in whose ample breast,
 Nature hath true inherent genius pour'd,
 The praise of wisdom may contest;
 Not they who, with loquacious learning stored,
 Like crows and chattering jays, with clamorous cries
 Pursue the bird of Jove, that sails along the skies.

⁸²² 'Learned felicity'. Quoted from Petronius's description of Horace in the *Satyricon*, 118: 'Quintilian observes concerning Horace, "that he is remarkably pure and polished" . . . and *Petronius* compliments him as distinguished for *curiosa felicitas*, an elaborate or elegant felicity' (Thomas Gibbons (ed.), *Memoirs of the Rev. Isaac Watts* (1780), 188).

⁸²³ Wordsworth, 'Influence on Natural Objects' (written 1798; first published 1809), 38-46.

Or to the poem on the green linnet, vol. I. p. 244. What can be more accurate yet more lovely than the two concluding stanzas?

Upon yon tuft of hazel trees,
That twinkle to the gusty breeze,
Behold him perched in ecstasies,
 Yet seeming still to hover,
There! where the flutter of his wings
Upon his back and body flings
Shadows and sunny glimmerings,
 That cover him all over.

While thus before my eyes he gleams,
A brother of the leaves he seems;
When in a moment forth he teems
 His little song in gushes:
As if it pleased him to disdain
And mock the form which he did feign
While he was dancing with the train
 Of leaves among the bushes.⁸²⁴

Or the description of the blue-cap, and of the noon-tide silence, p. 284,⁸²⁵ or the poem to the cuckoo, p. 299; or, lastly, though I might multiply the references to ten times the number, to the poem so completely Wordsworth's commencing

Three years she grew in sun and shower, &c.

Fifth: a meditative pathos, a union of deep and subtle thought with sensibility; a sympathy with man as man; the sympathy indeed of a contemplator, rather than a fellow-sufferer or co-mate, (spectator, *haud particeps*)⁸²⁶ but of a contemplator, from whose view no difference of rank conceals the sameness of the nature; no injuries of wind or weather, or toil, or even of ignorance, wholly disguise the human face divine. The superscription and the image of the Creator still remain

⁸²⁴ Wordsworth, 'The Green Linnet' (1807), 25–40.

⁸²⁵ Wordsworth, 'The Kitten and the Falling Leaves' (1807).

⁸²⁶ 'A spectator, not a participant'. Coleridge inverts a phrase ('spectator et particeps') from early Christian author Lactantius (c.240–320), who wrote of the guilt by association of audience members who watched the persecution of Christians in the Roman Arena: 'Qui hominem, quamvis ob merita damnatum, in conspectu suo pro voluptate jugulari computat, conscientiam suam polluit, tana scilicet quam si homicidii, quod fit occulte, spectator et particeps fiat' ['He that considers fun to see a man killed before his eyes, though it be a criminal condemned for his villainies, pollutes his conscience, as much as if he were both a spectator and partaker of any secret murder'] (Lactantius, *De Mortibus Persecutorum*, 7:20).

legible to *him* under the dark lines, with which guilt or calamity had cancelled or cross-barred it. Here the man and the poet lose and find themselves in each other, the one as glorified, the latter as substantiated. In this mild and philosophic pathos, Wordsworth appears to me without a compeer. Such he *is*: so he *writes*. See vol. I. page 134 to 136,⁸²⁷ or that most affecting composition, the “Affliction of Margaret — of —,” page 165 to 168,⁸²⁸ which no mother, and if I may judge by my own experience, no parent can read without a tear. Or turn to that genuine lyric, in the former edition, entitled, the “Mad Mother,” page 174 to 178, of which I cannot refrain from quoting two of the stanzas, both of them for their pathos, and the former for the fine transition in the two concluding lines of the stanza, so expressive of that deranged state, in which from the increased sensibility the sufferer’s attention is abruptly drawn off by every trifle, and in the same instant plucked back again by the one despotic thought, bringing home with it, by the blending, *fusing* power of Imagination and Passion, the alien object to which it had been so abruptly diverted, no longer an alien but an ally and an inmate.

Suck, little babe, oh suck again!
 It cools my blood; it cools my brain:
 Thy lips, I feel them, baby! they
 Draw from my heart the pain away.
 Oh! press me with thy little hand;
 It loosens something at my chest;
 About that tight and deadly band
 I feel thy little fingers prest.
 The breeze I see is in the tree!
 It comes to cool my babe and me.

Thy father cares not for my breast,
 ’Tis thine, sweet baby, there to rest.
 ’Tis all thine own!—and, if it’s hue,
 Be changed, that was so fair to view,
 ’Tis fair enough for thee, my dove!
 My beauty, little child, is flown,
 But thou wilt live with me in love,
 And what if my poor cheek be brown?
 ’Tis well for me, thou can’st not see
 How pale and wan it else would be.⁸²⁹

⁸²⁷ Wordsworth, “’Tis said, that some have died for love’ (1800).

⁸²⁸ Wordsworth, “The Affliction of Margaret ——’ (1807).

⁸²⁹ Wordsworth, ‘Her eyes are wild’ (1798), 31–40, 61–70.

Last, and pre-eminently I challenge for this poet the gift of IMAGINATION in the highest and strictest sense of the word. In the play of *Fancy*, Wordsworth, to my feelings, is not always graceful, and sometimes *recondite*. The *likeness* is occasionally too strange, or demands too peculiar a point of view, or is such as appears the creature of predetermined research, rather than spontaneous presentation. Indeed his fancy seldom displays itself, as mere and unmodified fancy. But in imaginative power, he stands nearest of all modern writers to Shakspear and Milton; and yet in a kind perfectly unborrowed and his own. To employ his own words, which are at once an instance and an illustration, he does indeed to all thoughts and to all objects—

—add the gleam,
The light that never was on sea or land,
The consecration, and the poet's dream.⁸³⁰

I shall select a few examples as most obviously manifesting this faculty; but if I should ever be fortunate enough to render my analysis of imagination, its origin and characters thoroughly intelligible to the reader, he will scarcely open on a page of this poet's works without recognizing, more or less, the presence and the influences of this faculty.

From the poem on the Yew Trees, vol. I. page 303, 304.

But worthier still of note
Are those fraternal four of Borrowdale,
Joined in one solemn and capacious grove:
Huge trunks!—and each particular trunk a growth
Of intertwined fibres serpentine
Up-coiling, and inveterately convolved,—
Not uninformed with phantasy, and looks
That threaten the prophane;—a pillared shade,
Upon whose grassless floor of red-brown hue,
By sheddings from the pinal umbrage tinged
Perennially—beneath whose sable roof
Of boughs, as if for festal purpose decked
With unrejoicing berries, ghostly shapes
May meet at noontide—FEAR and trembling HOPE,
SILENCE and FORESIGHT—DEATH, the skeleton,
And TIME, the shadow—there to celebrate,
As in a natural temple scattered o'er

⁸³⁰ Wordsworth, 'Elegaic Stanzas, Suggested by a Picture of Peele Castle' (1807), 14–16.

With altars undisturbed of mossy stone,
 United worship; or in mute repose
 To lie, and listen to the mountain flood
 Murmuring from Glanamara's inmost caves.⁸³¹

The effect of the old man's figure in the poem of Resignation and Independence, vol. II. page 33.

While he was talking thus, the lonely place
 The old man's shape, and speech, all troubled me:
 In my mind's eye I seemed to see him pace
 About the weary moors continually,
 Wandering about alone and silently.⁸³²

Or the 8th, 9th, 19th, 26th, 31st, and 33d, in the collection of miscellaneous sonnets—the sonnet on the subjugation of Switzerland, page 210,⁸³³ or the last ode from which I especially select the two following stanzas or paragraphs, page 349 to 350.

Our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting:
 The soul that rises with us, our life's star
 Hath had elsewhere its setting,
 And cometh from afar.
 Not in entire forgetfulness,
 And not in utter nakedness,
 But trailing clouds of glory do we come
 From God who is our home:
 Heaven lies about us in our infancy!
 Shades of the prison-house begin to close
 Upon the growing boy;
 But he beholds the light, and whence it flows,
 He sees it in his joy!
 The youth who daily further from the east
 Must travel, still is nature's priest,
 And by the vision splendid
 Is on his way attended;
 At length the man perceives it die away,
 And fade into the light of common day.⁸³⁴

⁸³¹ Wordsworth, 'Yew-Trees' (1815), 13–33.

⁸³² Wordsworth, 'Resolution and Independence' (1807), 134–8.

⁸³³ Coleridge directs his readers to: 'Where lies the land' (1807), 134–8; 'Even as the dragon's eye' (1815); 'To the River Duddon' (1807); 'Composed Upon Westminster Bridge' (1807); 'Methought I saw the footsteps' (1807); 'It is a Beauteous Evening' (1807); 'Two Voices are there' (1807).

⁸³⁴ Wordsworth, 'Ode: Intimations of Immortality' (1807), 58–76.

And page 352 to 354 of the same ode.

O joy that in our embers
 Is something that doth live,
 That nature yet remembers
 What was so fugitive!
 The thought of our past years in me doth breed
 Perpetual benedictions: not in deed
 For that which is most worthy to be blest;
 Delight and liberty the simple creed
 Of childhood, whether busy or at rest,
 With new-fledged hope still fluttering in his breast:—
 Not for these I raise
 The song of thanks and praise;
 But for those obstinate questionings
 Of sense and outward things,
 Fallings from us, vanishings;
 Blank misgivings of a creature
 Moving about in worlds not realized,
 High instincts, before which our mortal nature
 Did tremble like a guilty thing surprised!
 But for those first affections,
 Those shadowy recollections,
 Which, be they what they may,
 Are yet the fountain light of all our day,
 Are yet a master light of all our seeing;
 Uphold us—cherish—and have power to make
 Our noisy years seem moments in the being
 Of the eternal silence; truths that wake
 To perish never:
 Which neither listlessness, nor mad endeavour,
 Nor man nor boy
 Nor all that is at enmity with joy
 Can utterly abolish or destroy!
 Hence, in a season of calm weather,
 Though inland far we be,
 Our souls have sight of that immortal sea
 Which brought us hither,
 Can in a moment travel thither—
 And see the children sport upon the shore,
 And hear the mighty waters rolling evermore.⁸³⁵

⁸³⁵ 'Ode: Intimations of Immortality', 133–71.

And since it would be unfair to conclude with an extract, which though highly characteristic must yet from the nature of the thoughts and the subject be interesting or perhaps intelligible, to but a limited number of readers; I will add from the poet's last published work a passage equally Wordsworthian; of the beauty of which, and of the imaginative power displayed therein, there can be but one opinion, and one feeling. See White Doe, page 5.

Fast the church-yard fills;—anon
 Look again and they are gone;
 The cluster round the porch, and the folk
 Who sate in the shade of the prior's oak!
 And scarcely have they disappear'd
 Ere the prelusive hymn is heard:—
 With one consent the people rejoice,
 Filling the church with a lofty voice!
 They sing a service which they feel
 For 'tis the sun-rise of their zeal
 And faith and hope are in their prime
 In great Eliza's golden time.
 A moment ends the fervent din
 And all is hushed without and within;
 For though the priest more tranquilly
 Recites the holy liturgy,
 The only voice which you can hear
 Is the river murmuring near.
 When soft!—the dusky trees between
 And down the path through the open green,
 Where is no living thing to be seen;
 And through yon gateway, where is found,
 Beneath the arch with ivy bound,
 Free entrance to the church-yard ground;
 And right across the verdant sod,
 Towards the very house of God;
 Comes gliding in with lovely gleam,
 Comes gliding in serene and slow,
 Soft and silent as a dream,
 A solitary doe!
 White she is as lilly of June,
 And beauteous as the silver moon
 When out of sight the clouds are driven
 And she is left alone in heaven!

Or like a ship some gentle day
 In sunshine sailing far away—
 A glittering ship that hath the plain
 Of ocean for her own domain.

* * * * *

What harmonious pensive changes
 Wait upon her as she ranges
 Round and through this pile of state
 Overthrown and desolate!
 Now a step or two her way
 Is through space of open day,
 Where the enamoured sunny light
 Brightens her that was so bright:
 Now doth a delicate shadow fall,
 Falls upon her like a breath
 From some lofty arch or Wall,
 As she passes underneath.⁸³⁶

The following analogy will, I am apprehensive, appear dim and fantastic, but in reading Bartram's *Travels*⁸³⁷ I could not help transcribing the following lines as a sort of allegory, or connected simile and metaphor of Wordsworth's intellect and genius.—“The soil is a deep, rich, dark mould, on a deep stratum of tenacious clay; and that on a foundation of rocks, which often break through both strata, lifting their backs above the surface. The trees which chiefly grow here are the gigantic, black oak; magnolia magniflora; fraximus excelsior; platane; and a few stately tulip trees.” What Mr. Wordsworth *will* produce, it is not for me to prophecy but I could pronounce with the liveliest convictions what he is capable of producing. It is the FIRST GENUINE PHILOSOPHIC POEM.

The preceding criticism will not, I am aware, avail to overcome the prejudices of those, who have made it a business to attack and ridicule Mr. Wordsworth's compositions.

Truth and prudence might be imaged as concentric circles. The poet may perhaps have passed beyond the latter, but he has confined himself far within the bounds of the former, in designating these critics, as too petulant to be passive to a genuine poet, and

⁸³⁶ Wordsworth, ‘The White Doe of Rylstone’ (1815), 1:31–68, 81–92.

⁸³⁷ William Bartram, *Travels Through North & South Carolina, Georgia, East & West Florida, the Cherokee Country, the Extensive Territories of the Muscogulges or Creek Confederacy and the Country of the Chactaws* (1791). Coleridge quotes a condensed version of a passage from pp. 36–7.

too feeble to grapple with him;—"men of palsied imaginations, in whose minds all healthy action is languid;—who, therefore, feel as the many direct them, or with the many are greedy after vicious provocatives."⁸³⁸

Let not Mr. Wordsworth be charged with having expressed himself too indignantly, till the wantonness and the systematic and malignant perseverance of the aggressions have been taken into fair consideration. I myself heard the commander in chief of this unmanly warfare⁸³⁹ make a boast of his private admiration of Wordsworth's genius. I have heard him declare, that whoever came into his room would probably find the Lyrical Ballads lying open on his table, and that (speaking exclusively of those written by Mr. Wordsworth himself,) he could nearly repeat the whole of them by heart. *But* a Review, in order to be a saleable article, must be *personal*, *sharp*, and *pointed*: and, *since then*, the Poet has made himself, and with himself all who were, or were supposed to be, his friends and admirers, the object of the critic's revenge—how? by having spoken of a work so conducted in the terms which it deserved! I once heard a clergyman in boots and buckskin avow, that he would cheat his own father *in a horse*. A moral system of a similar nature seems to have been adopted by too many anonymous critics. As we used to say at school, in reviewing they *make* being rogues: and he, who complains, is to be laughed at for his ignorance of *the game*. With the pen out of their hand they are *honorable men*. They exert indeed power (which is to that of the injured party who should attempt to expose their glaring perversions and misstatements, as twenty to one) to write down, and (where the author's circumstances permit) to *impoverish* the man, whose learning and genius they themselves in private have repeatedly admitted. They knowingly strive to make it impossible for the man even to publish* any future work without exposing himself to all the wretchedness of debt and embarrassment. But this

* Not many months ago an eminent bookseller was asked what he thought of — — —? The answer was: "I have heard his powers very highly spoken of by some of our first-rate men; but I would not have a work of his if any one would give it me: for he is spoken but slightly of, or not at all, in the Quarterly Review: and the Edinburgh, you know, is decided, to cut him up!"—

⁸³⁸ From Wordsworth, 'Essay, Supplementary to the Preface' (1815).

⁸³⁹ Coleridge is referring to Francis Jeffrey. Engell and Bate quote Henry Crabb Robinson (14 November 1810) reporting Coleridge's story that Jeffrey 'had lately called on him, and assured him that he was a great admirer of Wordsworth's poetry, that the *Lyrical Ballads* were always on his table, and that Wordsworth had been attacked in the *Review* simply because the errors of men of genius ought to be exposed' (Engell and Bate, *Biographia Literaria*, 2:157).

is all *in their vocation*: and bating what they do in their *vocation*, “*who can say that black is the white of their eye?*”⁸⁴⁰

So much for the detractors from Wordsworth’s merits. On the other hand, much as I might wish for their fuller sympathy, I dare not flatter myself, that the freedom with which I have declared my opinions concerning both his theory and his defects, most of which are more or less connected with his theory, either as cause or effect, will be satisfactory or pleasing to *all* the poet’s admirers and advocates. More indiscriminate than mine their admiration may be: deeper and more sincere it cannot be. But I have advanced no opinion either for praise or censure, other than as texts introductory to the reasons which compel me to form it. Above all, I was fully convinced that such a criticism was not only wanted; but that, if executed with adequate ability, it must conduce in no mean degree to Mr. Wordsworth’s *reputation*. His *fame* belongs to another age, and can neither be accelerated or retarded. How small the proportion of the defects are to the beauties, I have repeatedly declared; and that no one of them originates in deficiency of poetic genius. Had they been more and greater, I should still, as a friend to his literary character in the present age, consider an analytic display of them as *pure gain*; if only it removed, as surely to all reflecting minds even the foregoing analysis must have removed, the strange mistake so slightly grounded, yet so widely and industriously propagated, of Mr. Wordsworth’s turn for SIMPLICITY! I am not half as much irritated by hearing his enemies abuse him for vulgarity of style, subject, and conception; as I am disgusted with the gilded side of the same meaning, as displayed by some affected admirers with whom he is, forsooth, a *sweet, simple poet!* and *so* natural, that little master Charles, and his younger sister, are *so* charmed with them, that they play at “Goody Blake,” or at “Johnny and Betty Foy!”

Were the collection of poems, published with these biographical sketches, important enough, (which I am not vain enough to believe)

⁸⁴⁰ ‘Black is the white of his eye’ is a proverbial expression for finding fault with something. ‘Mr Hunt . . . threatens death and destruction to all writers of prose or verse, who shall dare to say black is the white of his eye, or that his book is not like a vase lighted up from within with the torch of truth.’ (‘Lord Byron and his Contemporaries’, *Blackwood’s Edinburgh Magazine*, 23 (1828), 397). This entire paragraph, from ‘Let not Mr. Wordsworth be charged with having expressed himself too indignantly’ down to this proverbial ending, was excised by Sara Coleridge from her 1847 edition of the *Biographia*, because it contains ‘personal remarks, right and wrong, [which] were anomalies in my father’s writings, unworthy of them [i.e. other critics, such as Jeffrey] and of him, and such as I am sure he would not himself have reprinted.’

to deserve such a distinction: EVEN AS I HAVE DONE, SO WOULD I BE DONE UNTO.⁸⁴¹

For more than eighteen months have the volume of Poems, entitled SIBYLLINE LEAVES, and the present volumes up to this page, been printed, and ready for publication. But ere I speak of myself in the tones, which are alone natural to me under the circumstances of late years, I would fain present myself to the Reader as I was in the first dawn of my literary life:

When Hope grew round me, like the climbing vine,
And fruits and foliage not my own seem'd mine!⁸⁴²

For this purpose I have selected from the letters which I wrote home from Germany, those which appeared likely to be most interesting, and at the same time most pertinent to the title of this work.

⁸⁴¹ Matthew 7:12. This was the point at which the first, September 1815 draft of the *Biographia* ended.

⁸⁴² Coleridge, 'Dejection: an Ode' (1802), 80–1.

SATYRANE'S LETTERS

LETTER I⁸⁴³

On Sunday morning, September 16, 1798, the Hamburg Pacquet set sail from Yarmouth; and I, for the first time in my life, beheld my native land retiring from me. At the moment of its disappearance—in all the kirks, churches, chapels, and meeting-houses, in which the greater number, I hope, of my countrymen were at that time assembled, I will dare question whether there was one more ardent prayer offered up to heaven, than that which I then preferred for my country. Now then (said I to a gentleman who was standing near me) we are out of our country. Not yet, not yet! he replied, and pointed to the sea; “This, too, is a Briton’s country.” This bon mot gave a fillip to my spirits, I rose and looked round on my fellow-passengers, who were all on

⁸⁴³ This and the following two of ‘Satyrane’s Letters’ were originally published in three issues of Coleridge’s journal, *The Friend* – No. 14 (23 November 1809), No. 16 (7 December 1809) and No. 18 (21 December 1809). This in turn was the public reutilisation of letters Coleridge had originally written to his wife and to his friend Thomas Poole during his German journey in 1798–9. A note in the November 1809 issue of *The Friend* explains that the name Satyrane is taken from Spenser’s *Faerie Queene*, where ‘Sir Satyrane’ is initially a wild man, the son of a satyr, whom Una tames. He protects her against attack by other satyrs intent on rape, and battles inconclusively with the lawless ‘Sansloy’. Later in the poem, he chances upon Florimell’s girdle, which she had lost in the process of escaping from a monster. Satyrane holds a three-day tournament in which he and his ‘Knights of Maidenhead’ fight all comers for the right to possess the girdle. He wins this tourney, with the assistance of Britomart. Coleridge prefaces his explanatory note with a poem, explaining that the nickname was bestowed upon Coleridge by his friends:

Tis true, IDOLOCLASTES SATYRANE
(So call him, for so mingling blame with praise
And smiles with anxious looks, his earliest friends,
Masking his birth-name, wont to character
His wild-wood fancy and impetuous zeal)

‘Idoloclastes’ means ‘breaker of idols’. This suggests the name was a joking reference to Coleridge’s West-country origins, and his youthful religious and political enthusiasm, perhaps with a dig at his sexual priggishness and idealistic attachment to notions of chastity – ironically so, or perhaps genuinely so, with respect to his unrequited love for Sara Hutchinson. Other possible meanings of ‘Satyrane’ as a nickname are open to speculation. Coleridge enjoyed playing interlingual puns with his initials ‘S.T.C.’, and the ‘Sa-Ty’ portion of ‘Satyrane’ looks enough like a rubbed-down version of ‘Samuel Taylor’ to be suggestive. ‘Rane’ might glance at the Latin for ‘frog’ (a famous Gilray cartoon of 1798 had ridiculed the Lake poets as a toad and a frog reading a book called ‘Poems by Toad and Frog’).

the deck. We were eighteen in number, videlicet, five Englishmen, an English lady,⁸⁴⁴ a French gentleman and his servant, an Hanoverian and his servant, a Prussian, a Swede, two Danes, and a Mulatto boy, a German tailor and his wife (the smallest couple I ever beheld) and a Jew. We were all on the deck; but in a short time I observed marks of dismay. The lady retired to the cabin in some confusion, and many of the faces round me assumed a very doleful and frog-coloured appearance; and within an hour the number of those on deck was lessened by one half. I was giddy, but not sick, and the giddiness soon went away, but left a feverishness and want of appetite, which I attributed, in great measure, to the *sæva Mephitis*⁸⁴⁵ of the bilge-water; and it was certainly not decreased by the exportations from the cabin. However, I was well enough to join the able-bodied passengers, one of whom observed not inaptly, that Momus⁸⁴⁶ might have discovered an easier way to see a man's inside, than by placing a window in his breast. He needed only have taken a saltwater trip in a pacquet-boat.

I am inclined to believe, that a pacquet is far superior to a stage-coach, as a means of making men open out to each other. In the latter the uniformity of posture disposes to dozing, and the definitiveness of the period, at which the company will separate, makes each individual think more of those, *to whom he is going*, than of those *with whom he is going*. But at sea, more curiosity is excited, if only on this account, that the pleasant or unpleasant qualities of your companions are of greater importance to you, from the uncertainty how long you may be obliged to house with them. Besides, if you are countrymen, that now begins to form a distinction and a bond of brotherhood; and if of different countries, there are new incitements of conversation,

⁸⁴⁴ Dorothy Wordsworth. William Wordsworth was one of the 'five Englishmen'.

⁸⁴⁵ 'Foul, mephitic smell'. Quoting *Aeneid*, 7:84: 'soevamque exhalat opaca mephitim' ['foul and opaque mephitic exhalations'].

⁸⁴⁶ 'The Name of this God is *Momus*, which Word in the *Greek Tongue* signifies a *Jester*, a *Mocker*, a *Mimick*; for that is his Business. He follows no Employment, but lives an idle Life; yet nicely observes the Actions and Sayings of the other Gods, and when he finds them doing amiss, or neglecting their Duty, he censures, mocks, and derides them with the greatest Liberty. *Neptune*, *Vulcan*, and *Minerva* may witness the Truth of this. They all contended which of them was the most skilful Artificer; whereupon *Neptune* made a Bull, *Minerva* a House, and *Vulcan* a Man; they made *Momus* Judge between them; but he chid them all three. He accused *Neptune* of Imprudence; because he placed not the Bull's Horns in his Forehead before his Eyes; for then the Bull might give a strong and a surer Blow. He blamed *Minerva*, because her House was immoveable, so that it could not be carried away, if by Chance it was placed among ill Neighbours. But he said, that *Vulcan* was the most imprudent of them all, because he did not make a Window in the Man's Breast, that he might see what his Thoughts were, whether he designed some Trick, or whether he intended what he spoke.' (François Pomey, *The Pantheon: representing the fabulous histories of the heathen gods* (1767), 166)

more to ask and more to communicate. I found that I had interested the Danes in no common degree. I had crept into the boat on the deck and fallen asleep; but was awaked by one of them about three o'clock in the afternoon, who told me that they had been seeking me in every hole and corner, and insisted that I should join their party and drink with them. He talked English with such fluency, as left me wholly unable to account for the singular and even ludicrous incorrectness with which he spoke it. I went, and found some excellent wines and a desert of grapes with a pineapple. The Danes had christened me Doctor Teology, and dressed as I was all in black, with large shoes and black worsted stockings, I might certainly have passed very well for a Methodist missionary. However I disclaimed my title. What then may you be? A man of fortune? No!—A merchant? No!—A merchant's traveller? No!—A clerk? No!—un Philosophe, perhaps? It was at that time in my life, in which of all possible names and characters I had the greatest disgust to that of "un Philosophe." But I was weary of being questioned, and rather than be nothing, or at best only the abstract idea of a man, I submitted by a bow, even to the aspersion implied in the word "un philosophe."—The Dane then informed me, that all in the present party were philosophers likewise. Certes we were not of the stoic school. For we drank and talked and sung, till we talked and sung all together; and then we rose and danced on the deck a set of dances, which in *one* sense of the word at least, were very intelligibly and appropriately entitled *reels*. The passengers who lay in the cabin below in all the agonies of sea-sickness, must have found our bacchanalian merriment

———a tune

Harsh and of dissonant mood for their complaint.⁸⁴⁷

I thought so at the time; and (by way, I suppose, of supporting my newly assumed philosophical character) I thought too, how closely the greater number of our virtues are connected with the fear of death, and how little sympathy we bestow on pain, where there is no danger.

The two Danes were brothers. The one was a man with a clear white complexion, white hair, and white eye-brows; looked silly, and nothing that he uttered gave the lie to his looks. The other, whom, by way of eminence I have called THE DANE,⁸⁴⁸ had likewise white hair, but was much shorter than his brother, with slender limbs, and a very thin face slightly pock-fretten. This man convinced me of the justice of

⁸⁴⁷ Milton, *Samson Agonistes* (1671), 661–2.

⁸⁴⁸ In jokey reference to *Hamlet*.

an old remark, that many a faithful portrait in our novels and farces has been rashly censured for an outrageous caricature, or perhaps nonentity. I had retired to my station in the boat—he came and seated himself by my side, and appeared not a little tipsy. He commenced the conversation in the most magnificent style, and as a sort of pioneering to his own vanity, he flattered me with *such* grossness! The parasites of the old comedy were modest in the comparison. His language and accentuation were so exceedingly singular, that I determined for once in my life to take notes of a conversation. Here it follows, somewhat abridged, indeed, but in all other respects as accurately as my memory permitted.

THE DANE. Vat imagination! vat language! vat vast science! and vat eyes! vat a milk-vite forehead!—O my heafen! vy, you're a Got!

ANSWER. You do me too much honour, Sir.

THE DANE. O me! if you should dink I is flattering you!—No, no, no! I haf ten tousand a year—yes, ten tousand a year—yes, ten tousand pound a year! Vell—and vat is dhat? a mere trifle! I 'ouldn't gif my sincere heart for ten times dhe money.—Yes, you're a Got! I a mere man! But, my dear friend! dhink of me, as a man! Is, is—I mean to ask you now, my dear friend—is I not very eloquent? Is I not speak English very fine?

ANSW. Most admirably! Believe me, Sir! I have seldom heard even a native talk so *fluently*.

THE DANE. (*squeezing my hand with great vehemence*) My dear friend! vat an affection and fidelity ve have for each odher! But tell me, do tell me,—Is I not, now and den, speak some fault? Is I not in some wrong?

ANSW. Why, Sir! perhaps it might be observed by nice critics in the English language, that you occasionally use the word “Is” instead of “am.” In our best companies we generally say I am, and not I is or Ise. Excuse me, Sir! it is a mere trifle.

THE DANE. O!—is, is, am, am, am. Yes, yes—I know, I know.

ANSW. I am, thou art, he is, we are, ye are, they are.

THE DANE. Yes, yes,—I know, I know—Am, am, am, is dhe presens, and Is is dhe perfectum—yes, yes—and are is dhe plusquam perfectum.

ANSW. And “Art,” Sir! is—?

THE DANE. My dear friend! it is dhe plusquam perfectum, no, no—dhat is a great lie. “Are” is the plusquam perfectum—and “art” is dhe plusquam plueperfectum—(*then swinging my hand to and fro, and cocking his little bright hazel eyes at me, that danced with vanity and wine*) You see, my dear friend! that I too have *some* lehrning?

ANSW. Learning, Sir? Who dares suspect it? Who can listen to you

for a minute, who can even look at you, without perceiving the extent of it?

THE DANE. My *dear* friend!—(then with a *would-be* humble look, and in a tone of voice as if he was reasoning) I could not talk so of presens and imperfectum, and futurum and plusquamplue perfectum, and all dhat, my dear friend! without *some* lehrning?

ANSW. Sir! a man like you cannot talk on any subject without discovering the depth of his information.

THE DANE. Dhe grammatic Greek, my friend! ha! ha! ha! (*laughing, and swinging my hand to and fro—then with a sudden transition to great solemnity*) Now I will tell you, my dear friend! Dhere did happen about me vat de whole historia of Denmark record no instance about nobody else. Dhe bishop did ask me all dhe questions about all dhe religion in dhe Latin grammar.

ANSW. The grammar, Sir? The language, I presume—

THE DANE. (*A little offended.*) Grammar is language, and language is grammar—

ANSW. Ten thousand pardons!

THE DANE. Vell, and I was only fourteen years—

ANSW. Only fourteen years old?

THE DANE. No more. I vas fourteen years old—and he asked me all questions, religion and philosophy, and all in dhe Latin language—and I answered him all every one, my dear friend! all in dhe Latin language.

ANSW. A Prodigy! an absolute prodigy!

THE DANE. No, no, no! he was a bishop, a great superintendent.

ANSW. Yes! a bishop.

THE DANE. A bishop—not a mere predicant, not a prediger—

ANSW. My dear Sir! we have misunderstood each other. I said that your answering in Latin at so early an age was a prodigy, that is, a thing that is wonderful, that does not often happen.

THE DANE. Often! Dhere is not von instance recorded in dhe whole historia of Denmark.

ANSW. And since then, Sir—?

THE DANE. I was sent ofer to dhe Vest Indies—to our Island, and dhere I had no more to do vid books. No! no! I put my genius another way—and I haf made ten tousand pound a year. Is not dhat *ghenius*, my dear friend!—But vat is money!—I dhink dhe poorest man alive my equal. Yes, my dear friend! my little fortune is pleasant to my generous heart, because I can do good—no man with so little a fortune ever did so much generosity—no person, no man person, no woman person ever denies it. But we are all Got's children.

Here the Hanoverian interrupted him, and the other Dane, the Swede, and the Prussian, joined us, together with a young Englishman who spoke the German fluently, and interpreted to me many of the Prussian's jokes. The Prussian was a travelling merchant, turned of threescore, a hale man, tall, strong, and stout, full of stories, gesticulations, and buffoonery with the soul as well as the look of a mountebank, who, while he is making you laugh, picks your pocket. Amid all his droll looks and droll gestures, there remained one look untouched by laughter; and that one look was the true face, the others were but its mask. The Hanoverian was a pale, fat, bloated young man, whose father had made a large fortune in London, as an army-contractor. He seemed to emulate the manners of young Englishmen of fortune. He was a good-natured fellow, not without information or literature; but a most egregious coxcomb. He had been in the habit of attending the House of Commons, and had once spoken, as he informed me, with great applause in a debating society. For this he appeared to have qualified himself with laudable industry: for he was perfect in Walker's Pronouncing Dictionary,⁸⁴⁹ and with an accent, which forcibly reminded me of the Scotchman in Roderic Random, who professed to teach the English pronunciation,⁸⁵⁰ he was constantly *deferring* to my superior judgment, whether or no I had pronounced this or that word with propriety, or "the true delicacy." When he spoke, though it were only half a dozen sentences, he always rose; for which I could detect no other motive, than his partiality to that elegant phrase so liberally introduced in the orations of our British legislators, "While I am on my legs." The Swede, whom for reasons that will soon appear, I shall distinguish by the name of "Nobility", was a strong-featured, scurvy-faced man, his complexion resembling, in colour, a red hot poker beginning to cool. He appeared miserably dependent on the Dane; but was however incomparably the best informed and most rational of the party. Indeed his manners and conversation discovered him to be both a man of the world and a gentleman. The Jew was in the

⁸⁴⁹ John Walker, *Dictionary of the English Language, Answering at Once the Purpose of Rhyming, Spelling and Pronouncing* (1775).

⁸⁵⁰ Smollett's *Adventures of Roderick Random* (1748), Chapter 14: 'This gentleman, who had come from Scotland three or four years before, kept a school in town, where he taught the Latin, French, and Italian languages; but what he chiefly professed was the pronunciation of the English tongue, after a method more speedy and uncommon than any practised heretofore, and, indeed, if his scholars spoke like their master, the latter part of his undertaking was certainly performed to a tittle: for although I could easily understand every word of what I had heard hitherto since I entered England, three parts in four of his dialect were as unintelligible to me as if he had spoken in Arabic or Irish.'

hold: the French gentleman was lying on the deck so ill, that I could observe nothing concerning him, except the affectionate attentions of his servant to him. The poor fellow was very sick himself, and every now and then ran to the side of the vessel, still keeping his eye on his master, but returned in a moment and seated himself again by him, now supporting his head, now wiping his forehead and talking to him all the while in the most soothing tones. There had been a matrimonial squabble of a very ludicrous kind in the cabin, between the little German tailor and his little wife. He had secured two beds, one for himself, and one for her. This had struck the little woman as a very cruel action; she insisted upon their having but one, and assured the mate in the most piteous tones, that she was his lawful wife. The mate and the cabin boy decided in her favour, abused the little man for his want of tenderness with much humour, and hoisted him into the same compartment with his sea-sick wife. This quarrel was interesting to me, as it procured me a bed, which I otherwise should not have had.

In the evening, at 7 o'clock, the sea rolled higher, and the Dane, by means of the greater agitation, eliminated enough of what he had been swallowing to make room for a great deal more. His favourite potation was sugar and brandy, i.e. a very little warm water with a large quantity of brandy, sugar, and nutmeg. His servant boy, a black-eyed Mulatto, had a good-natured round face, exactly the colour of the skin of the walnut-kernel. The Dane and I were again seated, tete a tete, in the ship's boat. The conversation, which was now indeed rather an oration than a dialogue, became extravagant beyond all that I ever heard. He told me that he had made a large fortune in the island of Santa Cruz, and was now returning to Denmark to enjoy it. He expatiated on the style in which he meant to live, and the great undertakings which he proposed to himself to commence, till the brandy aiding his vanity, and his vanity and garrulity aiding the brandy, he talked like a madman—entreated me to accompany him to Denmark—there I should see his influence with the government, and he would introduce me to the king, &c., &c. Thus he went on dreaming aloud, and then passing with a very lyrical transition to the subject of general politics, he declaimed, like a member of the Corresponding Society, *about* (not concerning) the Rights of Man, and assured me that notwithstanding his fortune, he thought the poorest man alive his equal. "All are equal, my dear friend! all are equal! Ve are all Got's children. The poorest man haf the same rights with me. Jack! Jack! some more sugar and brandy. Dhere is dhat fellow now! He is a Mulatto—but he is my equal.—That's right, Jack! (*taking the sugar and brandy*) Here you Sir! shake hands with dhis gentleman! Shake hands with me, you dog!

Dhere, dhere!—We are all equal my dear friend! Do I not speak like Socrates, and Plato, and Cato—they were all philosophers, my dear philosophe! all very great men!—and so was Homer and Virgil—but they were poets, yes, yes! I know all about it!—But what can anybody say more than this? we are all equal, all Got’s children. I haf ten thousand a year, but I am no more dhan de meanest man alive. I haf no pride; and yet, my dear friend! I can say, do! and it is done.⁸⁵¹ Ha! ha! ha! my dear friend! Now dhere is dhat gentleman (*pointing to “Nobility”*) he is a Swedish baron—you shall see. Ho! (*calling to the Swede*) get me, will you, a bottle of wine from the cabin. SWEDE.—Here, Jack! go and get your master a bottle of wine from the cabin. Dane. No, no, no! do *you* go now—you go yourself—you go now! Swede. Pah!—Dane. Now go! Go, I pray you. AND THE SWEDE WENT!!

After this the Dane commenced an harangue on religion, and mistaking me for “un philosophe” in the continental sense of the word, he talked of Deity in a declamatory style, very much resembling the devotional rants of that rude blunderer, Mr. Thomas Paine, in his *Age of Reason*,⁸⁵² and whispered in my ear, what damned *hypocrism* all Jesus Christ’s business was. I dare aver, that few men have less reason to charge themselves with indulging in *persiflage* than myself. I should hate it if it were only that it is a Frenchman’s vice, and feel a pride in avoiding it because our own language is too honest to have a word to express it by. But in this instance the temptation had been too powerful, and I have placed it on the list of my offences. Pericles answered one of his dearest friends who had solicited him on a case of life and death, to take an equivocal oath for his preservation: *Debeo amicis opitulari, sed usque ad Deos.** Friendship herself must place her last and boldest step on this side the altar. What Pericles would not do to

* *Translation.* It behoves me to side with my friends, but only as far as the gods.⁸⁵³

⁸⁵¹ ‘For I am a man under authority, having soldiers under me: and I say to this man, Go, and he goeth; and to another, Come, and he cometh; and to my servant, Do this, and he doeth it.’ (Matthew 8:9)

⁸⁵² The third chapter of Thomas Paine’s *Age of Reason* (1794–5) is an attack on the received wisdom of Christianity entitled ‘Concerning the Character of Jesus Christ and his History’: ‘It is in vain to attempt to palliate or disguise this matter. The story [of Christ], so far as relates to the supernatural part, has every mark of fraud and imposition stamped upon the face of it.’

⁸⁵³ This is a line from Aulus Gellius’s *Noctes Atticae*, 1:3:20. ‘Pericles of Athens, a man of exalted genius, and adorned with every valuable accomplishment, gave us in one instance his undisguised sentiments. A friend having asked him to forswear himself in his interest and behalf, he made him this reply: “It becomes me to assist my friends, but I must also reverence the gods.”’ (W. Beloe (trans.), *The Attic Nights of Aulus Gellius* (3 vols, 1795), 1:14)

save a friend's life, you may be assured, I would not hazard merely to mill the chocolate-pot of a drunken fool's vanity till it frothed over. Assuming a serious look, I professed myself a believer, and sunk at once an hundred fathoms in his good graces. He retired to his cabin, and I wrapped myself up in my great coat, and looked at the water. A beautiful white cloud of foam at momentarily intervals coursed by the side of the vessel with a roar, and little stars of flame danced and sparkled and went out in it: and every now and then light detachments of this white cloud-like foam darted off from the vessel's side, each with its' own small constellation, over the sea, and scoured out of sight like a Tartar troop over a wilderness.

It was cold, the cabin was at open war with my olfactories, and I found reason to rejoice in my great coat, a weighty high-caped, respectable rug, the collar of which turned over, and played the part of a night-cap very passably. In looking up at two or three bright stars, which oscillated with the motion of the sails, I fell asleep, but was awakened at one o'clock, Monday morning, by a shower of rain. I found myself compelled to go down into the cabin, where I slept very soundly, and awoke with a very good appetite at breakfast time, my nostrils, the most placable of all the senses, reconciled to or indeed insensible of the mephitis.

Monday, September 17th, I had a long conversation with the Swede, who spoke with the most poignant contempt of the Dane, whom he described as a fool, purse-mad; but he confirmed the boasts of the Dane respecting the largeness of his fortune, which he had acquired in the first instance as an advocate, and afterwards as a planter. From the Dane and from himself I collected that he was indeed a Swedish nobleman, who had squandered a fortune, that was never very large, and had made over his property to the Dane, on whom he was now utterly dependent. He seemed to suffer very little pain from the Dane's insolence. He was in a high degree humane and attentive to the English lady, who suffered most fearfully, and for whom he performed many little offices with a tenderness and delicacy which seemed to prove real goodness of heart. Indeed his general manners and conversation were not only pleasing, but even interesting; and I struggled to believe his insensibility respecting the Dane philosophical fortitude. For though the Dane was now quite sober, his character oozed out of him at every pore. And after dinner, when he was again flushed with wine, every quarter of an hour or perhaps oftener he would shout out to the Swede, "Ho! Nobility, go—do such a thing! Mr. Nobility!—tell the gentlemen such a story, and so forth," with an insolence which must have excited disgust and detestation,

if his vulgar rants on the sacred rights of equality, joined to his wild havoc of general grammar no less than of the English language, had not rendered it so irresistibly laughable.

At four o'clock I observed a wild duck swimming on the waves, a single solitary wild duck. It is not easy to conceive, how interesting a thing it looked in that round objectless desert of waters. I had associated such a feeling of immensity with the ocean, that I felt exceedingly disappointed, when I was out of sight of all land, at the narrowness and *nearness*, as it were, of the circle of the horizon. So little are images capable of satisfying the obscure feelings connected with words. In the evening the sails were lowered, lest we should run foul of the land, which can be seen only at a small distance. And at four o'clock, on Tuesday morning, I was awakened by the cry of land! land! It was an ugly island rock at a distance on our left, called Heiligeland, well known to many passengers from Yarmouth to Hamburg, who have been obliged by stormy weather to pass weeks and weeks in weary captivity on it, stripped of all their money by the exorbitant demands of the wretches who inhabit it. So at least the sailors informed me.—About nine o'clock we saw the main land, which seemed scarcely able to hold its head above water, low, flat, and dreary, with light-houses and land-marks which seemed to give a character and language to the dreariness. We entered the mouth of the Elbe, passing Neu-werk; though as yet the right bank only of the river was visible to us. On this I saw a church, and thanked God for my safe voyage, not without affectionate thoughts of those I had left in England. At eleven o'clock on the same morning we arrived at Cuxhaven, the ship dropped anchor, and the boat was hoisted out, to carry the Hanoverian and a few others on shore. The captain agreed to take us, who remained, to Hamburg for ten guineas, to which the Dane contributed so largely, that the other passengers paid but half a guinea each. Accordingly we hauled anchor, and passed gently up the river. At Cuxhaven both sides of the river may be seen in clear weather; we could now see the right bank only. We passed a multitude of English traders that had been waiting many weeks for a wind. In a short time both banks became visible, both flat and evidencing the labour of human hands by their extreme neatness. On the left bank I saw a church or two in the distance; on the right bank we passed by steeple and windmill and cottage, and windmill and single house, windmill and windmill, and neat single house, and steeple. These were the objects and in the succession. The shores were very green and planted with trees not inelegantly. Thirty-five miles from Cuxhaven the night came on us, and, as the navigation of the Elbe is perilous, we dropped anchor.

Over what place, thought I, does the moon hang to *your* eye, my dearest friend? To me it hung over the left bank of the Elbe. Close above the moon was a huge volume of deep black cloud, while a very thin fillet crossed the middle of the orb, as narrow and thin and black as a ribbon of crape. The long trembling road of moonlight, which lay on the water and reached to the stern of our vessel, glimmered dimly and obscurely. We saw two or three lights from the right bank, probably from bed-rooms. I felt the striking contrast between the silence of this majestic stream, whose banks are populous with men and women and children, and flocks and herds—between the silence by night of this peopled river, and the ceaseless noise, and uproar, and loud agitations of the desolate solitude of the ocean. The passengers below had all retired to their beds; and I felt the interest of this quiet scene the more deeply from the circumstance of having just quitted them. For the Prussian had during the whole of the evening displayed all his talents to captivate the Dane, who had admitted him into the train of his dependents. The young Englishman continued to interpret the Prussian's jokes to me. They were all without exception profane and abominable, but some sufficiently witty, and a few incidents, which he related in his own person, were valuable as illustrating the manners of the countries in which they had taken place.

Five o'clock on Wednesday morning we hauled the anchor, but were soon obliged to drop it again in consequence of a thick fog, which our captain feared would continue the whole day; but about nine it cleared off, and we sailed slowly along, close by the shore of a very beautiful island, forty miles from Cuxhaven, the wind continuing slack. This holme or island is about a mile and a half in length, wedge-shaped, well wooded, with glades of the liveliest green, and rendered more interesting by the remarkably neat farm-house on it. It seemed made for retirement without solitude—a place that would allure one's friends, while it precluded the impertinent calls of mere visitors. The shores of the Elbe now became more beautiful, with rich meadows and trees running like a low wall along the river's edge; and peering over them, neat houses and (especially on the right bank) a profusion of steeple-spires, white, black, or red. An instinctive taste teaches men to build their churches in flat countries with spire-steeples, which as they cannot be referred to any other object, point, as with silent finger, to the sky and stars, and sometimes, when they reflect the brazen light of a rich though rainy sun-set, appear like a pyramid of flame burning heavenward. I remember once, and once only, to have seen a spire in a narrow valley of a mountainous country. The effect was not only mean but ludicrous, and reminded me against my will of an

extinguisher;⁸⁵⁴ the close neighbourhood of the high mountain, at the foot of which it stood, had so completely dwarfed it, and deprived it of all connection with the sky or clouds. Forty six English miles from Cuxhaven, and sixteen from Hamburg, the Danish village Veder ornaments the left bank with its black steeple, and close by it is the wild and pastoral hamlet of Schulau. Hitherto both the right and left bank, green to the very brink, and level with the river, resembled the shores of a park canal. The trees and houses were alike low, sometimes the low trees over-topping the yet lower houses, sometimes the low houses rising above the yet lower trees. But at Schulau the left bank rises at once forty or fifty feet, and stares on the river with its perpendicular facade of sand, thinly patched with tufts of green. The Elbe continued to present a more and more lively spectacle from the multitude of fishing boats and the flocks of sea gulls wheeling round them, the clamorous rivals and companions of the fishermen; till we came to Blankaness, a most interesting village scattered amid scattered trees, over three hills in three divisions. Each of the three hills stares upon the river, with faces of bare sand, with which the boats with their bare poles, standing in files along the banks, made a sort of fantastic harmony. Between each facade lies a green and woody dell, each deeper than the other. In short it is a large village made up of individual cottages, each cottage in the centre of its own little wood or orchard, and each with its own separate path: a village with a labyrinth of paths, or rather a *neighbourhood* of houses! It is inhabited by fishermen and boat-makers, the Blankanese boats being in great request through the whole navigation of the Elbe. Here first we saw the spires of Hamburg, and from hence, as far as Altona the left bank of the Elbe is uncommonly pleasing, considered as the vicinity of an industrious and republican city—in that style of beauty, or rather prettiness, that might tempt the citizen into the country, and yet gratify the taste which he had acquired in the town. Summer houses and Chinese show-work are everywhere scattered along the high and green banks; the boards of the farm-houses left unplastered and gaily painted with green and yellow; and scarcely a tree not cut into shapes and made to remind the human being of his own power and intelligence instead of the wisdom of nature. Still, however, these are links of connection between town and country, and far better than the affectation of tastes and enjoyments for which mens' habits have disqualified them. Pass them by on Saturdays and Sundays with the burgers of Hamburg smoking their pipes, the women and children feasting in the alcoves

⁸⁵⁴ Conical metal device, on a stick, used for snuffing out candles.

of box and yew, and it becomes a nature of its own. On Wednesday, four o'clock, we left the vessel, and passing with trouble through the huge masses of shipping that seemed to choke the wide Elbe from Altona upward, we were at length landed at the Boom House, Hamburg.⁸⁵⁵

LETTER II (To a Lady)

RATZEBURG.

Meine liebe Freundin,⁸⁵⁶

See how natural the German comes from me, though I have not yet been six weeks in the country!—almost as fluently as English from my neighbour the Amptschreiber (or public secretary) who as often as we meet, though it should be half a dozen times in the same day, never fails to greet me with—“**ddam your plood unt eyes, my dearest Englander! vhee goes it!”—which is certainly a proof of great generosity on his part, these words being his whole stock of English. I had, however, a better reason than the desire of displaying my proficiency: for I wished to put you in good humour with a language, from the acquirement of which I have promised myself much edification and the means too of communicating a new pleasure to you and your sister, during our winter readings. And how can I do this better than by pointing out its gallant attention to the ladies? Our English affix, *ess*, is, I believe, confined either to words derived from the Latin, as *actress*, *directress*, &c., or from the French, as *mistress*, *duchess*, and the like. But the German, *in*, enables us to designate the sex in every possible relation of life. Thus the Amtmann's lady is the Frau Amtmanin—the secretary's wife (by the bye the handsomest woman I have yet seen in Germany) is Die allerliebste Frau Amptschreiberin—the colonel's lady, Die Frau Obristin or colonellin—and even the parson's wife, die frau pastorin. But I am especially pleased with their *freundin*, which, unlike the *amica* of the Romans, is seldom used but in its best and purest sense.⁸⁵⁷ Now, I know, it will be said, that a friend is already something more than a friend, when a man feels an anxiety to express to himself that this friend is a female; but this I deny—in that sense at least in which the objection will be made. I would hazard the impeachment of

⁸⁵⁵ The 'Boom House' is the Toll or Custom House.

⁸⁵⁶ 'My dear friend'.

⁸⁵⁷ 'There is no word in the latin language, that signifies a female friend. *Amica* means a mistress: and perhaps there is no friendship betwixt the sexes wholly disunited from a degree of love.' (William Shenstone, 'On Writing and Books', *Works in Verse and Prose* (2 vols, 1764), 171)

heresy, rather than abandon my belief that there is a sex in our SOULS as well as in their perishable garments; and he who does not feel it, never truly loved a sister—nay, is not capable even of loving a wife as she deserves to be loved, if she indeed be worthy of that holy name.

Now I know, my gentle friend, what you are murmuring to yourself—“This is so like him! running away after the first bubble, that chance has blown off from the surface of his fancy; when one is anxious to learn where he is and what he has seen.” Well then! that I am settled at Ratzeburg, with my motives and the particulars of my journey hither, — will inform you.⁸⁵⁸ My first letter to him, with which doubtless he has edified your whole fireside, left me safely landed at Hamburg on the Elbe Stairs, at the Boom House. While standing on the stairs, I was amused by the contents of the passage-boat which crosses the river once or twice a day from Hamburg to Haarbürg. It was stowed close with all people of all nations, in all sorts of dresses; the men all with pipes in their mouths, and these pipes of all shapes and fancies—straight and wreathed, simple and complex, long and short, cane, clay, porcelain, wood, tin, silver, and ivory; most of them with silver chains and silver bole-covers. Pipes and boots are the first universal characteristic of the male Hamburgers that would strike the eye of a raw traveller. But I forget my promise of journalizing as much as possible.—Therefore, *Sept. 19th Afternoon*. My companion⁸⁵⁹ who, you recollect, speaks the French language with unusual propriety, had formed a kind of confidential acquaintance with the emigrant, who appeared to be a man of sense, and whose manners were those of a perfect gentleman. He seemed about fifty or rather more. Whatever is unpleasant in French manners from excess in the *degree*, had been softened down by age or affliction; and all that is delightful in the *kind*, alacrity and delicacy in little attentions, &c., remained, and without bustle, gesticulation, or disproportionate eagerness. His demeanour exhibited the minute philanthropy of a polished Frenchman, tempered by the sobriety of the English character disunited from its reserve. There is something strangely attractive in the character of a *gentleman* when you apply the word emphatically, and yet in that sense of the term which it is more easy to *feel* than to define. It neither includes the possession of high moral excellence, nor of necessity even the ornamental graces of manner. I have now in my mind’s eye a parson whose life would scarcely stand scrutiny even in the court

⁸⁵⁸ Thomas Poole. This letter was originally written and sent to Coleridge’s wife, Sara; he repurposed it for its publication in *The Friend*.

⁸⁵⁹ William Wordsworth.

of honour, much less in that of conscience; and his manners, if nicely observed, would of the two excite an idea of awkwardness rather than of elegance: and yet every one who conversed with him felt and acknowledged *the gentleman*. The secret of the matter, I believe to be this—we feel the gentlemanly character present to us, whenever under all the circumstances of social intercourse, the trivial not less than the important, through the whole *detail* of his manners and deportment, and with the ease of a habit, a person shews respect to others in *such a way*, as at the same time implies in his own feelings an habitual and assured anticipation of reciprocal respect from them to himself. In short, the *gentlemanly* character arises out of the feeling of Equality acting, as a Habit, yet flexible to the varieties of Rank, and modified without being disturbed or superseded by them. This description will perhaps explain to you the ground of one of your own remarks, as I was englishing to you the interesting dialogue concerning the causes of the corruption of eloquence.⁸⁶⁰ “What perfect gentlemen these old Romans must have been! I was impressed, I remember, with the same feeling at the time I was reading a translation of Cicero’s philosophical dialogues and of his epistolary correspondence: while in Pliny’s Letters I seemed to have a different feeling—he gave me the notion of a very *fine* gentleman.” You uttered the words as if you had felt that the adjunct had injured the substance and the increased degree altered the kind. Pliny was the courtier of an absolute monarch—Cicero an aristocratic republican. For this reason the character of gentleman, in the sense to which I have confined it, is frequent in England, rare in France, and found, where it is found, in age or the latest period of manhood; while in Germany the character is almost unknown. But the proper *antipode* of a gentleman is to be sought for among the Anglo-American democrats.

I owe this digression, as an act of justice, to this amiable Frenchman, and of humiliation for myself. For in a little controversy between us on the subject of French poetry, he made me feel my own ill behaviour by the silent reproof of contrast, and when I afterwards apologized to him for the warmth of my language, he answered me with a chearful expression of surprize, and an immediate compliment, which a gentleman might both make with dignity and receive with pleasure. I was pleased, therefore, to find it agreed on, that we should, if possible, take

⁸⁶⁰ Tacitus’s *Dialogus de oratoribus* (102 AD). The title was translated into English by Arthur Murphy as *Tacitus’ Dialogue Concerning Oratory, or the Causes of Corrupt Eloquence* (vol. 7 of *The Works of Cornelius Tacitus*, 8 vols, 1805). The quoted passage that follows this reference is not in the original letter Coleridge wrote to his wife, and was presumably added at first publication in *The Friend*.

up our quarters in the same house. My friend went with him in search of an hotel, and I to deliver my letters of recommendation.

I walked onward at a brisk pace, enlivened not so much by anything I actually saw, as by the confused sense that I was for the first time in my life on the *continent* of our planet. I seemed to myself like a liberated bird that had been hatched in an aviary, who now after his first soar of freedom poises himself in the upper air. Very naturally I began to wonder at *all* things, some for being so like and some for being so unlike the things in England—Dutch women with large umbrella hats shooting out half a yard before them, with a prodigal plumpness of petticoat behind—the women of Hamburg with caps plaited on the caul with silver or gold, or both, bordered round with stiffened lace, which *stood out* before their eyes, but not lower, so that the eyes sparkled through it—the Hanoverian women with the fore part of the head bare, then a stiff lace standing up like a wall perpendicular on the cap, and the cap behind *tailed* with an enormous quantity of ribbon which lies or tosses on the back:

Their visnomies seem'd like a goodly banner
Spread in defiance of all enemies.

SPENSER⁸⁶¹

—The ladies all in English dresses, all *rouged*, and all with bad teeth: which you notice instantly from their contrast to the almost *animal*, too glossy mother-of-pearl whiteness and the regularity of the teeth of the laughing, loud-talking country-women and servant-girls, who with their clean white stockings and with slippers without heel quarters, tripped along the dirty streets, as if they were secured by a charm from the dirt: with a lightness too, which surprized me, who had always considered it as one of the annoyances of sleeping *in an Inn*, that I had to clatter up stairs in a pair of them. The streets narrow; to my English nose sufficiently offensive, and explaining at first sight the universal use of boots; without any appropriate path for the foot-passengers; the gable ends of the houses all towards the street, some in the ordinary triangular form and *entire* as the botanists say,⁸⁶² but the greater number notched and scolloped with more than Chinese grotesqueness. Above all, I was struck with the profusion of windows, so large and so many, that the houses look all glass. Mr. Pitt's Window

⁸⁶¹ Spenser, *Amoretti* (1595), 5:11–12.

⁸⁶² A leaf or petal is 'entire' in the botanical sense if it lacks indentations or crenulations. ('The common stockgilly flower of the gardens. It is a native of Spain, with lanceolate leaves, very entire'; John Mason Good, Olinthus Gregory and Newton Bosworth, *Pantologia: A New Cyclopaedia* (1813), 'Cheiranthus'.)

Tax,⁸⁶³ with its pretty little *additional*s sprouting out from it like young toadlets on the back of a Surinam toad, would certainly improve the appearance of the Hamburg houses, which have a slight summer look, not *in keeping* with their size, incongruous with the climate, and precluding that feeling of retirement and self-content, which one wishes to associate with a house in a noisy city. But a conflagration would, I fear, be the previous requisite to the production of any architectural beauty in Hamburg: for verily it is a filthy town. I moved on and crossed a multitude of ugly bridges, with huge black deformities of water wheels close by them. The water intersects the city every where, and would have furnished to the genius of Italy the capabilities of all that is most beautiful and magnificent in architecture. It might have been the rival of Venice, and it is huddle and ugliness, stench and stagnation. The Jungfer Stieg (i.e. young Ladies Walk) to which my letters directed me, made an exception. It was a walk or promenade planted with treble rows of elm trees, which, being yearly pruned and cropped remain slim and dwarf-like. This walk occupies one side of a square piece of water, with many swans on it perfectly tame, and moving among the swans, shewy pleasure-boats with ladies in them, rowed by their husbands or lovers.*****

*(Some paragraphs have been here omitted.)*⁸⁶⁴

****thus embarrassed by sad and solemn politeness still more than by broken English, it sounded like the voice of an old friend when I heard the emigrant's servant inquiring after me. He had come for the purpose of guiding me to our hotel. Through streets and streets I pressed on as happy as a child, and, I doubt not, with a childish expression of wonderment in my busy eyes, amused by the wicker waggons with movable benches across them, one behind the other, (these were the hackney coaches;) amused by the sign-boards of the shops, on which all the articles sold within are painted, and that too very exactly, though in a grotesque confusion (a useful substitute for language in this great mart of nations) amused with the incessant tinkling of the shop and house door bells, the bell hanging over each door and struck with a small iron rod at every entrance and exit;—and finally, amused by looking in at the windows, as I passed along; the ladies and gentlemen drinking coffee or playing cards, and the gentlemen all smoaking.

⁸⁶³ A tax on the windows in a house (above a given number) had been introduced in 1696. Pitt the Younger increased the tax in 1797. One consequence of this tax was that some homeowners either bricked up their windows, or otherwise structurally modified their properties to cover windows over – Coleridge's 'additional's'.

⁸⁶⁴ This is more tantalising than it merits: the omitted text (which can be found in Griggs, *Collected Letters*, 1:432) contains only trivial details.

I wished myself a painter, that I might have sent you a sketch of one of the card parties. The long pipe of one gentleman rested on the table, its bole half a yard from his mouth, fuming like a censer by the fish pool—the other gentleman, who was dealing the cards, and of course had both hands employed, held his pipe in his teeth, which hanging down between his knees, smoked beside his ancles. Hogarth himself never drew a more ludicrous distortion both of attitude and physiognomy, than this effort occasioned: nor was there wanting beside it one of those beautiful female faces which the same Hogarth, in whom the satyrist never extinguished that love of beauty which belonged to him as a poet, so often and so gladly introduces as the central figure in a crowd of humourous deformities, which figure (such is the power of true genius!) neither acts, nor is *meant* to act as a contrast; but diffuses through all, and over each of the group, a spirit of reconciliation and human kindness; and even when the attention is no longer consciously directed to the cause of this feeling, still blends its tenderness with our laughter: and thus prevents the instructive merriment at the whims of nature or the foibles or humours of our fellow-men from degenerating into the heart-poison of contempt or hatred.

Our hotel DIE WILDE MAN, (the sign of which was no bad likeness of the landlord, who had engrafted on a very grim face a restless grin, that was at every man's service, and which indeed, like an actor rehearsing to himself, he kept playing in *expectation* of an occasion for it)—neither our hotel, I say, nor its landlord were of the genteel class. But it has one great advantage for a stranger, by being in the market place, and the next neighbour of the huge church of St. Nicholas: a church with shops and houses built up against it, out of which *wens* and *warts* its high massy steeple rises, *necklaced* near the top with a round of large gilt balls. A better pole-star could scarcely be desired. Long shall I retain the impression made on my mind by the awful echo, so loud and long and tremulous, of the deep-toned clock within this church, which awoke me at two in the morning from a distressful dream, occasioned, I believe, by the feather bed, which is used here instead of bed-clothes. I will rather carry my blanket about with me like a wild Indian, than submit to this abominable custom. Our emigrant acquaintance⁸⁶⁵ was, we found, an intimate friend of

⁸⁶⁵ Some 25,000 French émigrés lived in London during the 1790s and 1800s, and about 40,000 in Hamburg. The identity of this individual is not known, but it could be François Etienne Auguste, Comte de Paoli-Chagny (1756–1830), a Burgundian émigré who lived in London until c.1797, when he was recruited by British agents and paid to edit a series of anti-Napoleon periodicals in Hamburg (the journalistic connection could explain why Coleridge had letters of introduction to him).

the celebrated Abbé de Lisle:⁸⁶⁶ and from the large fortune which he possessed under the monarchy, had rescued sufficient not only for independence, but for respectability. He had offended some of his fellow-emigrants in London, whom he had obliged with considerable sums, by a refusal to make further advances, and in consequence of their intrigues had received an order to quit the kingdom. I thought it one proof of his innocence, that he attached no blame either to the alien act, or to the minister who had exerted it against him; and a still greater, that he spoke of London with rapture, and of his favorite niece, who had married and settled in England, with all the fervor and all the pride of a fond parent. A Man sent by force out of a country, obliged to sell out of the stocks at a great loss, and exiled from those pleasures and that style of society which habit had rendered essential to his happiness, whose predominant feelings were yet all of a private nature, resentment for friendship outraged, and anguish for domestic affections interrupted—such a man, I think, I could dare warrant guiltless of *espoinage* in any service, most of all in that of the present French Directory. He spoke with extacy of Paris under the Monarchy: and yet the particular facts, which made up his description, left as deep a conviction on my mind, of French worthlessness, as his own tale had done of emigrant ingratitude. Since my arrival in Germany, I have not met a single person, even among those who abhor the Revolution, that spoke with favor, or even charity of the French emigrants. Though the belief of their influence in the origination of this disastrous war, (from the horrors of which, North Germany deems itself only reprieved, not secured) may have some share in the general aversion with which they are regarded; yet I am deeply persuaded that the far greater part is owing to their own profligacy, to their treachery and hard-heartedness to each other, and the domestic misery or corrupt principles which so many of them have carried into the families of their protectors. My heart dilated with honest pride, as I recalled to mind the stern yet amiable characters of the English patriots, who sought refuge on the Continent at the Restoration! O let not our civil war under the first Charles be paralleled with the French revolution! In the former, the chalice overflowed from excess of principle; in the latter from the fermentation of the dregs! The former, was a civil war between the virtues and virtuous prejudices

⁸⁶⁶ Jean-Baptiste-Claude Delisle de Sales (1741–1816), also known as Jean-Baptiste Isoard de Lisle. French philosopher, cleric and friend of Voltaire, whose *De la philosophie de la nature* (1769) challenged the Biblical notion that the Earth was only 6,000 years old, arguing instead for an age of 140,000 years. He was imprisoned for this, and his books burnt.

of the two parties; the latter, between the vices. The Venetian glass of the French monarchy shivered and flew asunder with the working of a double poison.

Sept. 20th. I was introduced to Mr. Klopstock, the brother of the poet,⁸⁶⁷ who again introduced me to professor Ebeling,⁸⁶⁸ an intelligent and lively man, though deaf: so deaf, indeed, that it was a painful effort to talk with him, as we were obliged to drop all our pearls into a huge ear-trumpet. From this courteous and kind-hearted man of letters, (I hope, the German literati in general may resemble this first specimen) I heard a tolerable Italian pun, and an interesting anecdote. When Buonaparte was in Italy, having been irritated by some instance of perfidy, he said in a loud and vehement tone, in a public company—"tis a true proverb, *gli Italiani tutti ladroni*" (i.e. *the Italians all plunderers.*) A Lady had the courage to reply, "Non tutti; ma BUONA PARTE," (*not all, but a good part, or Buonaparte.*) This, I confess, sounded to my ears, as one of the many good things that *might have been said*. The anecdote is more valuable; for it instances the ways and means of French insinuation. HOICHE⁸⁶⁹ had received much information concerning the face of the country from a map of unusual fullness and accuracy, the maker of which, he heard, resided at Dusseldorf. At the storming of Dusseldorf by the French army, Hoche previously ordered, that the house and property of this man should be preserved, and entrusted the performance of the order to an officer on whose troop he could rely. Finding afterwards that the man had escaped before the storming commenced, Hoche exclaimed, "HE had no reason to flee! It is *for* such men, not *against* them, that the French nation makes war, and consents to shed the blood of its children." You remember Milton's sonnet—

The great Emathian conqueror bid spare
The house of Pindarus when temple and tower
Went to the ground——⁸⁷⁰

Now though the Dusseldorf map-maker may stand in the same relation to the Theban bard, as the snail that marks its path by lines

⁸⁶⁷ Victor Klopstock (1744–1811), a merchant. His more famous brother is Friedrich (1724–1803), arguably the most famous German poet of his generation, whom Coleridge describes meeting in the third letter, below.

⁸⁶⁸ Christoph Daniel Ebeling (1741–1817), at this time Professor of Greek at Hamburg. He was also superintendent of the Hamburg library, where he collected some 10,000 maps and 4,000 books relating to America. Ebeling published a five-volume *Erdbeschreibung und Geschichte von Amerika* [*Geography and History of North America*] (1796–1816).

⁸⁶⁹ Louis Lazare Hoche (1768–97), brilliant French soldier who rose quickly to be a general of the Revolutionary army before his death at the age of twenty-nine.

⁸⁷⁰ Milton, 'Sonnet VII' (1645), 10–12.

of film on the wall it creeps over, to the eagle that soars sunward and beats the tempest with its wings; it does not therefore follow, that the Jacobin of France may not be as valiant a general and as good a politician, as the madman of Macedon.⁸⁷¹

From Professor Ebeling's Mr. Klopstock accompanied my friend and me to his own house, where I saw a fine bust of his brother. There was a solemn and heavy greatness in his countenance which corresponded to my preconceptions of his style and genius.—I saw there, likewise, a very fine portrait of Lessing, whose works are at present the chief object of my admiration. His eyes were uncommonly like mine, if anything, rather larger and more prominent. But the lower part of his face and his nose—O what an exquisite expression of elegance and sensibility!—There appeared no depth, weight, or comprehensiveness, in the forehead.—The whole face seemed to say, that Lessing was a man of quick and voluptuous feelings; of an active but light fancy; acute; yet acute not in the observation of actual life, but in the arrangements and management of the ideal world, i.e. in taste, and in metaphysics. I assure you, that I wrote these very words in my memorandum book with the portrait before my eyes, and when I knew nothing of Lessing but his name, and that he was a German writer of eminence.

We consumed two hours and more over a bad dinner, at the table d'Hôte. "PATIENCE *at a German ordinary, smiling at time.*"⁸⁷² The Germans are the worst cooks in Europe. There is placed for every two persons a bottle of common wine—Rhenish and Claret alternately; but in the houses of the opulent during the many and long intervals of the dinner, the servants hand round glasses of richer wines. At the Lord of Culpin's they came in this order. Burgundy—Madeira—Port—Frontiniac—Pacchiaretti—Old Hock—Mountain—Champagne—Hock again—Bishop, and lastly, Punch. A tolerable quantum, methinks! The last dish at the ordinary, viz. slices of roast pork (for all the larger dishes are brought in, cut up, and first handed round and then set on the table) with stewed prunes and other sweet fruits, and this followed by cheese and butter, with plates of apples, reminded me of Shakespeare* and Shakespeare put it in my head to go to the French comedy.

* * *

* "*Slender*. I bruised my shin with playing with sword and dagger for a dish of stewed

⁸⁷¹ Alexander the Great (Milton's 'Emathian conqueror') ordered Thebes to be destroyed in 335 BC to punish the city for resisting him, but added that the house of Pindar should be spared in honour of his poetry.

⁸⁷² A play on the lines from *Twelfth Night* (2:4:113–14): 'She sat like Patience at a monument / Smiling at grief'.

Bless me! why it is worse than our modern English plays!⁸⁷³ The first act informed me, that a court martial is to be held on a Count Watron, who had drawn his sword on the Colonel, his brother-in-law. The officers plead in his behalf—in vain! His wife, the Colonel's sister, pleads with most tempestuous agonies—in vain! She falls into hysterics and faints away, to the dropping of the inner curtain! In the second act sentence of death is passed on the Count—his wife, as frantic and hysterical as before: more so (good industrious creature!) she could not be. The third and last act, the wife still frantic, very frantic indeed! the soldiers just about to fire, the handkerchief actually dropped, when reprieve! reprieve! is heard from behind the scenes: and in comes Prince somebody pardons the Count, and the wife is still frantic, only with joy; that was all!

O dear lady! this is one of the cases, in which laughter is followed by melancholy: for such is the *kind* of drama, which is now substituted every where for Shakespeare and Racine. You well know, that I offer violence to my own feelings in joining these names. But however meanly I may think of the French serious drama, even in its most perfect specimens; and with whatever right I may complain of its perpetual falsification of the language, and of the connections and transitions of thought, which Nature has appropriated to states of passion; still, however, the French tragedies are consistent works of art, and the offspring of great intellectual power. Preserving a fitness in the parts, and a harmony in the whole, they form a nature of their own, though a false nature. Still they excite the minds of the spectators to active thought, to a striving after ideal excellence. The soul is not stupefied into mere sensations, by a worthless sympathy with our own ordinary sufferings, or an empty curiosity for the surprising, undignified by the language or the situations which awe and delight the imagination. What (I would ask of the crowd, that press forward to the pantomimic tragedies and weeping comedies of Kotzebue⁸⁷⁴ and his imitators) what are you seeking? Is it comedy? But in the comedy of Shakespeare and Moliere the more accurate

prunes, and by my troth I cannot abide the smell of hot meat since.”—So again, *Evans*. “I will make an end of my dinner: there’s pippins and cheese to come.”⁸⁷⁵

⁸⁷³ The play discussed in this paragraph is a French version of Heinrich Friedrich Möller's *Der Graf von Walltron oder die Subordination* (1776), entitled *Le Comte Waltron*.

⁸⁷⁴ August Friedrich Ferdinand von Kotzebue (1761–1819), German dramatist, novelist and diplomat. His early plays, *Adelheid von Wulfingen* (1789), *Menschenhass und Reue* (1790) and *Die Indianer in England* (1790), won him great renown; although Coleridge, evidently, did not like them.

⁸⁷⁵ *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, 1:1:254–8 and 1:2:10–11.

my knowledge, and the more profoundly I think, the greater is the satisfaction that mingles with my laughter. For though the qualities which these writers pourtray are ludicrous indeed, either from the kind or the excess, and exquisitely ludicrous, yet are they the natural growth of the human mind and such as, with more or less change in the drapery, I can apply to my own heart, or at least to whole classes of my fellow-creatures. How often are not the moralist and the metaphysician obliged for the happiest illustrations of general truths and the subordinate laws of human thought and action to quotations not only from the tragic characters but equally from the Jaques, Falstaff, and even from the fools and clowns of Shakespeare, or from the Miser, Hypochondriast, and Hypocrite, of Moliere! Say not, that I am recommending abstractions: for these class-characteristics, which constitute the instructiveness of a character, are so modified and particularized in each person of the Shakesperian Drama, that life itself does not excite more distinctly that sense of individuality which belongs to real existence. Paradoxical as it may sound, one of the essential properties of geometry is not less essential to dramatic excellence, and (if I may mention his name without pedantry to a lady) Aristotle has accordingly required of the poet an involution of the universal in the individual.⁸⁷⁶ The chief differences are, that in geometry it is the universal truth itself, which is uppermost in the consciousness, in poetry the individual form in which the Truth is clothed. With the Ancients, and not less with the elder dramatists of England and France, both comedy and tragedy were considered as kinds of *poetry*. They neither sought in comedy to make us laugh merely, much less to make us laugh by wry faces, accidents of jargon, slang phrases for the day, or the clothing of common-place morals in metaphors drawn from the shops or mechanic occupations of their characters; nor did they condescend in tragedy to wheedle away the applause of the spectators, by representing before them fac-similes of their own mean selves in all their existing meanness, or to work on their sluggish sympathies by a pathos not a whit more respectable than the maudlin tears of drunkenness. Their tragic scenes were meant to affect us indeed, but within the bounds of pleasure, and in union with the activity both of our understanding and imagination. They wished to transport the mind to a sense of its possible greatness, and to implant the germs of that greatness during the temporary oblivion of the worthless

⁸⁷⁶ Aristotle, *Poetics*, 9:1-4.

“thing, we are”⁸⁷⁷ and of the peculiar state, in which each man *happens* to be; suspending our individual recollections and lulling them to sleep amid the music of nobler thoughts.

Hold! (methinks I hear the spokesman of the crowd reply, and we will listen to him. I am the plaintiff, and be he the defendant.)

DEFENDANT. *Hold!* are not our modern sentimental plays filled with the best Christian morality?

PLAINTIFF. Yes! just as much of it, and just that part of it which you can exercise without a single Christian virtue—without a single sacrifice that is really painful to you!—just as much as *flatters* you, sends you away pleased with your own hearts, and quite reconciled to your vices, which can never be thought very ill of, when they keep such good company, and walk hand in hand with so much compassion and generosity; adulation so loathsome, that you would spit in the man’s face who dared offer it to you in a private company, unless you interpreted it as insulting irony, you appropriate with infinite satisfaction, when you share the garbage with the whole stye, and gobble it out of a common trough. No Cæsar must pace your boards—no Antony, no royal Dane, no Orestes, no Andromache!—

D. No: or as few of them as possible. What has a plain citizen of London, or Hamburg, to do with your kings and queens, and your old school-boy Pagan heroes? Besides, every body knows the *stories*; and what curiosity can we feel—

P. What, Sir, not for the *manner*?—not for the delightful language of the poet?—not for the situations, the action and reaction of the passions?

D. You are hasty, Sir! the only curiosity, we feel, is in the story: and how can we be anxious concerning the end of a play, or be surprized by it, when we know how it will turn out?

P. Your pardon, for having interrupted you! we now understand each other. You seek then, in a tragedy, which wise men of old held for the highest effort of human genius, the same gratification, as that you receive from a new novel, the last German romance, and other dainties of the day, which *can* be enjoyed but once. If you carry these feelings to the sister art of Painting, Michael Angelo’s Sistine Chapel, and the Scripture Gallery of Raphael, can expect no favour from you. *You know all about them beforehand*; and are, doubtless, more familiar with the subjects of those paintings, than with the tragic tales of the historic or heroic ages. There is a consistency, therefore, in your preference of contemporary writers: for the great men of former times,

⁸⁷⁷ Shakespeare, *Rape of Lucrece*, 149.

those at least who were deemed great by our ancestors, sought so little to gratify *this* kind of curiosity, that they seemed to have regarded the *story* in a not much higher light, than the painter regards his canvass: as that *on*, not *by*, which they were to display their appropriate excellence. No work, resembling a tale or romance, can well shew less variety of invention in the incidents, or less anxiety in weaving them together, than the Don Quixote of CERVANTES. Its admirers feel the disposition to go back and re-peruse some preceding chapter, at least ten times for once that they find any eagerness to hurry forwards: or open the book on those parts which they best recollect, even as we visit those friends oftenest whom we love most, and with whose characters and actions we are the most intimately acquainted. In the divine ARIOSTO, (as his countrymen call this, their darling poet) I question whether there be a single *tale* of his own invention, or the elements of which, were not familiar to the readers of "old romance."⁸⁷⁸ I will pass by the ancient Greeks, who thought it even necessary to the fable of a tragedy, that its substance should be previously known. That there had been at least fifty tragedies with the same title, would be one of the motives which determined Sophocles and Euripedes, in the choice of Electra, as a subject. But Milton—

D. Aye Milton, indeed! but do not Dr. Johnson and other great men tell us, that nobody now reads Milton but as a task?⁸⁷⁹

P. So much the worse for them, of whom this can be truly said! But why then do you pretend to admire *Shakespeare*? The greater part, if not all, of *his* dramas were, as far as the names and the main incidents are concerned, already stock plays. All the *stories*, at least, on which they are built, pre-existed in the chronicles, ballads, or translations of contemporary or preceding English writers. Why, I repeat, do you pretend to admire *Shakespeare*? Is it, perhaps, that you only *pretend* to admire him? However, as once for all, you have dismissed the well-known events and personages of history, or the epic muse, what have you taken in their stead? Whom has *your* tragic muse armed with her bowl and dagger? the sentimental muse I should have said, whom

⁸⁷⁸ 'There is an old Romance of Chivalry proper to Italy . . . [although] when they did adopt from the French the fashionable tales of Charlemagne and his Paladins, they did not attract the attention of the classical Italians, until Boiardo, Berni, Pulci, and, above all, the divine Ariosto, condescended to use them as the basis of their well-known romantic poems. The romantic poets of Italy did not even disdain to imitate the rambling, diffuse, and episodal style proper to the old Romance; and Ariosto, in particular.' (Walter Scott, 'Essay on Romance' (1815))

⁸⁷⁹ Johnson's *Life of Milton* (1779) suggests that *Paradise Lost* is a work which the reader 'admires and lays down', and that 'its perusal is a duty rather than a pleasure'.

you have seated in the throne of tragedy? What heroes has *she* reared on her buskins?

D. O! our good friends and next-door-neighbours—honest tradesmen, valiant tars, high-spirited half-pay officers, philanthropic Jews, virtuous courtezans, tender-hearted braziers, and sentimental rat-catchers! (a little bluff or so, but all our very generous, tender-hearted characters *are* a little rude or misanthropic, and all our misanthropes very tender-hearted.)

P. But I pray you, friend, in what actions great or interesting, can such men be engaged?

D. They give away a great deal of money; find rich dowries for young men and maidens who have all other good qualities; they brow-beat lords, baronets, and justices of the peace, (for they are as bold as Hector!)—they rescue stage coaches at the instant they are falling down precipices; carry away infants in the sight of opposing armies; and some of our performers act a muscular able-bodied man to such perfection, that our dramatic poets, who always have the actors in their eye, seldom fail to make their favourite male character as strong as Sampson. And then they take such prodigious leaps!! And what is *done* on the stage is more striking even than what is acted. I once remember such a deafening explosion, that I could not hear a word of the play for half an act after it: and a little real gunpowder being set fire to at the same time, and smelt by all the spectators, the naturalness of the scene was quite astonishing!

P. But how can you connect with such men and such actions that dependance of thousands on the fate of one, which gives so lofty an interest to the personages of Shakespeare, and the Greek Tragedians? How can you connect with them that sublimest of all feelings, the power of destiny and the controlling might of heaven, which seems to elevate the characters which sink beneath its irresistible blow?

D. O mere fancies! We seek and find on the present stage our own wants and passions, our own vexations, losses, and embarrassments.

P. It is your own poor pettifogging nature then, which you desire to have represented before you? not human nature in its height and vigour? But surely you might find the former with all its joys and sorrows, more conveniently in your own houses and parishes.

D. True! but here comes a difference. Fortune is blind, but the poet has his eyes open, and is besides as complaisant as fortune is capricious. He makes every thing turn out exactly as we would wish it. He gratifies us by representing those as hateful or contemptible whom we hate and wish to despise.

P. (*aside*) That is, he gratifies your envy by libelling your superiors.

D. He makes all those precise moralists, who affect to be better than their neighbours, turn out at last abject hypocrites, traitors, and hard-hearted villains; and your men of spirit, who take their girl and their glass with equal freedom, prove the true men of honour, and (that no part of the audience may remain unsatisfied) reform in the last scene, and leave no doubt in the minds of the ladies, that they will make most faithful and excellent husbands: though it does seem a pity, that they should be obliged to get rid of qualities which had made them so interesting! Besides, the poor become rich all at once; and in the final matrimonial choice the opulent and high-born themselves are made to confess; that VIRTUE IS THE ONLY TRUE NOBILITY, AND THAT A LOVELY WOMAN IS A DOWRY OF HERSELF!!

P. Excellent! But you have forgotten those brilliant flashes of loyalty, those patriotic praises of the king and old England, which, especially if conveyed in a metaphor from the ship or the shop, so often solicit and so unfailingly receive the public plaudit! I give your prudence credit for the omission. For the whole system of your drama is a moral and intellectual *Jacobinism* of the most dangerous kind, and those common-place rants of loyalty are no better than hypocrisy in your playwrights, and your own sympathy with them a gross self-delusion. For the whole secret of dramatic popularity consists with you in the confusion and subversion of the natural order of things, their causes and their effects; in the excitement of surprise, by representing the qualities of liberality, refined feeling, and a nice sense of honour (those things rather which pass among you for such) in persons and in classes of life where experience teaches us least to expect them; and in rewarding with all the sympathies that are the dues of virtue, those criminals whom law, reason, and religion, have excommunicated from our esteem!

And now good night! Truly! I might have written this last sheet without having gone to Germany,⁸⁸⁰ but I fancied myself talking to you by your own fire-side, and can you think it a small pleasure to me to forget now and then, that I am *not* there. Besides, you and my other good friends have made up your minds to me as I am, and from whatever place I write you will expect that part of my "Travels" will consist of excursions in my own mind.

⁸⁸⁰ Indeed Coleridge did write it elsewhere (the dialogue is not in the original letter). It was probably written in 1808 or 1809.

LETTER III

RATZEBURG.

No little fish thrown back again into the water, no fly unimprisoned from a child's hand, could more buoyantly enjoy its element, than I this clean and peaceful house, with this lovely view of the town, groves, and lake of Ratzeburg, from the window at which I am writing. My spirits certainly, and my health I fancied, were beginning to sink under the noise, dirt, and unwholesome air of our Hamburg hotel—I left it on Sunday, Sept. 23d. with a letter of introduction from the poet Klopstock, to the Amptman of Ratzeburg. The Amptman received me with kindness, and introduced me to the worthy pastor, who agreed to board and lodge me for any length of time not less than a month. The vehicle, in which I took my place, was considerably larger than an English stage coach, to which it bore much the same proportion and rude resemblance, that an elephant's ear does to the human. Its top was composed of naked boards of different colours, and seeming to have been parts of different wainscots. Instead of windows there were leathern curtains with a little eye of glass in each: they perfectly answered the purpose of keeping out the prospect and letting in the cold. I could observe little, therefore, but the inns and farm houses at which we stopped. They were all alike, except in size: one great room, like a barn, with a hay-loft over it, the straw and hay dangling in tufts through the boards which formed the ceiling of the room, and the floor of the loft. From this room, which is paved like a street, sometimes one, sometimes two smaller ones, are enclosed at one end. These are commonly floored. In the large room the cattle, pigs, poultry, men, women, and children, live in amicable community: yet there was an appearance of cleanliness and rustic comfort. One of these houses I measured. It was an hundred feet in length. The apartments were taken off from one corner. Between these and the stalls there was a small interspace, and here the breadth was forty-eight feet, but thirty-two where the stalls were; of course, the stalls were on each side eight feet in depth. The faces of the cows, &c. were turned towards the room; indeed they were in it, so that they had at least the comfort of seeing each other's faces. Stall-feeding is universal in this part of Germany, a practice concerning which the agriculturist and the poet are likely to entertain opposite opinions—or at least, to have very different feelings. The wood work of these buildings on the outside is left unplastered, as in old houses among us, and being painted red and green, it cuts and tessellates the buildings very gaily. From within three miles of Hamburg almost to Molln, which

is thirty miles from it, the country as far as I could see it, was a dead flat, only varied by woods. At Molln it became more beautiful. I observed a small lake nearly surrounded with groves, and a palace in view belonging to the King of Great Britain,⁸⁸¹ and inhabited by the Inspector of the Forests. We were nearly the same time in travelling the thirty-five miles from Hamburg to Ratzeburg, as we had been in going from London to Yarmouth, one hundred and twenty-six miles.

The lake of Ratzeburg runs from south to north, about nine miles in length, and varying in breadth from three miles to half a mile. About a mile from the southernmost point it is divided into two, of course very unequal, parts by an island, which being connected by a bridge and a narrow slip of land with the one shore, and by another bridge of immense length with the other shore, forms a complete isthmus. On this island the town of Ratzeburg is built. The pastor's house or vicarage, together with the Amptman's, Amptschreiber's, and the church, stands near the summit of a hill, which slopes down to the slip of land and the little bridge, from which, through a superb military gate, you step into the island-town of Ratzeburg. This again is itself a little hill, by ascending and descending which, you arrive at the long bridge, and so to the other shore. The water to the south of the town is called the Little Lake, which however almost engrosses the beauties of the whole: the shores being just often enough green and bare to give the proper effect to the magnificent groves which occupy the greater part of their circumference. From the turnings, windings, and indentations of the shore, the views vary almost every ten steps, and the whole has a sort of majestic beauty, a feminine grandeur. At the north of the Great Lake, and peeping over it, I see the seven church towers of Lubec, at the distance of twelve or thirteen miles, yet as distinctly as if they were not three. The only defect in the view is, that Ratzeburg is built entirely of red bricks, and all the houses roofed with red tiles. To the eye, therefore, it presents a clump of brick-dust red. Yet this evening, Oct. 10th. twenty minutes past five, I saw the town perfectly beautiful, and the whole softened down into *complete keeping*,⁸⁸² if I may borrow a term from the painters. The sky

⁸⁸¹ George III (who reigned 1760–1820) was descended from the German House of Hanover, which owned extensive property across northern Germany.

⁸⁸² In a painterly sense, 'the keeping' is the proper proportion of colour in a composition. 'If [brightness] could in some Sort be imitated in a Picture, by the Assistance of gilding, it would not have a good effect with regard to the other Colours, which it would too much outshine; and thereby hurt the Keeping . . . [for] the due Keeping in the whole is not so exactly preserved as in Direct Vision.' (J. Hamilton, *Stereography, or a Compleat Body of Perspective, in all its branches* (2 vols, 1788), 1:384–5)

over Ratzeburg and all the east was a pure evening blue, while over the west it was covered with light sandy clouds. Hence a deep red light spread over the whole prospect, in undisturbed harmony with the red town, the brown-red woods, and the yellow-red reeds on the skirts of the lake. Two or three boats, with single persons paddling them, floated up and down in the rich light, which not only was itself in harmony with all, but brought all into harmony.

I should have told you that I went back to Hamburg on Thursday (Sept. 27th.) to take leave of my friend,⁸⁸³ who travels southward, and returned hither on the Monday following. From Empfelde, a village half way from Ratzeburg, I walked to Hamburg through deep sandy roads and a dreary flat: the soil everywhere white, hungry, and excessively pulverised; but the approach to the city is pleasing. Light cool country houses, which you can look through and see the gardens behind them, with arbours and trellis work, and thick vegetable walls, and trees in cloisters and piazzas, each house with neat rails before it, and green seats within the rails. Every object, whether the growth of nature or the work of man, was neat and artificial. It pleased me far better, than if the houses and gardens, and pleasure fields, had been in a nobler taste: for this nobler taste would have been mere apery. The busy, anxious, money-loving merchant of Hamburg could only have *adopted*, he could not have *enjoyed* the simplicity of nature. The mind begins to love nature by imitating human conveniences in nature; but this is a step in intellect, though a low one—and were it not so, yet all around me spoke of innocent enjoyment and sensitive comforts, and I entered with unscrupulous sympathy into the enjoyments and comforts even of the busy, anxious, money-loving merchants of Hamburg. In this charitable and *catholic* mood I reached the vast ramparts of the city. These are huge green cushions, one rising above the other, with trees growing in the interspaces, pledges and symbols of a long peace. Of my return I have nothing worth communicating, except that I took extra post, which answers to posting in England. These north German post chaises are uncovered wicker carts. An English dust-cart is a piece of finery, a chef d'oeuvre of mechanism, compared with them: and the horses! a savage might use their ribs instead of his fingers for a numeration table. Wherever we stopped, the postilion fed his cattle with the brown rye bread of which he eat himself, all breakfasting together, only the horses had no gin to their

⁸⁸³ Wordsworth, who had decided Ratzeburg was too expensive and so moved south (with his sister Dorothy) to Goslar, where he stayed from early October 1798 to late February 1799.

water, and the postillion no water to his gin. Now and henceforward for subjects of more interest to you, and to the objects in search of which I left you: namely, the literati and literature of Germany.

Believe me, I walked with an impression of awe on my spirits, as W—⁸⁸⁴ and myself accompanied Mr. Klopstock to the house of his brother, the poet,⁸⁸⁵ which stands about a quarter of a mile from the city gate. It is one of a row of little common-place summer-houses, (for so they looked) with four or five rows of young meagre elm trees before the windows, beyond which is a green, and then a dead flat intersected with several roads. Whatever beauty (thought I) may be before the poet's eyes at present, it must certainly be purely of his own creation. We waited a few minutes in a neat little parlour, ornamented with the figures of two of the muses and with prints, the subjects of which were from Klopstock's odes. The poet entered. I was much disappointed in his countenance, and recognized in it no likeness to the bust. There was no comprehension in the forehead, no weight over the eye-brows, no expression of peculiarity, moral or intellectual on the eyes, no massiveness in the general countenance. He is if any thing rather below the middle size. He wore very large half-boots, which his legs filled, so fearfully were they swoln. However, though neither W— nor myself could discover any indications of sublimity or enthusiasm in his physiognomy, we were both equally impressed with his liveliness, and his kind and ready courtesy. He talked in French with my friend, and with difficulty spoke a few sentences to me in English. His enunciation was not in the least affected by the entire want of his upper teeth. The conversation began on his part by the expression of his rapture at the surrender of the detachment of French troops under General Humbert.⁸⁸⁶ Their proceedings in Ireland with regard to the committee which they had appointed, with the rest of their organizing system, seemed to have given the poet great entertainment. He then declared his sanguine belief in Nelson's victory,⁸⁸⁷

⁸⁸⁴ Wordsworth.

⁸⁸⁵ Friedrich Klopstock (1724–1803) was 74 at the time of this visit. His best known work, the religious epic poem *Der Messias* ('The Messiah', published between 1748 and 1773) is judged and found wanting above in Chapter 22. Klopstock was also celebrated in his day for his odes, amongst which are *Die tote Klarissa* and *Die beiden Musen*, the latter perhaps being the poem illustrated by the prints Coleridge notes in his parlour.

⁸⁸⁶ Jean Joseph Amable Humbert (1755–1823) led an attempted French invasion of Ireland in 1798. Despite initial military success, including the declaration of a Republic of Connaught (governed by the committee to which Klopstock refers), his forces were defeated at the battle of Ballinamuch (8 September 1798) and he was taken prisoner of war.

⁸⁸⁷ The Battle of the Nile, also known as 'The Battle of Abukir Bay': a sea-battle fought on 1 August 1798 in which Nelson decisively defeated the French navy. That confirmation

and anticipated its confirmation with a keen and triumphant pleasure. His words, tones, looks, implied the most vehement Anti-Gallicanism. The subject changed to literature, and I inquired in Latin concerning the History of German Poetry and the elder German Poets. To my great astonishment he confessed, that he knew very little on the subject. He had indeed occasionally read one or two of their elder writers, but not so as to enable him to speak of their merits. Professor Ebeling, he said, would probably give me every information of this kind: the subject had not particularly excited his curiosity. He then talked of Milton and Glover,⁸⁸⁸ and thought Glover's blank verse superior to Milton's. W— and myself expressed our surprise: and my friend gave his definition and notion of harmonious verse, that it consisted (the English iambic blank verse above all) in the apt arrangement of pauses and cadences, and the sweep of whole paragraphs,

—with many a winding bout
Of linked sweetness long drawn out,⁸⁸⁹

and not in the even flow, much less in the prominence of antithetic vigour, of single lines, which were indeed injurious to the total effect, except where they were introduced for some specific purpose. Klopstock assented, and said that he meant to confine Glover's superiority to single lines. He told us that he had read Milton, in a prose translation, when he was fourteen.* I understood him thus myself, and W— interpreted Klopstock's French as I had already construed it. He appeared to know very little of Milton—or indeed of our poets in general. He spoke with great indignation of the English prose translation

* This was accidentally confirmed to me by an old German gentleman at Helmstadt, who had been Klopstock's school and bed-fellow. Among other boyish anecdotes, he related that the young poet set a particular value on a translation of the *Paradise Lost*, and always slept with it under his pillow.⁸⁹⁰

of this victory had yet to reach Germany nearly two months later speaks to the slowness of European communications at this time.

⁸⁸⁸ Richard Glover (1712–85), English poet and MP; the son of a Hamburg merchant, he was best known in his day for his epic poem in praise of liberty, *Leonidas* (1737, expanded version 1770), which contained allegorical reference to the eighteenth-century British political scene. *The Athenaid* (1787), in an eye-wearingly thirty books, is a sequel to the *Leonidas*.

⁸⁸⁹ Milton, *L'Allegro* (1631), 139–40.

⁸⁹⁰ This was J. J. Bodmer's translation of the *Paradise Lost* into German prose, published in 1732. Coleridge is careful to stress that he has accurately reported Klopstock's words, since the poet later claimed that he had not read Milton until *after* he had completed the plan of his own epic.

of his Messiah.⁸⁹¹ All the translations had been bad, very bad—but the English was *no* translation—there were pages on pages not in the original:—and half the original was not to be found in the translation. W— told him that I intended to translate a few of his odes as specimens of German lyrics—he then said to me in English, “I wish you would render into English some select passages of the Messiah, and *revenge* me of your countryman!” It was the liveliest thing which he produced in the whole conversation. He told us, that his first ode was fifty years older than his last. I looked at him with much emotion—I considered him as the venerable father of German poetry; as a good man; as a Christian; seventy-four years old; with legs enormously swoln; yet active, lively, chearful, and kind, and communicative. My eyes felt as if a tear were swelling into them. In the portrait of Lessing there was a toupee perriwig, which enormously injured the effect of his physiognomy—Klopstock wore the same, powdered and frizzled. By the bye, old men ought never to wear powder—the contrast between a large snow-white wig and the colour of an old man’s skin is disgusting, and wrinkles in such a neighbourhood appear only channels for dirt. It is an honour to poets and great men, that you think of them as parts of nature; and any thing of trick and fashion wounds you in them, as much as when you see venerable yews clipped into miserable peacocks.—The author of the Messiah should have worn his own grey hair.—His powder and perriwig were to the eye what Mr. Virgil would be to the ear.

Klopstock dwelt much on the superior power which the German language possessed of concentrating meaning. He said, he had often translated parts of Homer and Virgil, line by line, and a German line proved always sufficient for a Greek or Latin one. In English you cannot do this. I answered, that in English we could commonly render one Greek heroic line in a line and a half of our common heroic metre, and I conjectured that this line and a half would be found to contain no more syllables than one German or Greek hexameter. He did not understand me:* and I, who wished to hear his opinions, not to correct them, was glad that he did not.

* Klopstock’s observation was partly true and partly erroneous. In the literal sense of his words, and if we confine the comparison to the average of space required for the expression of the same thought in the two languages, it is erroneous. I have translated some German hexameters into English hexameter, and find, that on the average three lines English will express four lines German.⁸⁹² The reason is evident: our language

⁸⁹¹ Mary and Joseph Collyer, *The Messiah. Attempted from the German of Mr. Klopstock* (1763).

⁸⁹² This may be a reference to ‘Hymn to Earth’ (1799), Coleridge’s translation of part of the hexameter *Hymne, an der Erde* (1778) by Friedrich Leopold Graf zu Stolberg-Stolberg (1750–1819). One reason for doubting this, however, is that Coleridge’s translation

We now took our leave. At the beginning of the French Revolution Klopstock wrote odes of congratulation. He received some honorary presents from the French Republic (a golden crown I believe) and, like our Priestly⁸⁹³ was invited to a seat in the legislature, which he declined. But when French liberty metamorphosed herself into a fury, he sent back these presents with a palinodia, declaring his abhorrence of their proceedings: and since then he has been perhaps more than enough an Anti-Gallican. I mean, that in his just contempt and detestation of the crimes and follies of the Revolutionists, he suffers himself to forget that the revolution itself is a process of the Divine Providence; and that as the folly of men is the wisdom of God,⁸⁹⁴ so

abounds in monosyllables and dissyllables. The German, not less than the Greek, is a polysyllable language. But in another point of view the remark was not without foundation. For the German possessing the same unlimited privilege of forming compounds, both with prepositions and with epithets as the Greek, it can express the richest single Greek word in a single German one, and is thus freed from the necessity of weak or ungraceful paraphrases. I will content myself with one example at present, viz. the use of the prefixed participles *ver*, *zer*, *ent*, and *weg*: thus, *reissen* to rend, *verreissen* to rend away, *zerreissen* to rend to pieces, *entreissen* to rend off or out of a thing, in the active sense: or *schmelzen* to melt—*ver*, *zer*, *ent*, *schmelzen*—and in like manner through all the verbs neuter and active. If you consider only how much we should feel the loss of the prefix *be*, as in *bedropt*, *besprinkle*, *besot*, especially in our poetical language, and then think that this same mode of composition is carried through all their simple and compound prepositions, and many of their adverbs; and that with most of these the Germans have the same privilege as we have of dividing them from the verb and placing them at the end of the sentence; you will have no difficulty in comprehending the reality and the cause of this superior power in the German of condensing meaning, in which its great poet exulted. It is impossible to read half a dozen pages of Wieland without perceiving that in this respect the German has no rival but the Greek. And yet I seem to feel, that concentration or condensation is not the happiest mode of expressing this excellence, which seems to consist not so much in the less time required for conveying an impression, as in the unity and simultaneousness with which the impression is conveyed. It tends to make their language more picturesque: it *depictures* images better. We have obtained this power in part by our compound verbs derived from the Latin: and the sense of its great effect no doubt induced our Milton both to the use and the abuse of Latin derivatives. But still these prefixed particles, conveying no separate or separable meaning to the mere English reader, cannot possibly act on the mind with the force or liveliness of an original and homogeneous language such as the German is, and besides are confined to certain words.

matches Stolberg's original pretty much line for line (it takes thirty-three lines to translate thirty-one of the original). In 1805 the *Edinburgh Review* noted that 'an extraordinary hexameter-mania has lately pervaded Germany', adding that 'Klopstock, whose reputation is perhaps undeservedly great, has prefixed to his *Messiah* a treatise upon that disgusting abortion, which is called the German hexameter' ('Mitford's *Harmony of Language*', *Edinburgh Review* (1805), 369).

⁸⁹³ Joseph Priestley (1733–1804), English scientist, philosopher and dissenting theologian. He published over 150 works, including a detailed systematisation of the thought of David Hartley.

⁸⁹⁴ 'Summa hominum sapientia fit stulticia, si conferatur dei sapientiam' ['The sum of all human wisdom is folly, compared to the wisdom of God'], Erasmus, *Encomium Moriae*

are their iniquities instruments of his goodness. From Klopstock's house we walked to the ramparts, discoursing together on the poet and his conversation, till our attention was diverted to the beauty and singularity of the sunset and its effects on the objects round us. There were woods in the distance. A rich sandy light (nay, of a much deeper colour than sandy) lay over these woods that blackened in the blaze. Over that part of the woods which lay immediately under the intenser light, a brassy mist floated. The trees on the ramparts, and the people moving to and fro between them, were cut or divided into equal segments of deep shade and brassy light. Had the trees, and the bodies of the men and women, been divided into equal segments by a rule or pair of compasses, the portions could not have been more regular. All else was obscure. It was a fairy scene! and to encrease its romantic character among the moving objects, thus divided into alternate shade and brightness, was a beautiful child, dressed with the elegant simplicity of an English child, riding on a stately goat, the saddle, bridle, and other accoutrements of which were in a high degree costly and splendid. Before I quit the subject of Hamburg, let me say, that I remained a day or two longer than I otherwise should have done, in order to be present at the feast of St. Michael, the patron saint of Hamburg,⁸⁹⁵ expecting to see the civic pomp of this commercial Republic. I was however disappointed. There were no processions, two or three sermons were preached to two or three old women in two or three churches, and St. Michael and his patronage wished elsewhere by the higher classes, all places of entertainment, theatre, &c. being shut up on this day. In Hamburg, there seems to be no religion at all; in Lubec it is confined to the women. The men seemed determined to be divorced from their wives in the other world, if they cannot in this. You will not easily conceive a more singular sight, than is presented by the vast aisle of the principal church at Lubec seen from the organ-loft: for being filled with female servants and persons in the same class of life, and all their caps having gold and silver caulcs, it appears like a rich pavement of gold and silver.

I will conclude this letter with the mere transcription of notes, which my friend W— made of his conversations with Klopstock, during the interviews that took place after my departure. On these I shall make but one remark at present, and that will appear a presumptuous one, namely, that Klopstock's remarks on the venerable sage of

(1511) (*Opera Omnia Desiderii Erasmi Roterodami* (Amsterdam/Oxford: North-Holland Publishing, 1979), IV:3:187).

⁸⁹⁵ The feast-day of Saint Michael is 29 September. However, the patron saint of Hamburg is actually Saint Sixtus.

Koenigsburg are to my own knowledge injurious and mistaken; and so far is it from being true, that his system is now given up, that throughout the Universities of Germany there is not a single professor who is not, either a Kantian or a disciple of Fichte, whose system is built on the Kantian, and presupposes its truth; or lastly who, though an antagonist of Kant as to his theoretical work, has not embraced wholly or in part his moral system, and adopted part of his nomenclature. “Klopstock having wished to see the *Calvary* of Cumberland,⁸⁹⁶ and asked what was thought of it in England, I went to Remnant’s (the English bookseller) where I procured the *Analytical Review*, in which is contained the review of Cumberland’s *Calvary*. I remembered to have read there some specimens of a blank verse translation of *The Messiah*. I had mentioned this to Klopstock, and he had a great desire to see them. I walked over to his house and put the book into his hands. On adverting to his own poem, he told me he began the *Messiah* when he was seventeen: he devoted three entire years to the plan without composing a single line. He was greatly at a loss in what manner to execute his work. There were no successful specimens of versification in the German language before this time. The first three cantos he wrote in a species of measured or numerous prose. This, though done with much labour and some success, was far from satisfying him. He had composed hexameters both Latin and Greek as a school exercise, and there had been also in the German language attempts in that style of versification. These were only of very moderate merit.—One day he was struck with the idea of what could be done in this way—he kept his room a whole day, even went without his dinner, and found that in the evening he had written twenty-three hexameters, versifying a part of what he had before written in prose. From that time, pleased with his efforts, he composed no more in prose. To-day he informed me that he had finished his plan before he read Milton. He was enchanted to see an author who before him had trod the same path. This is a contradiction of what he said before. He did not wish to speak of his poem to any one till it was finished: but some of his friends who had seen what he had finished,

⁸⁹⁶ Dramatist Richard Cumberland (1732–1811), whose sub-Miltonic blank verse epic, *Calvary: or the Death of Christ* (1792), enjoyed some contemporary fame. The review mentioned here appeared in the *Analytical Review*, 13 (1792), 121–38. It contains samples of an English blank verse translation of Klopstock’s *Messiah*, presumably by the reviewer (initials: ‘R. R.’): ‘The first passage selected is taken from the second book of the *Messiah*, and opens with the speech of Satan, who, forced by Jesus to fly from the catacombs near Jerusalem, returns to hell, and in a general assembly of its princes opens his design of destroying the Saviour of man.’ (*Analytical Review*, 13 (1792), 130–3)

tormented him till he had consented to publish a few books in a journal. He was then I believe very young, about twenty-five. The rest was printed at different periods, four books at a time. The reception given to the first specimens was highly flattering. He was nearly thirty years in finishing the whole poem, but of these thirty years not more than two were employed in the composition. He only composed in favourable moments; besides he had other occupations. He values himself upon the plan of his odes, and accuses the modern lyrical writers of gross deficiency in this respect. I laid the same accusation against Horace: he would not hear of it—but waived the discussion. He called Rousseau's Ode to Fortune a moral dissertation in stanzas.⁸⁹⁷ I spoke of Dryden's St. Cecilia;⁸⁹⁸ but he did not seem familiar with our writers. He wished to know the distinctions between our dramatic and epic blank verse. He recommended me to read his Herman⁸⁹⁹ before I read either The Messiah or the odes. He flattered himself that some time or other his dramatic poems would be known in England. He had not heard of Cowper. He thought that Voss in his translation of the Iliad⁹⁰⁰ had done violence to the idiom of the Germans, and had sacrificed it to the Greek, not remembering sufficiently that each language has its particular spirit and genius. He said Lessing was the first of their dramatic writers. I complained of Nathan⁹⁰¹ as tedious. He said there was not enough of action in it; but that Lessing was the most chaste of their writers. He spoke favourably of Goethe; but said that his 'Sorrows of Werther'⁹⁰² was his best work,

⁸⁹⁷ Jean-Baptiste (not the more famous Jean-Jacques) Rousseau, French poet (1671–1741), whose *Odes, cantates, épigrammes et poésies diverses* (1723) included an 'Ode à la fortune'.

⁸⁹⁸ Dryden, 'A Song for St. Cecilia's Day' (1687).

⁸⁹⁹ Klopstock's drama, *Hermanns Schlacht* (1769).

⁹⁰⁰ Johann Heinrich Voss (1751–1826), prolific German poet and academic, was most famous in his day for his numerous translations from the classics, including the *Odyssey* (1781), the *Iliad* (1793), Ovid (1798), the whole of Vergil (1799), and Hesiod (1806). 'Voss is the author of a number of neat and elegant poems, which are universally read and admired. But it is to his incomparable translations of Homer and Virgil, that he stands indebted for that high literary fame, which he so deservedly enjoys . . . Voss without degenerating into Insipidity and servile imitation has so scrupulously adhered to the sense of his author, that he has preserved the exact metre, and even the very number of verses of the original.' ('Living German Literati', *Monthly Magazine*, 5 (1798), 282)

⁹⁰¹ A play by Gotthold Ephraim Lessing (1729–81), *Nathan der Weise* ['Nathan the Wise'] (1779). Set in the Holy Land during the Third Crusade, its title character is a wise Jewish merchant, Nathan, who meets the virtuous Sultan Saladin and a noble Templar knight. The play's message of religious tolerance, and its liberal attitude to Islam and Judaism, led to its performance being forbidden by the Church during Lessing's lifetime.

⁹⁰² *Die Leiden des jungen Werthers* ['The Sorrows of Young Werther'] (1774), Goethe's short, maudlin novel of unrequited love and suicide.

better than any of his dramas: he preferred the first written to the rest of Goethe's dramas. Schiller's "Robbers" he found so extravagant, that he could not read it. I spoke of the scene of the setting sun.⁹⁰³ He did not know it. He said Schiller could not live. He thought Don Carlos the best of his dramas; but said that the plot was inextricable.— It was evident he knew little of Schiller's works: indeed he said, he could not read them. Burgher⁹⁰⁴ he said, was a true poet, and would live; that Schiller, on the contrary, must soon be forgotten; that he gave himself up to the imitation of Shakespeare, who often was extravagant, but that Schiller was ten thousand times more so. He spoke very slightly of Kotzebue,⁹⁰⁵ as an immoral author in the first place, and next, as deficient in power. At Vienna, said he, they are transported with him; but we do not reckon the people of Vienna either the wisest or the wittiest people of Germany. He said Wieland⁹⁰⁶ was a charming author, and a sovereign master of his own language: that in this respect Goethe could not be compared to him, nor indeed could any body else. He said that his fault was to be fertile to exuberance. I told him the Oberon had just been translated into English. He asked me, if I was not delighted with the poem. I answered, that I thought the story began to flag about the seventh or eighth book; and

⁹⁰³ Schiller, *Die Räuber* (1781), Act 3, scene 2:

Grimm: Our wine-cantines are empty long ago. – How glorious, how majestic,
yonder setting sun!

Moor: (*Lost in contemplation*) 'Tis thus the hero falls; – 'tis thus he dies, – in godlike
majesty!

Grimm: The sight affects you, Sir!

Moor: When I was yet a boy, – a mere child, – it was my favorite thought, – my
wish to live like him! (*pointing to the sun.*) Like him to die. (*Suppressing his anguish.*)

'Twas an idle thought, a boy's conceit! –

Grimm: It was so.

Moor: (*Pulling his hat over his eyes*) There was a time. – Leave me, my friends – alone

–
Razman: Zounds! what is the matter with him? – Is he ill?

Moor: There was a time, when I could not go to sleep, if I had forgot my prayers! –

Grimm: Have you lost your senses? What! yet a schoolboy! – 'Twere fit indeed
such thoughts should vex you!

Moor: (*Resting his head on Grimm's bosom*) Brother! Brother!

Grimm: Come, come – be not a child, I beg it of you –

Moor: A child! Oh that I were a child once more!

(*The Robbers, a Tragedy. Translated from the German of Frederick Schiller* (London 1792),
108–9)

⁹⁰⁴ Gottfried August Bürger (1747–94), whose ballad 'Lenore' (1773) had been widely translated into French and English.

⁹⁰⁵ August Friedrich Ferdinand von Kotzebue (1761–1819), playwright.

⁹⁰⁶ Christoph Martin Wieland (1733–1813). Coleridge began translating his romantic epic *Oberon* (1780) in November 1797, although he did not complete the task. An English version by William Sotheby appeared in 1798.

observed that it was unworthy of a man of genius to make the interest of a long poem turn entirely upon animal gratification. He seemed at first disposed to excuse this by saying, that there are different subjects for poetry, and that poets are not willing to be restricted in their choice. I answered, that I thought the *passion* of love as well suited to the purposes of poetry as any other passion; but that it was a cheap way of pleasing to fix the attention of the reader through a long poem on the mere *appetite*. Well! but, said he, you see, that such poems please every body. I answered, that it was the province of a great poet to raise people up to his own level, not to descend to theirs. He agreed, and confessed, that on no account whatsoever would he have written a work like the *Oberon*. He spoke in raptures of Wieland's style, and pointed out the passage where Retzia is delivered of her child, as exquisitely beautiful. I said that I did not perceive any very striking passages; but that I made allowance for the imperfections of a translation. Of the thefts of Wieland, he said, they were so exquisitely managed, that the greatest writers might be proud to steal as he did. He considered the books and fables of old romance writers in the light of the ancient mythology, as a sort of common property, from which a man was free to take whatever he could make a good use of. An Englishman had presented him with the odes of Collins, which he had read with pleasure. He knew little or nothing of Grey, except his *Essay in the churchyard*.⁹⁰⁷ He complained of the fool in *Lear*. I observed, that he seemed to give a terrible wildness to the distress; but still he complained. He asked whether it was not allowed, that Pope had written rhymed poetry with more skill than any of our writers—I said I preferred Dryden, because his couplets had greater variety in their movement. He thought my reason a good one; but asked whether the rhymes of Pope were not more exact. This question I understood as applying to the final terminations, and observed to him that I believed it was the case; but that I thought it was easy to excuse some inaccuracy in the final sounds, if the general sweep of the verse was superior. I told him that we were not so exact with regard to the final endings of the lines as the French. He did not seem to know that we made no distinction between masculine and feminine (i.e. single or double,) rhymes: at least he put inquiries to me on this subject. He seemed to think that no language could ever be so far formed as that it might not be enriched by idioms borrowed from another tongue. I

⁹⁰⁷ Thomas Gray's 'Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard' (1751) is a poem so famous it is inconceivable that this version of the title is Wordsworth's error. Presumably it records Klopstock's ignorance.

said this was a very dangerous practice; and added that I thought Milton had often injured both his prose and verse by taking this liberty too frequently. I recommended to him the prose works of Dryden as models of pure and native English. I was treading upon tender ground, as I have reason to suppose that he has himself liberally indulged in the practice.

The same day I dined at Mr. Klopstock's, where I had the pleasure of a third interview with the poet. We talked principally about indifferent things. I asked him what he thought of Kant. He said that his reputation was much on the decline in Germany. That for his own part he was not surprised to find it so, as the works of Kant were to him utterly incomprehensible—that he had often been pestered by the Kantians; but was rarely in the practice of arguing with them. His custom was to produce the book, open it and point to a passage, and beg they would explain it. This they ordinarily attempted to do by substituting their own ideas. I do not want, I say, an explanation of your own ideas, but of the passage which is before us. In this way I generally bring the dispute to an immediate conclusion. He spoke of Wolfe⁹⁰⁸ as the first Metaphysician they had in Germany. Wolfe had followers; but they could hardly be called a sect, and luckily till the appearance of Kant, about fifteen years ago, Germany had not been pestered by any sect of philosophers whatsoever; but that each man had separately pursued his enquiries uncontrolled by the dogmas of a Master. Kant had appeared ambitious to be the founder of a sect, that he had succeeded: but that the Germans were now coming to their senses again. That Nicolai and Engel⁹⁰⁹ had in different ways contributed to disenchant the nation; but above all the incomprehensibility of the philosopher and his philosophy. He seemed pleased to hear, that as yet Kant's doctrines had not met with many admirers in England—did not doubt but that we had too much wisdom to be duped by a writer who set at defiance the common sense and common understandings of men. We talked of tragedy. He seemed to rate highly the power of exciting tears—I said that nothing was more

⁹⁰⁸ Christian Wolff (1679–1754), generally considered the most significant German philosopher between Leibniz and Kant. He produced work on almost every scholarly subject, all argued according to his distinctive 'demonstrative-deductive mathematical method'.

⁹⁰⁹ Christoph Friedrich Nicolai (1733–1811), German author and bookseller, who wrote various works as well as editing the *Briefe, die neueste Literatur betreffend* (1759–65) and the *Allgemeine deutsche Bibliothek* (1765–92), which included attacks on various prominent figures in German thought and literature. Johann Jakob Engel (1741–1802) was another German author. His work on aesthetic philosophy, *Anfangsgrunde einer Theorie der Dichtungsarten* (1783), takes a non-Kantian line.

easy than to deluge an audience, that it was done every day by the meanest writers.”

I must remind you, my friend, first, that these notes &c. are not intended as specimens of Klopstock's intellectual power, or even “*colloquial prowess*,”⁹¹⁰ to judge of which by an accidental conversation, and this with strangers, and those too foreigners, would be not only unreasonable, but calumnious. Secondly, I attribute little other interest to the remarks than what is derived from the celebrity of the person who made them. Lastly, if you ask me, whether I have read the *Messiah*, and what I think of it? I answer—as yet the first four books only: and as to my opinion (the reasons of which hereafter) you may guess it from what I could not help muttering to myself, when the good pastor this morning told me, that Klopstock was the German Milton—“a very *German* Milton indeed!!!”—Heaven preserve you, and

S. T. COLERIDGE.

⁹¹⁰ ‘When I called upon Dr. Johnson next morning, I found him highly satisfied with his colloquial prowess the preceding evening. “Well, (said he,) we had good talk.” Boswell. “Yes, Sir; you tossed and gored several persons.”’ (James Boswell, *The life of Samuel Johnson*, L. L.D. (1791), 307)

CHAPTER 23

Quid quod præfatione præmunierim libellum, quâ conor omnem offendiculi ansam præcidere? Neque quicquam addubito, quin ea candidis omnibus faciat satis. Quid autem facias istis, qui vel ob ingenii pertinaciam sibi satisfieri nolint, vel stupidiores sint, quam ut satisfactionem intelligant? Nam quem ad modum Simonides dixit, Thessalos hebetiores esse, quam ut possint a se decipi, ita quosdam videas stupidiores quam ut placari queant. Adhæc, non mirum est, invenire quod calumniatur qui nihil aliud quærit, nisi quod calumniatur. ERASMUS *ad Dorpium, Theologum*.⁹¹¹

In the rifacciamento of THE FRIEND, I have inserted extracts from the *Conciones ad Populum*,⁹¹² printed, though scarcely published, in the year 1795, in the very heat and height of my anti-ministerial enthusiasm: these in proof that my principles of *politics* have sustained no change.—In the present chapter, I have annexed to my Letters from Germany, with particular reference to that, which contains a disquisition on the modern drama, a critique on the Tragedy of Bertram, written within the last twelve months: in proof, that I have been as falsely charged with any fickleness in my principles of *taste*.—The letter was written to a friend:⁹¹³ and the apparent abruptness with which it begins, is owing to the omission of the introductory sentences.

⁹¹¹ ‘What good would the preface to my little book do if I tried to remove the handle for fear of causing offence? I do not doubt it will satisfy all who approach it candidly. But what to do about those who, out of native stubbornness, or sheer stupidity, refuse to understand how to be satisfied? For just as Simonides said, that “the Thessalians are too sluggish-witted for me to be able to deceive them”, so you may find that some people are too stupid to be appeased. Besides, it is not surprising that a person who looks only for things to reproach finds only things to reproach. ERASMUS to Dorpius Theologian.’ This 1511 letter to Martin Dorpius by the great Renaissance humanist Desiderius Erasmus (1466–1536) was printed with the first edition of the latter’s *Moriae encomium* [‘Praise of Folly’] (1511).

⁹¹² Coleridge’s pamphlet, *Conciones ad populum: Or addresses to the people. By S. T. Coleridge* (1795), runs to sixty-eight pages.

⁹¹³ In fact Coleridge wrote five letters (amalgamated in this chapter) to the editor of the *Courier* newspaper (29 August, 7 September, 9 September, 10 September and 11 September 1816) with a view to them being published. The letters laid out Coleridge’s reaction to the recently published Gothic tragedy *Bertram, or the Castle of St Aldobrand* by Irish writer Robert Maturin (1782–1824).

You remember, my dear Sir, that Mr. Whitbread,⁹¹⁴ shortly before his death, proposed to the assembled subscribers of Drury-Lane Theatre, that the concern should be farmed to some responsible individual under certain conditions and limitations: and that his proposal was rejected, not without indignation, as subversive of the main object, for the attainment of which the enlightened and patriotic assemblage of philo-dramatists had been induced to risk their subscriptions. Now this object was avowed to be no less than the redemption of the British stage not only from horses, dogs, elephants, and the like zoological rarities, but also from the more pernicious barbarisms and Kotzebuisms⁹¹⁵ in morals and taste. Drury-Lane was to be restored to its former classical renown; Shakspeare, Johnson, and Otway, with the expurgated muses of Vanburgh, Congreve, and Wycherley,⁹¹⁶ were to be re-inaugurated in their rightful dominion over British audiences; and the Herculean process was to commence, by exterminating the speaking monsters imported from the banks of the Danube, compared with which their mute relations, the emigrants from Exeter 'Change, and Polito (late Pidcock's) show-carts,⁹¹⁷ were tame and inoffensive. Could an heroic project, at once so refined and so arduous, be consistently entrusted to, could its success be rationally expected from, a mercenary manager, at whose critical quarantine the *lucri bonus ordor*⁹¹⁸ would conciliate a bill of health to the plague in person? No! As the work proposed, such must be the work-masters. Rank, fortune, liberal education, and (their natural accompaniments, or consequences) critical discernment, delicate tact, disinterestedness,

⁹¹⁴ Samuel Whitbread (1758–1815) philanthropist, radical MP, and for a time leader of the opposition in the Commons. He hoped for Napoleonic reforms in England, and was convinced the French would triumph in the continental war. When Napoleon abdicated he became depressed, eventually committing suicide. Prior to his death he was involved in running the theatre at Drury Lane.

⁹¹⁵ Coleridge recorded his low opinion of German dramatist August von Kotzebue (1761–1819) in 'Satyrane's Letters', above.

⁹¹⁶ Bowdlerised versions of plays by Restoration dramatists like John Vanbrugh (1664–1726), William Congreve (1670–1729) and William Wycherley (1640–1716) were popular in London theatres at the end of the eighteenth and beginning of the nineteenth centuries.

⁹¹⁷ The Exeter Exchange (or 'Change) was a zoo on the Strand (Byron visited in 1813 and reported seeing lions, tigers and a hippopotamus) that also housed 'Gilbert Pidcock's Museum'. On Pidcock's death in 1810 the venue was bought by Stephen Polito, whose advertisements boasted 'Royal Menagerie, Exeter 'Change, Strand, Revived and Improved by S. Polito, the First Emporium of Living Curiosities in the Known World!'

⁹¹⁸ 'Good profitable order'. Adapting *lucri bonus odor* ['good odour of profit'] (Juvenal, 14:204). Modern editions of the *Biographia* all change Coleridge's phrasing to the Juvenalian original, but both the original *Courier* letter and the first edition of the *Biographia* print 'ordor', which makes reasonable sense in this context.

unsuspected morals, notorious patriotism, and tried Macænaship,⁹¹⁹ these were the recommendations that influenced the votes of the proprietary subscribers of Drury Lane Theatre, these the motives that occasioned the election of its Supreme Committee of Management. This circumstance alone would have excited a strong interest in the public mind, respecting the first production of the Tragic Muse which had been announced under such auspices, and had passed the ordeal of such judgements: and the Tragedy, on which you have requested my judgement, was the work on which the great expectations, justified by so many causes, were doomed at length to settle.

But before I enter on the examination of *Bertram, or The Castle of St. Aldebrand*, I shall interpose a few words, on the phrase *German Drama*, which I hold to be altogether a misnomer. At the time of Lessing, the German stage, such as it was, appears to have been a flat and servile copy of the French. It was Lessing who first introduced the name and the works of Shakespeare to the admiration of the Germans; and I should not perhaps go too far, if I add, that it was Lessing who first proved to all thinking men, even to Shakespeare's own countrymen, the true nature of his apparent irregularities. These, he demonstrated, were deviations only from the *Accidents* of the Greek Tragedy; and from such accidents as hung a heavy weight on the wings of the Greek Poets, and narrowed their flight within the limits of what we may call the *Heroic Opera*. He proved, that in all the essentials of art, no less than in the truth of nature, the Plays of Shakespeare were incomparably more coincident with the principles of Aristotle, than the productions of Corneille and Racine, notwithstanding the boasted regularity of the latter. Under these convictions were Lessing's own dramatic works composed. Their deficiency is in depth and imagination: their excellence is in the construction of the plot; the good sense of the sentiments; the sobriety of the morals; and the high polish of the diction and dialogue. In short, his dramas are the very antipodes of all those which it has been the fashion of late years at once to abuse and enjoy, under the name of the German Drama. Of this latter, Schiller's *Robbers* was the earliest specimen; the first fruits of his youth (I had almost said of his boyhood) and as such, the pledge, and promise of no ordinary genius. Only as *such*, did the maturer judgement of the author tolerate the Play. During his whole life he expressed himself concerning this production with more than needful asperity, as a monster not less

⁹¹⁹ Maecenas was the wealthy Roman patron of the poet Vergil. Following Whitbread's suicide in 1815, a committee of prominent men took over management of the theatre, including Thomas Dibden, Alexander Rae, Lord Byron, Lord Essex, George Lamb and Douglas Kinnard.

offensive to good taste, than to sound morals; and in his latter years his indignation at the unwonted popularity of the *Robbers* seduced him into the *contrary* extremes, viz. a studied feebleness of interest (as far as the interest was to be derived from incidents and the excitement of curiosity); a diction elaborately metrical; the affectation of rhymes; and the pedantry of the chorus.

But to understand the true character of the *Robbers*, and of the countless imitations which were its spawn, I must inform you, or at least call to your recollection, that about that time, and for some years before it, three of the most popular books in the German language were, the translations of *Young's Night Thoughts*, *Harvey's Meditations*, and *Richardson's Clarissa Harlow*.⁹²⁰ Now we have only to combine the bloated style and peculiar rhythm of Harvey, which is poetic only on account of its utter unfitness for prose, and might as appropriately be called prosaic, from its utter unfitness for poetry; we have only, I repeat, to combine these Harveyisms with the strained thoughts, the figurative metaphysics and solemn epigrams of Young on the one hand; and with the loaded sensibility, the minute detail, the morbid consciousness of every thought and feeling in the whole flux and reflux of the mind, in short the self-involution and dreamlike continuity of Richardson on the other hand; and then to add the horrific incidents, and mysterious villains, (geniuses of supernatural intellect, if you will take the authors' words for it, but on a level with the meanest ruffians of the condemned cells, if we are to judge by their actions and contrivances)—to add the ruined castles, the dungeons, the trap-doors, the skeletons, the flesh-and-blood ghosts, and the perpetual moonshine of a modern author, (themselves the literary brood of the *Castle of Otranto*,⁹²¹ the translations of which, with the imitations and improvements aforesaid, were about that time beginning to make as much noise in Germany as their originals were making in England),—and as the compound of these ingredients duly mixed, you will recognize the so-called *German* drama. The *Olla Podrida*⁹²² thus cooked up, was denounced, by the best critics in Germany, as the mere cramps of weakness, and orgasms of a sickly imagination on

⁹²⁰ The sententious poetry of *Night Thoughts* (1742–5) by Edward Young (1683–1765) was very popular in its day, and had been translated into German in 1752. The prose epistolary (with inset poems) *Meditations among the Tombs, tending to Reform the Vices of the Age and to promote Evangelical Holiness* (1748), by James Hervey (1714–58) was translated into German in 1755, and Richardson's enormous novel *Clarissa* (1748) in 1748–52.

⁹²¹ Horace Walpole's originary Gothic novel, first published in 1763 and much reprinted and imitated.

⁹²² A Spanish mixed stew.

the part of the author, and the lowest provocation of torpid feeling on that of the readers. The old blunder however, concerning the irregularity and wildness of Shakespeare, in which the German did but echo the French, who again were but the echoes of our own critics, was still in vogue, and Shakespeare was quoted as authority for the most anti-Shakespearean Drama. We have indeed two poets who wrote as one, near the age of Shakespeare, to whom (as the worst characteristic of their writings), the Coryphæus⁹²³ of the present drama may challenge the honour of being a poor relation, or impoverished descendant. For if we would charitably consent to forget the comic humour, the wit, the felicities of style, in other words, *all* the poetry, and nine-tenths of all the genius of Beaumont and Fletcher, that which would remain becomes a Kotzebue.

The so-called *German Drama*, therefore, is *English* in its *origin*, *English* in its *materials*, and *English* by re-adoption; and till we can prove that Kotzebue, or any of the whole breed of Kotzebues, whether dramatists or romantic writers, or writers of romantic dramas, were ever admitted to any other shelf in the libraries of well-educated Germans than were occupied by their originals, and apes' apes in their mother country, we should submit to carry our own brat on our own shoulders; or rather consider it as a lack-grace returned from transportation with such improvements only in growth and manners as young transported convicts usually come home with.

I know nothing that contributes more to a clear insight into the true nature of any literary phenomenon, than the comparison of it with some elder production, the *likeness* of which is *striking*, yet only *apparent*: while the *difference* is *real*. In the present case this opportunity is furnished us, by the old Spanish play, entitled *Atheista Fulminato*,⁹²⁴ formerly, and perhaps still, acted in the churches and monasteries of Spain, and which, under various names (*Don Juan*, *the Libertine*, &c.) has had its day of favour in every country throughout Europe. A popularity so extensive, and of a work so grotesque and extravagant, claims and merits philosophical attention and investigation. The first point to be noticed is, that the play is throughout *imaginative*.

⁹²³ In Greek tragedy the 'Coryphaeus' was the Chorus leader. Coleridge is referring to Kotzebue.

⁹²⁴ Scholars now think there never was any such play, but Coleridge can be forgiven for believing there was. 'The incident . . . is the same with the catastrophe of Don John in *The Libertine*, and was probably borrowed from the same original, viz. an Italian play, called *Il Atheisto Fulminato*.' (*Biographia Dramatica* (3 vols, 1812), 3:113). At any rate, his comments here relate first to the 'Don Juan' story in general, and later to Thomas Shadwell's eighteenth-century specific version of it, *The Libertine* (1676).

Nothing of it belongs to the real world, but the names of the places and persons. The comic parts, equally with the tragic; the living, equally with the defunct characters, are creatures of the brain; as little amenable to the rules of ordinary probability, as the *Satan* of *Paradise Lost*, or the Caliban of the *Tempest*, and therefore to be understood and judged of as impersonated *abstractions*. Rank, fortune, wit, talent, acquired knowledge, and liberal accomplishments, with beauty of person, vigorous health, and constitutional hardihood,—all these advantages, elevated by the habits and sympathies of noble birth and national character, are supposed to have combined in *Don Juan*, so as to give him the means of carrying into all its *practical* consequences the doctrine of a godless nature, as the sole ground and efficient cause not only of all things, events, and appearances, but likewise of all our thoughts, sensations, impulses and actions. Obedience to nature is the only virtue: the gratification of the passions and appetites her only dictate: each individual's self-will the sole organ through which nature utters her commands, and

Self-contradiction is the only wrong!
 For by the laws of spirit, in the right
 Is every individual character
 That acts in strict consistence with itself.⁹²⁵

That speculative opinions, however impious and daring they may be, are not always followed by correspondent conduct, is most true, as well as that they can scarcely in any instance be *systematically* realized, on account of their unsuitableness to human nature and to the institutions of society. It can be hell, only where it is *all* hell: and a separate world of devils is necessary for the existence of any one complete devil. But on the other hand it is no less clear, nor, with the biography of Carrier⁹²⁶ and his fellow atheists before us, can it be denied without wilful blindness, that the (so called) *system of nature*, (i.e. materialism, with the utter rejection of moral responsibility, of a present providence, and of both present and future retribution) may influence the characters and actions of individuals, and even of communities, to a degree that almost does away the distinction between men and devils, and will make the page of the future historian resemble the narration of a madman's dreams. It is not the *wickedness* of *Don Juan*, therefore,

⁹²⁵ Schiller, *The Piccolomini, or the first part of Wallenstein* (1798), 4:7:191–4; Coleridge's own translation.

⁹²⁶ French revolutionary and atheist Jean-Baptiste Carrier (1756–94) persecuted members of the clergy with an especial severity. In one incident he ordered several hundred priests to be drowned in the Loire at Nantes in 1793.

which constitutes the character an *abstraction*, and removes it from the rules of probability; but the rapid succession of the correspondent acts and incidents, his intellectual superiority, and the splendid accumulation of his gifts and desirable qualities, as co-existent with *entire* wickedness in one and the same person. But this likewise is the very circumstance which gives to this strange play its charm and universal interest. *Don Juan* is, from beginning to end, an *intelligible* character: as much so as the *Satan* of Milton. The poet asks only of the reader, what as a poet he is privileged to ask: viz. that sort of negative faith in the existence of such a being, which we willingly give to productions *professedly ideal*, and a disposition to the same state of feeling, as that with which we contemplate the *idealized* figures of the Apollo Belvedere, and the Farnese Hercules. What the Hercules is to the *eye* in *corporeal* strength, *Don Juan* is to the *mind* in strength of *character*. The ideal consists in the happy balance of the generic with the individual. The former makes the character representative and symbolical, therefore instructive; because, *mutatis mutandis*, it is applicable to whole classes of men. The latter gives its *living* interest; for nothing *lives* or is *real*, but as definite and individual. To understand this compleatly, the reader need only recollect the specific state of his feelings, when in looking at a picture of the historic (more properly of the poetic or heroic) class, he objects to a particular figure as being too much of a *portrait*; and this interruption of his complacency he feels without the least reference to, or the least acquaintance with, any person in real life whom he might recognize in this figure. It is enough that such a figure is not *ideal*: and therefore not ideal, because one of the two factors or elements of the *ideal* is in excess. A similar and more powerful objection he would feel towards a set of figures which were *mere* abstractions, like those of Cipriani,⁹²⁷ and what have been called Greek forms and faces, i.e. outlines drawn according to a recipe. *These* again are not *ideal*; because in these the other element is in excess. “*Forma formans per formam formatam translucens*,”⁹²⁸ is the definition and perfection of *ideal* art.

⁹²⁷ Italian mannerist painter and engraver, Giovanni Battista Cipriani (1727–85).

⁹²⁸ ‘The forming form shining through the formed form’. Coleridge perhaps takes this from the distinction that German philosopher Johannes-Theodorus Law makes between God and himself: ‘Mihi Deus natura naturans, ego natura naturata; Ratio ratiocinans, ego ratio ratiocinatus; Forma formans, ego forma formata . . . Sol, ego radius’ [‘My God is the naturing nature; I am the natural natured; He the reasoning reason, I the reasoned reason; He the forming form, I the formed form . . . He the Sun, I the radius’] (Law, *Meditationes Philosophicae de Deo, Mundo et Homine* (1717), 42). The point here is to elide the differences between the Eternal ‘I AM’ and the individual being, such that the former is seen shining through the latter. The 1847 edition of the *Biographia* adds a footnote, presumably taken from a Coleridge marginalium: ‘Better

This excellence is so happily achieved in the *Don Juan*, that it is capable of interesting without poetry, nay, even without words, as in our pantomime of that name.⁹²⁹ We see clearly how the character is formed; and the very extravagance of the incidents, and the super-human *entireness* of *Don Juan's* agency, prevents the wickedness from shocking our minds to any painful degree. (We do not *believe* it enough for this effect; no, not even with that kind of temporary and negative belief or acquiescence which I have described above.) Meantime the qualities of his character are too desirable, too flattering to our pride and our wishes, not to make up on this side as much additional faith as was lost on the other. There is no danger (thinks the spectator or reader) of *my* becoming such a monster of iniquity as *Don Juan!* *I* never shall be an atheist! *I* shall never disallow all distinction between right and wrong! *I* have not the least inclination to be so outrageous a drawcansir⁹³⁰ in my love affairs! But to possess such a power of captivating and enchanting the affections of the other sex! to be capable of inspiring in a charming and even a virtuous woman, a love so deep, and so entirely personal to *me!* that even my worst vices, (if I *were* vicious) even my cruelty and perfidy, (if I *were* cruel and perfidious) could not eradicate the passion! To be so loved for my *own self*, that even with a distinct knowledge of my character, she yet died to save me! this, sir, takes hold of two sides of our nature, the better and the worse. For the heroic disinterestedness, to which love can transport a woman, can not be contemplated without an honourable emotion of reverence towards womanhood: and on the other hand, it is among the miseries, and abides in the dark ground-work of our nature, to crave an outward confirmation of that *something* within us, which is our *very self*, that something, not *made up* of our qualities and relations, but itself the supporter and substantial basis of all these. Love *me*, and not my qualities, may be a vicious and an insane wish, but it is not a wish wholly without a meaning.

thus: *Forma specifica per formam individualem translucens*: or better yet—*Species individualizata, sive Individuum cuiuslibet Speciei determinate in omni parte correspondens et quasi versione quadam eum interpretans et repetens.* ['The specific form [or 'the form of the species'] shining through the individual form . . . the species individualised, or the individual corresponding to a particular species in every respect, and as with a type of translation interpreting it and repeating it.']

⁹²⁹ Garrick's production of *Don Juan, or the Libertine Destroyed*, which was often revived at Drury Lane and elsewhere.

⁹³⁰ Drawcansir is a character in the play-within-a-play in Buckingham's *Rehearsal* (1671). He is an aggressive boaster who declares 'I drink, I huff, I strut, look big and stare, / And all this I can do, because I dare'. He ends up killing all the combatants in a battle, on both sides, 'sparing none'.

Without power, virtue would be insufficient and incapable of revealing its being. It would resemble the magic transformation of Tasso's heroine into a tree, in which she could only groan and bleed.⁹³¹ (Hence power is necessarily an object of our desire and of our admiration.) But of all power, that of the mind is, on every account, the grand desideratum of human ambition. We shall be as Gods in knowledge,⁹³² was and must have been the *first* temptation: and the co-existence of great intellectual lordship with guilt has never been adequately represented without exciting the strongest interest, and for this reason, that in this bad and heterogeneous co-ordination we can contemplate the intellect of man more exclusively as a separate self-subsistence, than in its proper state of subordination to his own conscience, or to the will of an infinitely superior being.

This is the sacred charm of Shakespeare's male characters in general. They are all cast in the mould of Shakespear's own gigantic intellect; and this is the open attraction of his *Richard, Iago, Edmund, &c.* in particular. But again; of all intellectual power, that of superiority to the fear of the invisible world is the most dazzling. Its influence is abundantly proved by the one circumstance, that it can bribe us into a voluntary submission of our better knowledge, into suspension of all our judgment derived from constant experience, and enable us to peruse with the liveliest interest the wildest tales of ghosts, wizards, genii, and secret talismans. On this propensity, so deeply rooted in our nature, a specific *dramatic* probability may be raised by a true poet, if the whole of his work be in harmony: a *dramatic* probability, sufficient for dramatic pleasure, even when the component characters and incidents border on impossibility. The poet does not require us to be awake and believe; he solicits us only to yield ourselves to a dream; and this too with our eyes open, and with our judgment *perdue* behind the curtain, ready to awaken us at the first motion of our will: and meantime, only, not to *dis*believe. And in such a state of mind, who

⁹³¹ Tasso, *Gerusalemme Liberata*, Book 13, stanza 38:

At length, resolv'd, his shining steel he [Tancred] drew,
And struck the tree, when, dreadful to his view!
The wounded bark a sanguine current shed,
And stain'd the grassy turf with streaming red.
With horror fill'd, yet fix'd th'event to know,
Again his arm renew'd the forceful blow:
When from the trunk was heard a human groan,
And plaintive accents in a female tone.

(*Jerusalem Delivered: An Heroic Poem. Translated from the Italian of Torquato Tasso by John Hoole* (2 vols, 1797), 2:67)

⁹³² Genesis 3:5.

but must be impressed with the cool intrepidity of *Don John* on the appearance of his father's ghost:

GHOST.—Monster! behold these wounds!

D. JOHN.—I do! They were well meant and well performed, I see.

GHOST.——Repent, repent of all thy villanies.

My clamorous blood to heaven for vengeance cries,

Heaven will pour out his judgments on you all.

Hell gapes for you, for you each fiend doth call,

And hourly waits your unrepenting fall.

You with eternal horrors they'll torment,

Except of all your crimes you suddenly repent. (Ghost sinks.)

D. JOHN.—Farewell, thou art a foolish ghost. Repent, quoth he! what could this mean? Our senses are all in a mist sure.

D. ANTONIO.—(one of D. Juan's reprobate companions.) They are not! 'Twas a ghost.

D. LOPEZ.—(another reprobate.) I ne'er believed those foolish tales before.

D. JOHN.—Come! 'Tis no matter. Let it be what it will, it must be natural.

D. ANT.—And nature is unalterable in us too.

D. JOHN.—'Tis true! The nature of a ghost can not change our's.⁹³³

Who also can deny a portion of sublimity to the tremendous consistency with which he stands out the last fearful trial, like a second Prometheus?

Chorus of Devils.

STATUE-GHOST.—Will you not relent and feel remorse?

D. JOHN.—Could'st thou bestow another heart on me I might. But with this heart I have, I can not.

D. LOPEZ.—These things are prodigious.

D. ANTON.—I have a sort of grudging to relent, but something holds me back.

D. LOP.—If we could, 'tis now too late. I will not.

D. ANT.—We defy thee!

GHOST.—Perish ye impious wretches, go and find the punishments laid up in store for you!

(Thunder and lightning. D. Lop. and D. Ant. are swallowed up.)

⁹³³ Shadwell, *The Libertine* (1676), 2:1.

GHOST to D. JOHN.—Behold their dreadful fates, and know that thy last moment's come!

D. JOHN.—Think not to fright me, foolish ghost; I'll break your marble body in pieces and pull down your horse.

(Thunder and lightning—chorus of devils, &c.)

D. JOHN.—These things I see with wonder, but no fear.

Were all the elements to be confounded,
And shuffled all into their former chaos;
Were seas of sulphur flaming round about me,
And all mankind roaring within those fires,
I could not fear, or feel the least remorse.

To the last instant I would dare thy power.

Here I stand firm, and all thy threats condemn.

Thy murderer (*to the ghost of one whom he had murdered*)

Stands here! Now do thy worst!

(*He is swallowed up in a cloud of fire.*)⁹³⁴

In fine the character of *Don John* consists in the union of every thing desirable to human nature, as *means*, and which therefore by the well known law of association become at length desirable on their own account. On their own account, and in their own dignity they are here displayed, as being employed to *ends* so *unhuman*, that in the effect, they appear almost as *means* without an *end*. The ingredients too are mixed in the happiest proportion, so as to uphold and relieve each other—more especially in that constant interpoise of wit, gaiety, and social generosity, which prevents the criminal, even in his most atrocious moments, from sinking into the mere ruffian, as far at least, as our *imagination* sits in judgment. Above all, the fine suffusion through the whole, with the characteristic manners and feelings, of a highly bred gentleman gives life to the drama. Thus having invited the *statue-ghost* of the governor whom he had murdered, to supper, which invitation the marble ghost accepted by a nod of the head, *Don John* has prepared a banquet.

D. JOHN.—Some wine, sirrah! Here's to Don Pedro's ghost—he should have been welcome.

D. LOP.—The rascal is afraid of you after death.

(*One knocks hard at the door.*)

D. JOHN.—(*to the servant*)—Rise and do your duty.

SERV.—Oh the devil, the devil! (*marble ghost enters.*)

⁹³⁴ *The Libertine*, 5:2.

D. JOHN.—Ha! 'tis the ghost! Let's rise and receive him! Come, Governor, you are welcome, sit there; if we had thought you would have come, we would have staid for you.

* * * * *

Here, Governor, your health! Friends, put it about! Here's excellent meat, taste of this ragout. Come, I'll help you, come eat, and let old quarrels be forgotten.

(The ghost threatens him with vengeance.)

D. JOHN.—We are too much confirmed—curse on this dry discourse. Come, here's to your mistress, you had one when you were living: not forgetting your sweet sister. *(devils enter.)*

D. JOHN.—Are these some of your retinue? Devils say you? I'm sorry I have no burnt brandy to treat 'em with, that's drink fit for devils &c.⁹³⁵

Nor is the scene from which we quote interesting, in *dramatic* probability alone; it is susceptible likewise of a sound moral; of a moral that has more than common claims on the notice of a too numerous class, who are ready to receive the qualities of gentlemanly courage, and scrupulous honor (in all the recognised laws of honor,) as the *substitutes* of virtue, instead of its *ornaments*.⁹³⁶ This, indeed, is the moral value of the play at large, and that which places it at a world's distance from the spirit of modern jacobinism. The latter introduces to us clumsy copies of these showy instrumental qualities, in order to *reconcile* us to vice and want of principle; while the *Atheista Fulminato* presents an exquisite portraiture of the same qualities, in all their gloss and glow, but presents them for the sole purpose of displaying their hollowness, and in order to put us on our guard by demonstrating their utter indifference to vice and virtue, whenever these and the like accomplishments are contemplated for themselves alone.

Eighteen years ago I observed,⁹³⁷ that the whole secret of the modern jacobinical drama, (which, and not the German, is its appropriate designation,) and of all its popularity, consists in the confusion and subversion of the natural order of things in their causes and effects: namely, in the excitement of surprise by representing the qualities of liberality, refined feeling, and a nice sense of honour (those things

⁹³⁵ *The Libertine*, 4:4.

⁹³⁶ Coleridge quotes Edmund Burke's famous speech in the Commons at the impeachment of Warren Hastings (16 June 1794): 'May you stand, not as the substitute for virtue, but as an ornament of virtue.'

⁹³⁷ Coleridge refers to the letter published in *The Friend*, incorporated as the second of 'Satyrane's Letters' above.

rather which pass amongst us for such) in persons and in classes where experience teaches us least to expect them; and by rewarding with all the sympathies which are the due of virtue, those criminals whom law, reason, and religion have excommunicated from our esteem.

This of itself would lead me back to *Bertram*, or the *Castle of St. Aldobrand*; but, in my own mind, this tragedy was brought into connection with *The Libertine*, (Shadwell's adaptation of the *Atheista Fulminato* to the English stage in the reign of Charles the Second,) by the fact, that our modern drama is taken, in the substance of it, from the first scene of the third act of *The Libertine*. But with what palpable superiority of judgment in the original! Earth and hell, men and spirits are up in arms against *Don John*: the two former acts of the play have not only prepared us for the supernatural, but accustomed us to the prodigious. It is, therefore, neither more nor less than we anticipate when the *Captain* exclaims: "In all the dangers I have been, such horrors I never knew. I am quite unmanned;" and when the *Hermit* says, "that he had beheld the ocean in wildest rage, yet ne'er before saw a storm so dreadful, such horrid flashes of lightning, and such claps of thunder, were never in my remembrance."⁹³⁸ And *Don John's* burst of startling impiety is equally intelligible in its motive, as dramatic in its effect.

But what is there to account for the prodigy of the tempest at *Bertram's* shipwreck? It is a mere supernatural effect without even a hint of any supernatural agency; a prodigy without any circumstance mentioned that is prodigious; and a miracle introduced without a ground, and ending without a result. Every event and every scene of the play might have taken place as well if *Bertram* and his vessel had been driven in by a common hard gale, or from want of provisions. The first act would have indeed lost its greatest and most *sonorous* picture; a scene for the sake of a scene, without a word spoken; as *such*, therefore, (a rarity without a precedent) we must take it, and be thankful! In the opinion of not a few, it was, in every sense of the word, the best scene in the play. I am quite certain it was the most *innocent*: and the steady, quiet uprightness of the flame of the wax-candles which the monks held over the roaring billows amid the storm of wind and rain, was *really* miraculous.

The Sicilian sea coast: a convent of monks: night: a most portentous, unearthly storm: a vessel is wrecked: contrary to all human expectation, one man saves himself by his prodigious powers as a swimmer, aided by the peculiarity of his destination—

⁹³⁸ *The Libertine*, 3:1.

Prior.—All, all did perish—
 1st Monk—Change, change those drenched weeds—
 Prior—I wist not of them—every soul did perish—
 Enter 3d Monk hastily.
 3d Monk—No, there was one did battle with the storm
 With careless desperate force; full many times
 His life was won and lost, as tho' he recked not—
 No hand did aid him, and he aided none—
 Alone he breasted the broad wave, alone
 That man was saved.⁹³⁹

Well! This man is led in by the monks, supposed dripping wet, and to very natural inquiries he either remains silent, or gives most brief and surly answers, and after three or four of these half-line courtesies, “*dashing off the monks*”⁹⁴⁰ who had saved him, he exclaims in the true sublimity of our modern misanthropic heroism—

Off! ye are men—there's poison in your touch.
 But I must yield, for this (*What?*) hath left me strengthless.⁹⁴¹

So end the three first scenes. In the next (the Castle of St. Aldobrand,) we find the servants there equally frightened with this unearthly storm, though wherein it differed from other violent storms we are not told, except that Hugo informs us, page 9—

Piet.—Hugo, well met. Does e'en thy age bear
 Memory of so terrible a storm?
 Hugo—They have been frequent lately.
 Piet.—They are ever so in Sicily.
 Hugo—So it is said. But storms when I was young
 Would still pass o'er like Nature's fitful fevers,
 And rendered all more wholesome. Now their rage,
 Sent thus unseasonable and profitless,
 Speaks like the threats of heaven.⁹⁴²

A most perplexing theory of Sicilian storms is this of old Hugo! and what is very remarkable, not apparently founded on any great familiarity of his own with this troublesome article. For when Pietro asserts the “*ever more frequency*” of tempests in Sicily, the old man professes to know nothing more of the fact, but by hearsay. “So it is said.”—But why he

⁹³⁹ *Bertram*, 1:3:2–9.

⁹⁴⁰ *Bertram*, 1:3:38, stage directions.

⁹⁴¹ *Bertram*, 1:3:39–40.

⁹⁴² *Bertram*, 1:4:12–20.

assumed this storm to be unseasonable, and on what he grounded his prophecy (for the storm is still in full fury) that it would be profitless, and without the physical powers common to all other violent sea-winds in purifying the atmosphere, we are left in the dark; as well concerning the particular points in which he knew it (during its continuance) to differ from those that he had been acquainted with in his youth. We are at length introduced to the Lady Imogine, who, we learn, had not rested “*through*” the night; not on account of the tempest, for

Long ere the storm arose, her restless gestures
Forbade all hope to see her blest with sleep.⁹⁴³

Sitting at a table, and looking at a portrait, she informs us—First, that portrait-painters may make a portrait from memory—

The limner’s art may trace the absent feature.⁹⁴⁴

For surely these words could never mean, that a painter may have a person sit to him who afterwards may leave the room or perhaps the country? Secondly, that a portrait-painter can enable a mourning lady to possess a good likeness of her absent lover, but that the portrait-painter cannot, and who shall—

Restore the *scenes* in which they met and parted?⁹⁴⁵

The natural answer would have been—Why the scene-painter to be sure! But this unreasonable lady requires in addition sundry things to be painted that have neither lines nor colours—

The thoughts, the recollections sweet and bitter,
Or the Elysian dreams of lovers when they loved.⁹⁴⁶

Which last sentence must be supposed to mean; *when they were present, and making love to each other.*—Then, if this portrait could speak, it would “acquit the faith of womankind.” How? Had she remained constant? No, she has been married to another man, whose wife she now is. How then? Why, that, in spite of her marriage vow, she had continued to yearn and crave for her former lover—

This has her body, that her mind:
Which has the better bargain?⁹⁴⁷

⁹⁴³ *Bertram*, 1:4:32–3.

⁹⁴⁴ *Bertram*, 1:5:2.

⁹⁴⁵ *Bertram*, 1:5:5.

⁹⁴⁶ *Bertram*, 1:5:12.

⁹⁴⁷ William Congreve, ‘Song: Tell Me I Am No More Deceived’ (1692), 12.

The lover, however, was not contented with this precious arrangement, as we shall soon find. The lady proceeds to inform us, that during the many years of their separation, there have happened in the different parts of the world, a number of “*such things*”; even such, as in a course of years always have, and till the Millennium, doubtless always will happen somewhere or other. Yet this passage, both in language and in metre, is perhaps among the best parts of the play. The Lady’s loved companion and most esteemed attendant, Clotilda, now enters and explains this love and esteem by proving herself a most passive and dispassionate listener, as well as a brief and lucky querist, who asks by *chance*, questions that we should have thought made for the very sake of the answers. In short, she very much reminds us of those puppet-heroines, for whom the showman contrives to dialogue without any skill in ventriloquism. This, notwithstanding, is the best scene in the Play, and though crowded with solecisms, corrupt diction, and offences against metre, would possess merits sufficient to outweigh them, if we could suspend the moral sense during the perusal. It tells well and passionately the preliminary circumstances, and thus overcomes the main difficulty of most first acts, viz. that of retrospective narration. It tells us of her having been honourably addressed by a noble youth, of rank and fortune vastly superior to her own: of their mutual love, heightened on her part by gratitude; of his loss of his sovereign’s favour; his disgrace; attainder; and flight; that he (thus degraded) sank into a vile ruffian, the chieftain of a murderous banditti; and that from the habitual indulgence of the most reprobate habits and ferocious passions, he had become so changed, even in appearance, and features,

That she who bore him had recoiled from him,
Nor known the alien visage of her child,
Yet still *she* (Imogine) lov’d him.⁹⁴⁸

She is compelled by the silent entreaties of a father, perishing with “bitter shameful want on the cold earth,”⁹⁴⁹ to give her hand, with a heart thus irrecoverably pre-engaged, to Lord Aldobrand, the enemy of her lover, even to the very man who had baffled his ambitious schemes, and was, at the present time, entrusted with the execution of the sentence of death which had been passed on Bertram. Now, the proof of “woman’s love,” so industriously held forth for the sympathy, if not for the esteem of the audience,

⁹⁴⁸ *Bertram*, 1:5:67–9.

⁹⁴⁹ *Bertram*, 1:5:108–9.

consists in this, that though Bertram had become a robber and a murderer by trade, a ruffian in manners, yea, with form and features at which his *own mother* could not but “recoil,” yet she (Lady Imogine) “the wife of a most noble, honoured Lord,” estimable as a man, exemplary and affectionate as a husband, and the fond father of her only child—that she, notwithstanding all this, striking her heart, dares to say to it—

But thou art Bertram’s still, and Bertram’s ever.⁹⁵⁰

A Monk now enters, and entreats in his Prior’s name for the wonted hospitality, and “free *noble usage*” of the Castle of St. Aldobrand for some wretched ship-wrecked souls, and from this we learn, for the first time, to our infinite surprize, that notwithstanding the supernaturalness of the storm aforesaid, not only Bertram, but the whole of his gang, had been saved, by what means we are left to conjecture, and can only conclude that they had all the same desperate swimming powers, and the same saving destiny as the Hero, Bertram himself. So ends the first act, and with it the tale of the events, both those with which the Tragedy begins, and those which had occurred previous to the date of its commencement. The second displays Bertram in disturbed sleep, which the Prior who hangs over him prefers calling a “starting trance,” and with a strained voice, that would have awakened one of the seven sleepers, observes to the audience—

How the lip works! How the bare teeth *do* grind!
And beaded drops course* down his writhen brow!⁹⁵¹

The dramatic effect of which passage we not only concede to the admirers of this tragedy, but acknowledge the further advantage of preparing the audience for the most surprising series of wry faces,

* ——The big round tears
Coursed one another down his innocent nose
In piteous chase,⁹⁵²

says Shakespeare of a wounded stag hanging its head over a stream: naturally, from the position of the head, and most beautifully, from the association of the preceding image, of the chase, in which “the poor sequester’d stag from the hunter’s aim had ta’en a hurt.” In the supposed position of Bertram, the metaphor, if not false, loses all the propriety of the original.

⁹⁵⁰ *Bertram*, 1:5:122.

⁹⁵¹ *Bertram*, 2:1:4–5.

⁹⁵² Shakespeare, *As You Like It*, 2:1:8–10.

proflated mouths, and lunatic gestures that were ever “*launched*” on an audience to “**sear the sense.*”

Prior.—I will awake him from this *horrid trance*.

This is no natural sleep! Ho, *wake thee*, stranger!⁹⁵³

This is rather a whimsical application of the verb reflex we must confess, though we remember a similar transfer of the agent to the patient in a manuscript Tragedy, in which the Bertram of the piece, prostrating a man with a single blow of his fist exclaims—“Knock me thee down, then ask thee if thou liv’st.”—Well; the stranger obeys, and whatever his sleep might have been, his waking was perfectly natural, for lethargy itself could not withstand the scolding stentorship of Mr. Holland, the Prior. We next learn from the best authority, his own confession, that the misanthropic hero, whose destiny was incompatible with drowning, is Count Bertram, who not only reveals his past fortunes, but avows with open atrocity, his satanic hatred of Imogine’s Lord, and his frantic thirst of revenge; and so the raving character raves, and the scolding character scolds—and what else? Does not the Prior *act*? Does he not send for a posse of constables or thief-takers to handcuff the villain, or take him either to Bedlam or Newgate? Nothing of the kind; the author preserves the unity of character, and the scolding Prior from first to last does nothing but scold, with the exception indeed of the last scene of the last act, in which, with a most surprising revolution, he whines, weeps, and kneels to the condemned blaspheming assassin out of pure affection to the high-hearted man, the sublimity of whose angel-sin rivals the star-bright apostate, (i.e. who was as proud as Lucifer, and as wicked as the Devil) and, “had thrilled him,” (Prior Holland aforesaid) with wild admiration.⁹⁵⁴

Accordingly in the very next scene, we have this tragic Macheath,⁹⁵⁵

* Among a number of other instances of words chosen without reason, Imogine in the first act declares, that thunder-storms were not able to intercept her prayers for “the desperate man, in desperate *ways* who *dealt*”—

Yea, when the launched bolt did sear her sense,
Her soul’s deep orisons were breathed for him;

i.e., when a red-hot bolt, launched at her from a thunder-cloud had cauterized her sense, to plain English, burnt her eyes out of her head, she kept still praying on.

Was not *this* love? Yea, thus doth women love!⁹⁵⁶

⁹⁵³ *Bertram*, 2:1:6–7.

⁹⁵⁴ *Bertram*, 3:2:68–71.

⁹⁵⁵ The charismatic but wicked captain of the robber gang in Gay’s *The Beggar’s Opera* (1728).

⁹⁵⁶ Quoting *Bertram*, 1:5:77–9.

with his whole gang, in the Castle of St. Aldobrand, without any attempt on the Prior's part either to prevent him, or to put the mistress and servants of the Castle on their guard against their new inmates, though he (the Prior) knew, and confesses that he knew that Bertram's "fearful mates" were assassins so habituated and naturalized to guilt, that—

When their *drenched hold* forsook both gold and gear,
They griped their daggers with a murderer's instinct;⁹⁵⁷

and though he also knew, that Bertram was the leader of a band whose trade was blood. To the Castle however he goes, thus with the holy Prior's consent, if not with his assistance; and thither let us follow him.

No sooner is our hero safely housed in the Castle of St. Aldobrand, than he attracts the notice of the lady and her confidante, by his "wild and terrible dark eyes," "muffled form," "fearful form,"* "darkly wild," "proudly stern,"⁹⁵⁸ and the like common-place indefinites, seasoned by merely verbal antitheses, and at best, copied with very slight change, from the CONRADE of Southey's *Joan of Arc*.⁹⁵⁹ The lady Imogine, who has been (as is the case, she tells us, with all soft and solemn spirits,) *worshipping* the moon on a terrace or rampart within view of the castle, insists on having an interview with our hero, and this too tete-a-tete. Would the reader learn why and wherefore the confidante is excluded, who very properly remonstrates against such

* This sort of repetition is one of this writers peculiarities, and there is scarce a page which does not furnish one or more instances—Ex. gr. in the first page or two. Act I, line 7th, "and *deemed* that I might sleep."—Line 10, "Did rock and *quiver* in the bickering *glare*."—Lines 14, 15, 16, "But by the momentarily *gleams* of sheeted blue, Did the pale marbles *glare* so *sternly* on me, I almost *deemed* they lived."—Line 37, "The *glare* of Hell."—Line 35, "O holy Prior, this is no *earthly storm*."—Line 38, "This is no *earthly storm*."—Line 42, "*Dealing* with us."—Line 43, "*Deal* thus sternly."—Line 44, "Speak! thou hast *something seen*?"—"A *fearful sight*!"—Line 45, "What hast thou *seen*! A piteous, *fearful sight*."—Line 48, "*quivering gleams*."—Line 50, "In the hollow *pauses of the storm*."—Line 61, "The *pauses of the storm*, &c."

⁹⁵⁷ *Bertram*, 3:2:43–4.

⁹⁵⁸ *Bertram*, 2:3:39–40.

⁹⁵⁹ Conrade is a ferocious French soldier in Southey's epic, *Joan of Arc* (1796). It's not clear why Coleridge takes this opportunity to include a side-swipe at his friend's youthful poem, although *Joan of Arc* is indeed filled with repetitious epithets, particularly where Conrade is concerned. With Coleridge's cue, and taking for example only 'eyes', 'terrible' and 'stern' (all page numbers that follow are to the first edition): 'From his eyes the fire / Sparkled' (126); 'Conrade, rolling round his angry eyes' (166); 'eyes / Flash'd forth a wilder lustre' (180); 'fierce eyes gleaming as with meteor fires' (250); 'terrible in arms' (5); 'So fierce, so terrible / Came Conrade thro' the camp' (66); 'terrible in vengeance' (126); 'terrible in arms' (243); 'stern and sullen' (21); 'stern form' (23); 'serious and stern' (50); 'sadly stern' (115); 'sullen and stern' (197).

“conference, alone, at night, with one who bears such fearful form,” the reason follows—why, *therefore* send him!” I say, *follows*, because the next line, “all things of fear have lost their power over me,”⁹⁶⁰ is separated from the former by a break or pause, and besides that it is a very poor answer to the danger, is no answer at all to the gross indelicacy of this wilful exposure. We must therefore regard it as a mere after-thought, that a little softens the rudeness, but adds nothing to the weight of that exquisite woman’s reason aforesaid. And so exit Clotilda and enter Bertram, who “stands without looking at her,” that is, with his lower limbs forked, his arms akimbo, his side to the lady’s front, the whole figure resembling an inverted Y. He is soon however roused from the state surly to the state frantic, and then follow raving, yelling, cursing, she fainting, he relenting, in runs Imogine’s child, squeaks “mother!” He snatches it up, and with a “God bless thee, child! Bertram has kissed thy child,”—the curtain drops. The third act is short, and short be our account of it. It introduces Lord St. Aldobrand on his road homeward, and next Imogine in the convent, confessing the foulness of her heart to the prior, who first indulges his old humour with a fit of senseless scolding, then leaves her alone with her ruffian paramour, with whom she makes at once an infamous appointment, and the curtain drops, that it may be carried into act and consummation.

I want words to describe the mingled horror and disgust with which I witnessed the opening of the fourth act, considering it as a melancholy proof of the depravation of the public mind. The shocking spirit of jacobinism seemed no longer confined to politics. The familiarity with atrocious events and characters appeared to have poisoned the taste, even where it had not directly disorganized the moral principles, and left the feelings callous to all the mild appeals, and craving alone for the grossest and most outrageous stimulants. The very fact then present to our senses, that a British audience could remain passive under such an insult to common decency, nay, receive with a thunder of applause, a human being supposed to have come reeking from the consummation of this complex foulness and baseness, these and the like reflections so pressed as with the weight of lead upon my heart, that actor, author, and tragedy would have been forgotten, had it not been for a plain elderly man sitting beside me, who, with a very serious face, that at once expressed surprize and aversion, touched my elbow, and pointing to the actor, said to me in a half-whisper—“Do you see that little fellow there? he has just been committing adultery!”

⁹⁶⁰ *Bertram*, 2:3:54–6.

Somewhat relieved by the laugh which this droll address occasioned, I forced back my attention to the stage sufficiently to learn, that Bertram is recovered from a transient fit of remorse by the information that St. Aldobrand was commissioned (to do, what every honest man must have done without commission, if he did his duty) to seize him and deliver him to the just vengeance of the law; an information which (as he had long known himself to be an attainted traitor and proclaimed outlaw, and not only a trader in blood himself, but notoriously the *Captain* of a gang of thieves, pirates, and assassins) assuredly could not have been new to him. It is this, however, which alone and instantly restores him to his accustomed state of raving, blasphemy, and nonsense. Next follows Imogine's constrained interview with her injured husband, and his sudden departure again, all in love and kindness, in order to attend the feast of St. Anselm at the convent. This was, it must be owned, a very strange engagement for so tender a husband to make within a few minutes after so long an absence. But first his lady has told him that she has "a vow on her," and wishes "that black perdition may gulf her perjured soul,"⁹⁶¹—(Note: she is lying at the very time)—if she ascends his bed, till her penance is accomplished. How, therefore, is the poor husband to amuse himself in this interval of her penance? But do not be distressed, reader, on account of the St. Aldobrand's absence! As the author has contrived to send him out of the house, when a husband would be in his, and the lover's way, so he will doubtless not be at a loss to bring him back again as soon as he is wanted. Well! the husband gone in on the one side, out pops the lover from the other, and for the fiendish purpose of harrowing up the soul of his wretched accomplice in guilt, by announcing to her with most brutal and blasphemous execrations his fixed and deliberate resolve to assassinate her husband; all this too is for no discoverable purpose on the part of the author, but that of introducing a series of super-tragic starts, pauses, screams, struggling, dagger-throwing, falling on the ground, starting up again wildly, swearing, outcries for help, falling again on the ground, rising again, faintly tottering towards the door, and, to end the scene, a most convenient fainting fit of our lady's, just in time to give Bertram an opportunity of seeking the object of his hatred, before she alarms the house, which indeed she has had full time to have done before, but that the author rather chose she should amuse herself and the audience by the above-described ravings and startings. She recovers slowly, and to her enter Clotilda, the confidante and mother confessor; then commences, what in theatrical

⁹⁶¹ *Bertram*, 4:2:159–60.

language is called the madness, but which the author more accurately entitles, delirium, it appearing indeed a sort of intermittent fever with fits of lightheadedness off and on, whenever occasion and stage effect happen to call for it. A convenient return of the storm (we told the reader before-hand how it would be) had changed—

The rivulet, that bathed the Convent walls,
 Into a foaming flood: upon its brink
 The Lord and his small train *do* stand appalled.
 With torch and bell from their high battlements
 The monks *do* summon to the pass in vain;
 He must return to-night.⁹⁶²

Talk of the devil, and his horns appear, says the proverb: and sure enough, within ten lines of the exit of the messenger, sent to stop him, the arrival of Lord St. Aldobrand is announced. Bertram's ruffian-band now enter, and range themselves across the stage, giving fresh cause for Imogine's screams and madness. St. Aldobrand having received his mortal wound behind the scenes, totters in to welter in his blood, and to die at the feet of this double-damned adulteress.

Of her, as far as she is concerned in this 4th act, we have two additional points to notice: first, the low cunning and Jesuitical trick with which she deludes her husband into *words* of forgiveness, which he himself does not understand; and secondly, that every where she is made the object of interest and sympathy, and it is not the author's fault, if at any moment she excites feelings less gentle, than those we are accustomed to associate with the self-accusations of a sincere, religious penitent. And did a British audience endure all this?—They received it with plaudits, which, but for the rivalry of the carts and hackney coaches, might have disturbed the evening-prayers of the scanty week day congregation at St. Paul's cathedral.

Tempora mutantur, nos et mutamur in illis.⁹⁶³

Of the fifth act, the only thing noticeable (for rant and nonsense, though abundant as ever, have long before the last act become things of course,) is the profane representation of the high altar in a chapel, with all the vessels and other preparations for the holy sacrament. A hymn is actually sung on the stage by the choir-boys! For the rest, Imogine, who now and then *talks* deliriously, but who is always light-

⁹⁶² *Bertram*, 4:2:357–62.

⁹⁶³ 'The times change, and we change with them'. The earliest printed appearance of this proverbial phrase seems to be William Harrison's *A Historical Description of the Islande of Britayne* (1577), 3:3:99.

headed as far as her *gown* and *hair* can make her so, wanders about in dark woods with cavern-rocks and precipices in the back-scene; and a number of mute dramatis personæ move in and out continually, for whose presence, there is always at least this reason, that they afford something to be *seen*, by that very large part of a Drury-lane audience who have small chance of *hearing* a word. She had, it appears, taken her child with her, but what becomes of the child, whether she murdered it or not, nobody can tell, nobody can learn; it was a riddle at the *representation*, and after a most attentive *perusal* of the Play, a riddle it remains.

No more I know, I wish I did,
 And I would tell it all to you;
 For what became of this poor child
 There's none that ever knew.

WORDSWORTH'S THORN⁹⁶⁴

Our whole information* is derived from the following words—

Prior.—Where is thy child?

Clotil.—(Pointing to the cavern into which she has looked) Oh he lies cold within his cavern-tomb!

Why dost thou urge her with the horrid theme?

Prior.—(who will not, the reader may observe, be disappointed of his dose of scolding)

It was to make (quere wake) one living cord o'th'heart,
 And I will try, tho' my own breaks at it.

Where is thy child?

Imog.—(with a frantic laugh)

The forest fiend hath snatched him—

He (who? the fiend or the child?) rides the night-mare thro' the wizzard woods.⁹⁶⁵

Now these two lines consist in a senseless plagiarism from the counterfeited madness of Edgar in *Lear*, who, in imitation of the gipsy incantations, puns on the old word *Mair*, a Hag; and the no less senseless adoption of Dryden's forest-fiend, and the wizzard-stream by which Milton, in his *Lycidas*, so finely characterises the spreading

* The child is an important personage, for I see not by what possible means the author could have ended the second and third acts but for its timely appearance. How ungrateful then not further to notice its fate?

⁹⁶⁴ Lines 144–7.

⁹⁶⁵ *Bertram*, 5:3:39–46.

Deva, fabulosus Amnis.⁹⁶⁶ Observe too these images stand unique in the speeches of Imogine, without the slightest resemblance to anything she says before or after. But we are weary. The characters in this act frisk about, here, there, and every where, as teasingly as the Jack o'Lanthorn-lights which mischievous boys, from across a narrow street, throw with a looking-glass on the faces of their opposite neighbours. Bertram disarmed, out-heroding Charles de Moor in the Robbers,⁹⁶⁷ befaces the collected knights of St. Anselm (all in complete armour,) and so, by pure dint of black looks, he outdares them into passive poltroons. The sudden revolution in the Prior's manners we have before noticed, and it is indeed so outré, that a number of the audience imagined a great secret was to come out, viz.: that the Prior was one of the many instances of a youthful sinner metamorphosed into an old scold, and that this Bertram would appear at last to be his son. Imogine re-appears at the convent, and dies of her own accord. Bertram stabs himself, and dies by her side, and that the play may conclude as it began, viz. in a superfetation of blasphemy upon nonsense, because he had snatched a sword from a despicable coward, who retreats in terror when it is pointed towards him in sport; this *felo de se*,⁹⁶⁸ and thief-captain, this loathsome and leprous confluence of robbery, adultery, murder, and cowardly assassination, this monster whose best deed is, the having saved his betters from the degradation of hanging him, by turning jack ketch⁹⁶⁹ to himself; first recommends the charitable Monks and holy Prior to pray for his soul, and then has the folly and impudence to exclaim—

I died no felon's death,
A warrior's weapon freed a warrior's soul!—⁹⁷⁰

⁹⁶⁶ 'Fabled torrent'. The references here are, respectively, Dryden's *Theodore and Honoraria* (1700) and Milton's description of the river Dee in *Lycidas* (1638), 55: 'Nor yet where Deva spreads her wizard stream'. It's not immediately obvious why Coleridge glosses Milton's English-language poem with his two-word Latin phrase – apparently derived from Roman historian Quintus Curtius Rufus ('amnis fabulosus', *Historiae Alexandri Magni*, 3:1), but describing quite another river.

⁹⁶⁷ In Schiller's German original (*Die Räuber*), the character is called Karl von Moor.

⁹⁶⁸ Archaic legal term for 'suicide'; the Latin means 'felon upon himself'.

⁹⁶⁹ The celebrated seventeenth-century hangman, whose name came to be used as a general signifier for a public executioner.

⁹⁷⁰ These are the final lines of *Bertram*.

CHAPTER 24

CONCLUSION

It sometimes happens that we are punished for our faults by incidents, in the causation of which these faults had no share: and this I have always felt the severest punishment. The wound indeed is of the same dimensions; but the edges are jagged, and there is a dull underpain that survives the smart which it had aggravated. For there is always a consolatory feeling that accompanies the sense of a proportion between antecedents and consequents. The sense of Before and After becomes both intelligible and intellectual when, and *only* when, we contemplate the succession in the relations of Cause and Effect, which like the two poles of the magnet manifest the being and unity of the one power by relative opposites, and give, as it were, a substratum of permanence, of identity, and therefore of reality, to the shadowy flux of Time. It is Eternity revealing itself in the phenomena of Time: and the perception and acknowledgement of the proportionality and appropriateness of the Present to the Past, prove to the afflicted Soul, that it has not yet been deprived of the sight of God, that it can still recognize the effective presence of a Father, though through a darkened glass and a turbid atmosphere, though of a Father that is chastising it. And for this cause, doubtless, are we so framed in mind, and even so organized in brain and nerve, that all confusion is painful.—It is within the experience of many medical practitioners, that a patient, with strange and unusual symptoms of disease, has been more distressed in mind, more wretched, from the fact of being unintelligible to himself and others, than from the pain or danger of the disease: nay, that the patient has received the most solid comfort, and resumed a genial and enduring cheerfulness, from some new symptom or product, that had at once determined the name and nature of his complaint, and rendered it an intelligible effect of an intelligible cause: even though the discovery did at the same moment preclude all hope of restoration. Hence the mystic theologians, whose delusions we may more confidently hope to separate from their actual intuitions, when we condescend to read their works without the presumption that whatever our fancy (always the ape, and too often the adulterator and counterfeit of our memory) has not made or cannot make a picture of, must be nonsense,—hence, I say, the Mystics have

joined in representing the state of the reprobate spirits as a dreadful dream in which there is no sense of reality, not even of the pangs they are enduring—an eternity without time, and as it were below it—God present without manifestation of his presence. But these are depths, which we dare not linger over. Let us turn to an instance more on a level with the ordinary sympathies of mankind. Here then, and in this same healing influence of *Light* and distinct Beholding, we may detect the final cause of that instinct which in the great majority of instances leads and almost compels the Afflicted to communicate their sorrows. Hence too flows the alleviation that results from “*opening out* our griefs:” which are thus presented in distinguishable forms instead of the mist, through which whatever is shapeless becomes magnified and (literally) enormous.⁹⁷¹ Casimir,⁹⁷² in the fifth Ode of his third Book, has happily* expressed this thought.

* *Classically* too, as far as consists with the allegorizing fancy of the *modern*, that still *striving to project* the inward, contra-distinguishes itself from the seeming ease with which the poetry of the ancients *reflects* the world without. Casimir affords, perhaps, the most striking instance of this characteristic difference.—For his *style* and *diction* are really classical: while Cowley, who resembles Casimir in many respects, compleatly barbarizes *his* Latinity, and even his metre, by the heterogeneous nature of his thoughts. That Dr. Johnson should have passed a contrary judgement, and have even preferred Cowley’s Latin Poems to Milton’s, is a caprice that has, if I mistake not, excited the surprize of all scholars. I was much amused last summer with the laughable *affright*, with which an Italian poet perused a page of Cowley’s Davideis, contrasted with the enthusiasm with which he first ran through, and then read aloud, Milton’s Mansus and Ad Patrem.³⁷³

⁹⁷¹ ‘Enormous’ in the sense of deviant or delinquent: ‘E-NORMITY, *norma*; quasi *gnorma*-, a square, used by builders . . . thence applied to the integrity and rectitude of actions; consequently *enormous* expresses irregularity, a deviation from that rectitude’ (George William Lemon, *English Etymology* (1783)). The figure of the ‘magnifying mist’ was an eighteenth-century commonplace (‘Trivial faults are construed into the effects of a deep malignity by the magnifying optics of rugged and obstinate humour, as objects through a mist are enlarged beyond the life’ (*Monthly Review*, 67 (1782), 376); ‘So you well might if you only look at them through the magnifying mist of prejudice’ (*London Magazine*, 51 (1782), 267)). Coleridge employs the metaphor often in his own writings: Engell and Bate cite examples from *Conciones*, *Lectures of 1795*; *Watchmen*; *Essays on his Times*; and variously in his poetry (*Biographia Literaria*, 2:235).

⁹⁷² Maciej Kazimierz Sarbiewski (1595–1640; Latin name: Matthias Casimirus Sarbievius) was a Polish writer and Jesuit priest. Arguably the most prominent seventeenth-century Latin poet in Europe, he was known as *Horationis par* [‘the equal of Horace’]. His fame was greater on the Continent than in Britain, where his Catholic focus alienated some readers. Pope Urban VIII appointed him ‘poeta laureatus’ and gave him the task of revising the hymns of the Latin breviary.

⁹⁷³ In his ‘Life of Cowley’ (1779), Johnson in fact prefers Thomas May (1594–1650) to both Abraham Cowley (1618–67) and John Milton (1608–74), although he does think Cowley the better of the latter two: ‘If the Latin performances of Cowley and Milton be compared, (for May I hold to be superiour to both,) the advantage seems to lie on the side of Cowley. Milton is generally content to express the thoughts of the ancients in their language; Cowley, without much loss of purity or elegance, accommodates the

Me longus silendi
 Edit amor, facilesque Luctus
 Hausit medullas. Fugerit ocius,
 Simul negantem visere jusseris
 Aures amicorum, et loquacem
 Questibus evacuâris iram.

Olim querendo desinimus queri,
 Ipsoque fletu lacryma perditur,
 Nec fortis æquè, si per omnes
 Cura volet residetque ramos.

Vires amicis perdit in auribus
 Minorque semper dividitur dolor
 Per multa permissus vagari
 Pectora.—
 Id. Lib. iii. Od. 5.⁹⁷⁴

I shall not make this an excuse, however, for troubling my Readers with any complaints or explanations, with which, as Readers, they have little or no concern. It may suffice (for the present at least) to declare that the causes that have delayed the publication of these volumes for so long a period after they had been printed off, were not connected with any neglect of my own; and that they would form an instructive comment on the chapter concerning authorship as a

diction of Rome to his own conceptions.’ Cowley began a Latin epic on the subject of the Biblical King David – the *Davideis* – but did not complete it; the first book only was published in his *Works* (1668). Milton’s *Poems* (1645) contains both English and Latin verses, including the two titles Coleridge mentions. Engell and Bate speculate that the ‘Italian poet’ was Ugo Foscolo (1778–1827), who was in England in 1816 staying with W. S. Rose, whom Coleridge also knew (*Biographia Literaria*, 2:236).

⁹⁷⁴ Casimir, *Carmina*, Book 3, Ode 5 (‘Ad Publium Munatium; Maerorem animi colloquiis & caetibus amicorum temperandum esse’ [‘To Publius Munatius: That sorrows of the soul may be lessened by conversation and suchlike with friends’], lines 11–24. The Latin means: ‘A long-standing love of silence has consumed me, and sorrow has drained my soft bones. This will fly faster at your command as soon as you deny [it] – going to the ears of your friends and, by talking, to eliminate your anger. To complain once is to cease to complain; the tear itself is lost in the act of weeping; nor is anxiety as strong if it soars through all the branches. The ears of friends lessen sorrow, which ever grows less as it roams and is divided amongst many breasts.’ Casimir’s original starts with ‘Te’ rather than Coleridge’s ‘Me’ (which is to say: the original opening sentence is ‘A long-standing love of silence has consumed you, and sorrow has drained your soft bones.’) Engell and Bate think Coleridge made the change ‘by accident’; but it’s surely more likely he did so deliberately. The 1847 edition of the *Biographia* includes a footnote on ‘fortis’, perhaps reproducing a Coleridge marginalium from a copy of the first edition: ‘*Flectit*, or if the metre had allowed, *premit* would have supported the metaphor better.’ This would replace ‘nor is anxiety as strong’ with ‘nor does anxiety weigh us down’.

Trade, addressed to young men of genius in the first volume of this work.⁹⁷⁵ I remember the ludicrous effect which the first sentence of an Auto-biography, which happily for the writer was as meagre in incidents as it is well possible for the Life of an Individual to be—"The *eventful* Life which I am about to record, from the hour in which I rose into exist on this Planet, &c."⁹⁷⁶ Yet when, notwithstanding this warning example of Self-importance before me, I review my own life, I cannot refrain from applying the same epithet to it, and with more than ordinary emphasis—and no private feeling, that affected myself only, should prevent me from *publishing* the same, (for *write* it I assuredly shall, should life and leisure be granted me) if continued reflection should strengthen my present belief, that my history would add its contingent to the enforcement of one important truth, viz. that we must not only love our neighbours as ourselves, but ourselves likewise as our neighbours; and that we can do neither unless we love God above both.

Who lives, that's not
Depraved or depraves? Who dies, *that bears*
*Not one spurn to the grave—of their friends' gift?*⁹⁷⁷

Strange as the delusion may appear, yet it is most true that three years ago I did not know or believe that I had an enemy in the world: and now even my strongest sensations of gratitude are mingled with fear, and I reproach myself for being too often disposed to ask,—Have I one friend?—During the many years which intervened between the composition and the publication of the *Christabel*, it became almost as well known among literary men as if it had been on common sale, the same references were made to it, and the same liberties taken with it, even to the very names of the imaginary persons in the poem.⁹⁷⁸ From

⁹⁷⁵ Chapter 11.

⁹⁷⁶ This is *Memoirs of the Life of Gilbert Wakefield, Written by Himself* (London, 1792), in which the bookish, scholarly Wakefield (1756–1801) often talks about his uneventful life in these terms. For instance: 'I was delivered from the mortification of disappointment . . . by a new adventure in my eventful history, which shall soon be related in its *chronological* order to the reader' (187), or (on not being able to hear a speech in the Commons from the public gallery) 'the greatest disappointment in the whole course of my eventful life!' (396–7). The first sentence of the *Memoir* is close to, though not precisely as, Coleridge records here: 'I was introduced into this planet on February 22, 1756, in the parsonage-house of *St Nicholas in Nottingham*' (5).

⁹⁷⁷ Shakespeare, *Timon of Athens*, 1:2:140–2.

⁹⁷⁸ Coleridge wrote 'Christabel' at some point in the late 1790s, but did not publish it until 1816. During that interlude, various people either read it in manuscript or heard it recited, including Walter Scott and Byron, both of whom imitated aspects of the poem in their own work.

almost all of our most celebrated Poets, and from some with whom I had no personal acquaintance, I either received or heard of expressions of admiration that (I can truly say) appeared to myself utterly disproportionate to a work, that pretended to be nothing more than a common Faery Tale. Many, who had allowed no merit to my other poems, whether printed or manuscript, and who have frankly told me as much, uniformly made an exception in favor of the CHRISTABEL and the Poem, entitled LOVE.⁹⁷⁹ Year after year, and in societies of the most different kinds, I had been entreated to recite it: and the result was still the same in all, and altogether different in this respect from the effect produced by the occasional recitation of any other poems I had composed.—This before the publication. And since then, with very few exceptions, I have heard nothing but abuse, and this too in a spirit of bitterness at least as disproportionate to the pretensions of the poem, had it been the most pitiably below mediocrity, as the previous eulogies, and far more inexplicable. In the *Edinburgh Review* it was assailed with a malignity and a spirit of personal hatred that ought to have injured only the work in which such a Tirade was suffered to appear: and this review was generally attributed (whether rightly or no I know not) to a man,⁹⁸⁰ who both in my presence and in my absence has repeatedly pronounced it the finest poem of its kind in the language.—This may serve as a warning to authors, that in their calculations on the probable reception of a poem, they must subtract to a large amount from the panegyric, which may have encouraged them to publish it, however unsuspecting and however various the sources of this panegyric may have been. And, first, allowances must be made for private enmity, of the very existence of which they had perhaps entertained no suspicion—for personal enmity behind the mask of anonymous criticism: secondly for the necessity of a certain proportion of abuse and ridicule in a Review, in order to make it saleable, in consequence of which, if they have no friends behind the scenes, the chance must needs be against them; but lastly and chiefly, for the excitement and temporary sympathy of feeling, which the recitation of the poem by an admirer, especially if he be at once a warm

⁹⁷⁹ Written late in the 1790s, first published (as ‘Introduction to the Tale of the Dark Ladie’) in the *Morning Post*, 21 December 1799, then as ‘Love’ in *Lyrical Ballads* (1800) and *Sybilline Leaves* (1817).

⁹⁸⁰ Coleridge himself believed that the review in question (*Edinburgh Review*, 27 (1816), 58–67) was by William Hazlitt (1778–1830). In fact it probably wasn’t: Hazlitt had already published a review of the same volume in the *Examiner* (2 June 1816), a piece that takes a rather different (though also broadly negative) tack. The actual identity of the *Edinburgh* reviewer has never been firmly established.

admirer and a man of acknowledged celebrity, calls forth in the audience. For this is really a species of Animal Magnetism, in which the enkindling Reciter, by perpetual comment of looks and tones, lends his own will and apprehensive faculty to his Auditors. They *live* for the time within the dilated sphere of his intellectual Being. It is equally possible, though not equally common, that a reader left to himself should sink below the poem, as that the poem left to itself should flag beneath the feelings of the reader.—But, in my own instance, I had the additional misfortune of having been gossipped about, as devoted to metaphysics, and worse than all to a system incomparably nearer to the visionary flights of Plato, and even to the jargon of the mystics, than to the established tenets of Locke. Whatever therefore appeared with my name was condemned before hand, as predestined metaphysics. In a dramatic poem, which had been submitted by me to a gentleman⁹⁸¹ of great influence in the Theatrical world, occurred the following passage.—

O we are querulous creatures! Little less
 Than all things can suffice to make us happy:
 And little more than nothing is enough
 To make us wretched.⁹⁸²

Aye, here now! (exclaimed the Critic) here come Coleridge's *Metaphysics!*⁹⁸³ And the very same motive (that is, not that the lines were unfit for the present state of our immense Theatres; but that they were *Metaphysics**) was assigned elsewhere for the rejection of the two following passages. The first is spoken in answer to a usurper, who

* Poor unlucky Metaphysics! and what are they? A single sentence expresses the object and thereby the contents of this science. Γνωθι σεαυτον: et Deum quantum licet et in Deo omnia scibis. Know thyself: and so shalt thou know God, as far as is permitted to a

⁹⁸¹ Byron, who was a member of the committee in charge of the Drury Lane theatre, and who, despite having helped Coleridge get his earlier play *Remorse* published in 1815, was unable to persuade the theatre to produce his later *Zapolya* the following year.

⁹⁸² Coleridge, *Zapolya* (1816), 2:1:1, lines 23–6.

⁹⁸³ Coleridge had been stung by a recent review in the *Edinburgh*, not of the *Zapolya* but rather his *Statesman's Manual*: 'a few plain instincts, and a little common sense, are all that the most popular of our popular writers attribute to the people, or rely on for their success in addressing them. But Mr Coleridge, the mob-hating Mr Coleridge, here supposes them, intuitively to perceive the cabalistical visions of German metaphysics; and compliments the poorest peasant, and the nameless soldier, not only on the cognateness of their ideas and principles to man as man, but on their immediate and joyous excitation at the mere annunciation of such delightful things as *Principles* and *Ideas*. Our mystic, in a Note, finds a confirmation of this cognateness of the most important truths to the vulgarest of the people' (*Edinburgh Review*, 27 (1816), 455).

had rested his plea on the circumstance, that he had been chosen by the acclamations of the people.—

What people? How conven'd? Or if conven'd,
Must not that magic power that charms together
Millions of men in council, needs have power
To win or wield them? Rather, O far rather
Shout forth thy titles to yon circling mountains,
And with a thousandfold reverberation
Make the rocks flatter thee, and the volleying air,
Unbribed, shout back to thee, King Emerich!
By wholesome laws to embank the Sovereign Power;
To deepen by restraint, and by prevention
Of lawless will to amass and guide the flood
In its majestic channel, is man's task
And the true patriot's glory! In all else
Men safer trust to heaven, than to themselves
When least themselves: even in those whirling crowds
Where folly is contagious, and too oft
Even wise men leave their better sense at home,
To chide and wonder at them, when return'd.⁹⁸⁴

The second passage is in the mouth of an old and experienced Courtier, betrayed by the man in whom he had most trusted.

And yet Sarolta, simple, inexperienced,
Could see him as he was and often warn'd me.
Whence learnt she this? O she was innocent.
And to be innocent is Nature's wisdom.
The fledge dove knows the prowlers of the air
Fear'd soon as seen, and flutters back to shelter!
And the young steed recoils upon his haunches,

creature, and in God all things.—Surely, there is a strange—nay, rather too natural—aversion to many to know themselves.⁹⁸⁵

⁹⁸⁴ Coleridge, 'Prelude' to *Zapolya* (1816), lines 355–72.

⁹⁸⁵ The Greek (according to Pausanias, 10.24.1) was inscribed in the forecourt of the Delphic Temple of Apollo. The Latin is expanded in the 1847 *Biographia* and set out as verse, perhaps recording one of Coleridge's marginalia in his own copy of the 1817 edition:

*Nosce te ipsum,
Tuque Deum, quantum licet, inque Deo omnia noscas.*

This elaborates on a sentiment from the paraphrase of Psalm 68:23: 'Tu Domine cum Omnia noscas' (Cornelius Jansenius, *Paraphrases in omnes Psalmos Davidicos* (1578), 86).

The never-yet-seen adder's hiss first heard!
 Ah! surer than suspicion's hundred eyes
 Is that fine sense, which to the pure in heart
 By mere oppugnancy of their own goodness
 Reveals the approach of evil!⁹⁸⁶

As therefore my character as a writer could not easily be more injured by an overt-act than it was already in consequence of the report, I published a work,⁹⁸⁷ a large portion of which was professedly metaphysical. A long delay occurred between its first annunciation and its appearance; it was reviewed therefore by anticipation with a malignity, so avowedly and exclusively personal, as is, I believe, unprecedented even in the present contempt of all common humanity that disgraces and endangers the liberty of the press. After its appearance, the author of this lampoon was chosen to review it in the *Edinburgh Review*; and under the single condition, that he should have written what he himself really thought, and have criticised the work as he would have done had its author been indifferent to him, I should have chosen that man myself, both from the vigour and the originality of his mind, and from his particular acuteness in speculative reasoning, before all others.—I remembered Catullus's lines.

Desine de quoquam quicquam bene velle mereri,
 Aut aliquem fieri posse putare pium.
 Omnia sunt ingrata: nihil fecisse benigne est:
 Imo', etiam tædet, tædet obestque magis;
 Ut mihi, quem nemo gravius nec acerbius urget
 Quam modo qui me unum atque unicum amicum
 habuit.⁹⁸⁸

⁹⁸⁶ *Zapolya*, 2:4:1, lines 70–81.

⁹⁸⁷ *The Statesman's Manual, Or, The Bible the Best Guide to Political Skill and Foresight: a Lay Sermon*, published December 1816. The anticipatory review Coleridge mentions, 'unprecedented even in the present contempt of all common humanity', was by Hazlitt, in the *Examiner*, 8 September 1816 – Hazlitt had not, at this time, actually read the work. He later published a proper review (again, hostile) in the *Edinburgh Review*, 27 (1816), 443–59 (quoted in the footnote fourth above). Hazlitt certainly accused Coleridge of 'potential infidelity', something he identified with the Coleridgean claim that 'Reason and Religion are their own evidence'. However, in fact this phrase 'potential infidelity' – which, judging by the *Biographia's* Conclusion, so affronted Coleridge – was actually quoted by Hazlitt from Coleridge's own *Statesman's Manual* – which condemns 'the plan of poisoning the children of the poor with a sort of potential infidelity', namely the '*liberal idea*' of teaching only interdenominational religion.

⁹⁸⁸ Catullus, *Carmina*, 73: 'Give up the idea that you deserve anybody's good wishes, or that anyone can become *pius* ['dutiful', 'respectful']. Ingratitude is everywhere; it doesn't matter if you have performed deeds of kindness; on the contrary it wearies me, wearies me and causes greater harm: so it is with me, whom no one oppresses more

But I can truly say, that the grief with which I read this rhapsody of predetermined insult, had the Rhapsodist himself for its whole and sole object: and the indignant contempt which it excited in me, was as exclusively confined to his employer and soborner. I refer to this Review at present, in consequence of information having been given me, that the innuendo of my “potential infidelity,” grounded on one passage of my first Lay Sermon, has been received and propagated with a degree of *credence*, of which I can safely acquit the originator of the calumny. I give the sentences, as they stand in the sermon, premising only that I was speaking exclusively of miracles worked for the outward senses of men. “It was only to overthrow the usurpation exercised in and through the senses, that the senses were miraculously appealed to. REASON AND RELIGION ARE THEIR OWN EVIDENCE. The natural sun is in this respect a symbol of the spiritual. Ere he is fully arisen, and while his glories are still under veil, he calls up the breeze to chase away the usurping vapours of the night-season, and thus converts the air itself into the minister of its own purification: not surely in proof or elucidation of the light from heaven, but to prevent its interception.

Wherever, therefore, similar circumstances co-exist with the same moral causes, the principles revealed, and the examples recorded, in the inspired writings render miracles superfluous: and if we neglect to apply truths in expectation of wonders, or under pretext of the cessation of the latter, we tempt God and merit the same reply which our Lord gave to the Pharisees on a like occasion.”⁹⁸⁹

In the sermon and the notes both the historical truth and the necessity of the miracles are strongly and frequently asserted. “The testimony of books of history (i.e. relatively to the signs and wonders, with which Christ came) is one of the strong and stately *pillars* of the church: but it is not the *foundation*!”⁹⁹⁰ Instead, therefore, of defending myself, which I could easily effect by a series of passages, expressing the same opinion, from the Fathers and the most eminent Protestant Divines, from the Reformation to the Revolution, I shall merely state what my belief is, concerning the true evidences of Christianity. 1. Its consistency with right Reason, I consider as the outer Court of the Temple—the common area, within which it stands. 2. The miracles,

brutally or bitterly than that person who only a little while ago told me he was my one and only friend.’

⁹⁸⁹ Coleridge, *Statesman’s Manual* (1816), 10. The reply Christ gave the Pharisees was: ‘an evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas’ (Matthew 12:39).

⁹⁹⁰ *Statesman’s Manual*, 55–6.

with and through which the Religion was first revealed and attested, I regard as the steps, the vestibule, and the portal of the Temple. 3. The sense, the inward feeling, in the soul of each Believer of its exceeding *desirableness*—the experience, that he *needs* something, joined with the strong Foretokening, that the Redemption and the Graces propounded to us in Christ are *what* he needs—this I hold to be the true FOUNDATION of the spiritual Edifice. With the strong *a priori* probability that flows in from 1 and 3 on the correspondent historical evidence of 2, no man can refuse or neglect to make the experiment without guilt. But, 4, it is the experience derived from a practical conformity to the conditions of the Gospel—it is the opening Eye; the dawning Light: the terrors and the promises of spiritual Growth; the blessedness of loving God as God, the nascent sense of Sin hated as Sin, and of the incapability of attaining to either without Christ; it is the sorrow that still rises up from beneath and the consolation that meets it from above; the bosom treacheries of the Principal in the warfare and the exceeding faithfulness and long-suffering of the uninterested Ally;—in a word, it is the actual *Trial* of the Faith in Christ, with its accompaniments and results, that must form the arched ROOF, and the Faith itself is the completing KEY-STONE. In order to an efficient belief in Christianity, a man must have been a Christian, and this is the seeming argumentum in circulo,⁹⁹¹ incident to all spiritual Truths, to every subject not presentable under the forms of Time and Space, as long as we attempt to master by the reflex acts of the Understanding what we can only *know* by the act of *becoming*. “Do the will of my father, and ye shall KNOW whether I am of God.”⁹⁹² These four evidences I believe to have been and still to be, for the world, for the whole church, all necessary, all equally necessary: but that at present, and for the majority of Christians born in christian countries, I believe the third and the fourth evidences to be the most operative, not as superseding but as involving a glad undoubting faith in the two former. Credidi, ideóque intellexi,⁹⁹³ appears to me the dictate equally of Philosophy and Religion, even as I believe Redemption to be the antecedent of Sanctification, and not its consequent. All spiritual predicates may be construed indifferently as modes of Action or as states of Being. Thus Holiness and Blessedness are the same idea, now seen in relation to

⁹⁹¹ ‘Circular argument’.

⁹⁹² John 7:17.

⁹⁹³ ‘I have believed and therefore I have understood’. Adapted from St Augustine, *In Johannis Evangelium Tractatus*, 29:6: ‘ergo noli quaerere intelligere, ut credas, sed crede ut intelligas’ [‘therefore do not seek to understand in order to believe, but rather believe in order to understand’].

act and now to existence. The ready belief which has been yielded to the slander of my “potential infidelity,” I attribute in part to the openness with which I have avowed my doubts, whether the heavy interdiction, under which the name of BENEDICT SPINOZA lies, is merited on the whole or to the whole extent. Be this as it may, I wish, however, that I could find in the books of philosophy, theoretical or moral, which are alone recommended to the present students of Theology in our established schools, a few passages as thoroughly *Pauline*, as completely accordant with the doctrines of the established Church, as the following sentences in the concluding page of Spinoza’s *Ethics*. Deinde quó mens amore divino seu beatitudine magis gaudet, eó plus *intelligit*, eó majorem in affectus habet potentiam, et eó minus ab affectibus, qui mali sunt, patitur; atque adeo ex eo, quod mens hoc amore divino seu beatitudine gaudet, potestatem habet libidines coercendi, nemo beatitudine gaudet quia affectus coercuit; sed contra potestas libidines coercendi ex ipsâ beatitudine oritur.⁹⁹⁴

With regard to the Unitarians, it has been shamelessly asserted, that I have denied them to be Christians. God forbid! For how should I know, what the piety of the Heart may be, or what Quantum of Error in the Understanding may consist with a saving Faith in the intentions and actual dispositions of the whole moral Being in any one individual? Never will God reject a soul that sincerely loves him: be his speculative opinions what they may: and whether in any given instance certain opinions, be they Unbelief, or Misbelief, are compatible with a sincere Love of God, God only can know.—But this I have said, and shall continue to say: that if the Doctrines, the sum of which I *believe* to constitute the Truth in Christ, *be* Christianity, then Unitarianism is not, and vice versâ: and that in speaking theologically and *impersonally*, i.e. of PSILANTHROPISM and THEANTHROPISM⁹⁹⁵ as schemes of Belief, without reference to Individuals, who profess either the one or the other, it will be absurd to use a different language as long as it is the

⁹⁹⁴ Spinoza, *Ethics* (1677), 5:42. ‘Again, the greater the extent to which the mind rejoices in this divine love or blessedness, the more it *understands*; the more power it possesses over the emotions, the lesser the extent to which it is subject to such emotions as are wicked; therefore, the extent to which the mind rejoices in this divine love or blessedness is the extent to which it will be able to control its lusts. No one rejoices in blessedness because he has mastered his lusts, but, on the contrary, his power of mastering his lusts arises from this blessedness itself.’

⁹⁹⁵ ψιλός is the Greek for ‘bald, naked’; and ἄνθρωπος means ‘human’. ‘Psilanthropism’ is, accordingly, the doctrine that Christ was merely a man, and not divine. It was so-called and condemned as a heresy at the First Council of Nicaea, AD 325. *Theanthropism* is the contrary belief that Christ was both man and God at the same time – see for example Francis Quarles’s poem, ‘The True Theanthropos, Jesus Christ, the Saviour of the World’ (1632).

dictate of common sense, that two opposites cannot properly be called by the same name. I should feel no offence if a Unitarian applied the same to me, any more than if he were to say, that 2 and 2 being 4, 4 and 4 must be 8.

Αλλα βροτων
 Τον μεν κενοφρονες αυχαι
 Εξ αγαθων εβαλον.
 Τον δ' αυ καταμεμφθεντ' αγαν
 Ισχυν οικειων κατεσφαλεν καλων,
 Χειρος ελκων οπισσω, θυμος ατολμος.
 PINDAR. Nem. Ode xi.⁹⁹⁶

This has been my Object, and this alone can be my Defence—and O! that with this my personal as well as my LITERARY LIFE might conclude! the unquenched desire I mean, not without the consciousness of having earnestly endeavoured to kindle young minds, and to guard them against the temptations of Scorners, by shewing that the Scheme of Christianity, as taught in the Liturgy and Homilies of our Church, though not discoverable by human Reason, is yet in accordance with it; that link follows link by necessary consequence; that Religion passes out of the ken of Reason only where the eye of Reason has reached its own Horizon; and that Faith is then but its continuation: even as the Day softens away into the sweet Twilight, and Twilight, hushed and breathless, steals into the Darkness. It is Night, sacred Night! the upraised Eye views only the starry Heaven which manifests itself alone: and the outward Beholding is fixed on the sparks twinkling in the awful depth, though Suns of other Worlds, only to preserve the Soul steady and collected in its pure *Act* of inward Adoration to the great I AM, and to the filial WORD that re-affirmeth it from Eternity to Eternity, whose choral Echo is the Universe.⁹⁹⁷

ΘΕΩ ΜΟΝΩ ΔΟΞΑ.⁹⁹⁸

FINIS

⁹⁹⁶ Pindar, *Nemean Odes*, 11:29–32. ‘But, among mortals, numbskull pride casts one man out of his happiness; and a cowardly spirit robs another man of the grand achievements that should be his, hauling him back by the hand – because he underrated his own strength.’

⁹⁹⁷ The musical metaphor of the universe as a ‘choral echo’ of divine unity is from Plotinus (see *Enneads*, 6.9.8:34–45).

⁹⁹⁸ ‘Glory to the only God’. An abbreviated form (Δόξα μόνω Θεῷ) of a passage in the New Testament: ‘μόνῳ σοφῷ Θεῷ, τιμὴ καὶ δόξα εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας τῶν αἰώνων· ἀμήν’ [‘[to] the only wise God, be honour and glory for ever and ever. Amen’] (1 Timothy 1:17). It was sometimes printed as the last thing on the last page of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century theological or philosophical books – a practice Coleridge imitates here.

Textual Appendix

This appendix lists the textual differences between the 1817 and 1847 editions, cited by chapter and paragraph thus: '1¶1'. The justification for listing these changes here is the likelihood (a very strong likelihood) that at least some of the stylistic alterations represent Coleridge's own revisions, noted as marginalia on a now-lost copy of the first edition. The problem is that we can't know which revisions are Coleridge's, and which were made by Sara or Henry Nelson Coleridge, or the printer.

Alterations consisting only of the addition or removal of commas, or the changing of semi-colons to colons, are not recorded here. Also not specifically listed here are the following general emendations: the 1847 consistently expanded Coleridge's use of '&c.' into 'and so on', 'ex. gr.' into 'for example' and 'viz.' into 'namely'. The 1847 consistently regularises 1817's various spellings of 'Shakspeare', 'Shakespeare' and 'Shakspear' to 'Shakspeare'; and 1817's 'judgement' to 'judgment'. 1817's parentheses are generally preceded and followed by long-ems in 1847. For example:

3¶1 these works (which . . . form nine-tenths of the reading of the reading public) cannot [1817]; these works—(which . . . form nine-tenths of the reading of the reading public)—cannot [1847]

The many capitalisations in 1817 are reduced to lower case in 1847. For example:

1¶2 EXCESS OF ORNAMENT . . . STRAINED AND ELABORATE DICTION [1817]; excess of ornament . . . strained and elaborate diction [1847]

1¶7 GRECIAN [1817]; Grecian [1847]

3¶1 BEAUTIES, ELEGANT EXTRACTS and ANAS [1817]; Beauties, elegant Extracts and Anas [1847]

For reasons of space, these practices are not otherwise noted in this appendix. Similarly, rather than list all the (small) changes between all chapter header descriptions in 1817 and 1847, I cite as indicative the description of the first chapter in both versions:

'The motives to the present work—Reception of the Author's first publication—The discipline of his taste at school—The

effect of contemporary writers on youthful minds—Bowles’s sonnets—Comparison between the Poets before and since Mr. Pope.’ [1817]

‘Motives to the present work—Reception of the Author’s first publication—Discipline of his taste at school—Effect of contemporary writers on youthful minds—Bowles’s sonnets—Comparison between the poets before and since Pope.’ [1847]

Many of the chapter headings were modified in this way for 1847. From time to time the textual emendations of James Engell and W. Jackson Bate’s 1983 Princeton edition of the *Biographia* (where they differ from both 1817 and 1847, or where they prefer a reading from 1847 over their professed 1817 copy-text) are noted.

1¶1 and the application of the rules [1817]; and an application of the rules [1847]

1¶2 defects, though I am persuaded not with equal justice: with [1817]; defects, (though I am persuaded not with equal justice),—with [1847] (*Vide the criticisms . . . Lyrical Ballads*) [1817]; not in 1847 (footnote) “Tanquam scopulum sic vites insolens verbum,” [1817]; “Ut tanquam scopulum sic fugias insolens verbum,” [1847]

1¶3 a very severe master. He* early [1817]; a very severe master, the Reverend James Bowyer. He early [1847; with no footnote] synonymes to the Homer [1817]; synonymes to the Homer [1847]; synonymes to Homer [1983]

1¶5 *abreast* on the desk [1817]; abreast on the desk [1847]

1¶6 not many years elder than himself [1817]; not many years older than himself [1847]

1¶8 Obruta! Vivit amor, vivit dolor! Ora [1817]; Obruta; vivit amor, vivit dolor; ora [1847].

‘*Petr. Ep. Lib. 1. Ep 1*’ [1817]; not in 1847; whole Latin quotation italicised in 1847 except for ‘qui’.

The footnote ‘I am most happy . . . men be limited’ is not in 1847.

1¶9 metaphysicks [1817]; metaphysics [1847]

dress in black [1817]; ‘dressed in black’ [1847]

(footnote) The Christ Hospital [1817]; footnote not in 1847; The Christ’s Hospital [1983]

1¶10 the Lewsdon Hill of Mr. CROW [1817]; ‘the Lewesdon Hill of Mr. Crowe’ [1847]

The skarfed bark [1817]; The scarfed bark [1847]
 personifications, or mere abstracts [1817]; personifications, or mere
 abstractions [1847]

(footnote) The Nutricia of Politian [1817]; The *Rusticus* of Politian
 [1847]

1¶11 *essential poetry*. Second [1817]; *essential poetry*;—secondly [1847]

1¶12 (*ex. gr.* the shorter blank verse poems, the lines which are now
 adopted in the introductory part of the VISION in the present collection
 in Mr Southey's Joan or Arc, 2nd book, 1st edition, and the tragedy
 of REMORSE) [1817]; (for example, the shorter blank verse poems, the
 lines, which now form the middle and conclusion of the poem entitled
 the Destiny of Nations, and the tragedy of Remorse) [1847]

(footnote) seems to have led Thompson [1817]; seems to have led
 Thomson [1847]

(footnote) Cowper leaves Thompson [1817]; Cowper leaves Thomson
 [1847]

2¶1 we well know [1817]; we know well [1847]

known to Mr. Pope [1817]; known to Pope [1847]

there reigns a cheerfulness [1817]; there reigns a cheerfulness [1847]

2¶2 In Spencer indeed [1817]; In Spenser, indeed [1847, 1983]

2¶6 anglo-gallican [1817]; Anglo-Gallican [1847]

explain, tho' by no [1817]; explain, though by no [1847]

(footnote) Homer, which, I do not [1817]; Homer, which I do not
 [1847]

examine with impartial strictness Grey's celebrated elegy [1817]; . . .
 Gray's . . . [1847]

(second footnote) Especially "in this AGE OF PERSONALITY [1817];
 Especially in this age of personality [1847]; The 1847 truncates this
 note at '. . . whispers and conjectures.'

The PARAS in Hindostan [1817]; the Paras in Hindostan [1847]; the
 PARIAS in Hindostan [1983]

It might correct the moral feelings [new paragraph begins here in
 1847]

that the "genus irritabile" [1817]; that the *genus irritabile* [1847]

shadow-fights (σκιομαχίας) in [1817]; shadow-fights in [1847] shad-
 ow-fights (σκιομαχίας) in [1983]

2¶7 GENIUS. But an experience (and . . . if I added) a tried [1817];

genius. But an experience—(and . . . if I added)—tried [1847]

quantum [1817]; *quantum* [1847]

2¶8 I cannot *afford it*. [1817] I cannot afford it. [1847]
 by woeful experience [1817]; by woful experience [1847]
 (final footnote) An instance in confirmation of the Note, p.39 [1817]
 Another instance in confirmation of these remarks [1847; which
 moves this whole addendum back to the original note]
 (says Mr. S.) [1817]; (says Seward) [1847]
 Spencer [1817]; Spenser [1847, 1983]

3¶1 (first footnote) daydreaming [1817]; day-dreaming [1847]
 (first footnote) an hundred other [1817]; a hundred other [1847]
 (first footnote) genus comprizes [1817]; genus comprises [1847]
 (first footnote) tete a tete quarrels [1817]; *tête-à-tête* quarrels [1847]
 (first footnote) advertisements of a daily advertizer [1817]; advertise-
 ments of a daily newspaper [1847]
 introduced for an eulogy [1817]; introduced for eulogy [1847]
 Averrhoes's [1817]; Averroes' [1847]
 (second footnote) moveable things [1817]; movable things [1847]
 (second footnote) etourderie [1817]; *étourderie* [1847]
 (second footnote) Welchman [1817]; Welshman [1847]
anger . . . surprize [1817]; anger . . . surprise
 judgement-seat [1817]; judgment-seat [1847]
 17 years [1817]; seventeen years [1847]

3¶2 mixt company [1817]; mixed company [1847]
 The entire 1817 footnote beginning 'Some years ago . . .' is omitted
 in 1847
 (footnote) W. SOUTHEY [1817]; SOUTHEY [1983]

3¶3 on *their* account . . . *other* . . . be *envy-mad!* [1817]; on their account
 . . . other . . . be envy-mad! [1847]

3¶4 Thomson [1817, 1847]; Thompson [1983]

3¶5 and Spinoza, are *not* read, because Hume, Condilliac, and Voltaire
are [1817]; and Spinoza, are not read, because Hume, Condillac, and
 Voltaire are [1847]

3¶6 explain. [1817]; explain? [1847]
 The solution may seem to have been given, or at least suggested, in a
 note to a preceding page. [1817]; The solution seems to be this,— [1847]
 "noscitur a socio" my [1817]; *noscitur a socio*, my [1847]; "noscitur a
 socio," my [1983]

3¶7 Quintilian [1817]; Quinctilian [1847]
 chuses to write [1817]; chooses to write [1847]
 (in the words of Jeremy Taylor) [1817]; not in 1847

3¶8 there was a gradual sinking in the etiquette or allowed style of pretension. [1847]; not in 1817

3¶9 guardianship of the muses [1817]; guardianship of the Muses [1847]

3¶10 se cogitâsse quám [1817]; se cogitare quam [1847]
“a Book was writ of late called Tetrachordon;” [1817] *“A Book was writ of late called Tetrachordon;”* [1847; the line set as an indented quotation]
 second psalm [1817]; second Psalm [1847]

3¶11 Hæc ipsi novimus esse nihil [set as an indented quotation in 1847]
 the writer of “Gulliver’s travels”, and the “Tale of a Tub.” [1817]; the writer of Gulliver, or the Tale of a Tub. [1847]

3¶12 the pastoral claims [1817]; the pastoral charms [1847, 1983]
 to his “Roderic,” [1817]; to his Roderick, [1847]
 the splendor of [1817]; the splendour of [1847]

3¶13 honor of human nature [1817]; honour of human nature [1847]
 stedfast in the performance [1817]; steadfast in the performance [1847]
 friends and honorers [1817]; friends and honourers [1847]

4¶1 clamors [1817]; clamours [1847]

4¶2 of “the lines written near Tintern Abbey,” those “left upon a Seat [1817]; admiration of the Lines written near Tintern Abbey, those Left upon a Seat [1847]
 or the “Simon Lee.” [1817]; or Simon Lee. [1847]

4¶3 I believe, that we may [1817]; I believe, we may [1847]
 (footnote) associate itself with the person who occasions it [1817]; associate itself with him who occasions it [1847]

4¶4 censure should have been grounded almost by each different [1817]; censure has been grounded by almost every different [1847]

4¶5 mentioned the “Alice Fell” [1817]; mentioned Alice Fell [1847]
 pamphlets [1817]; pamphlet [1847]
 (footnote) Shakespear [1817]; Shakespeare [1847]
 Χορος Βατραχων; Διονυσος [1817]; not in 1847; Χορὸς Βατράχων· Διόνυσος [1983]
 τούτω [1817]; τούτω [1847]
 ΚΟΑΞ, ΚΟΑΞ ! [1817]; ΚΟ’ΑΞ, ΚΟ’ΑΞ! [1847]

4¶6 demanded always [1817]; demands always [1847]
 Wide o’er the Alps a hundred streams unfold, [1817]; Those Eastern cliffs a hundred streams unfold, [1847]

4¶7 full developement [1817]; full development [1847]
 neither to need or permit [1817]; neither to need nor permit [1847]
 controul [1817]; control [1847]
 (second footnote) Mr. Wordsworth, even in his two earliest, [1817];
 Mr. Wordsworth, even in his two earliest poems, [1847]
 Spencerian . . . Spencer's [1817]; Spenserian . . . Spenser's [1847]
 "To find no contradiction in . . . exploded errors." THE FRIEND, page
 76, No.5. [1817]; not in 1847

4¶9 fancy and imagination [1817]; Fancy and Imagination [1847]
 Greek *Phantasia*, than [1817]; Greek *Φαντασία* than [1847]
 mixt languages [1817]; mixed languages [1847]
 appropriation had already begun [1817]; appropriation has already
 begun [1847]
 Lutes, lobsters, [1817]; Lutes, laurels, [1847]
 from Shakspear's [1817]; from Shakspeare's [1847]
 could not, I thought, but derive [1817]; could not but derive [1847]

4¶10 volume of synonimes [1817]; volume of synonymes [1847]
 (footnote) absolute synonimes [1817]; absolute synonymes [1847]
 (footnote) or more words, that [1817]; or more words, which
 [1847]
 (footnote) Hobbs [1817]; Hobbes [1847]

4¶11 labor [1817]; labour [1847]

5¶1 (and *passim*) idealism [1817]; Idealism [1847]
 (and *passim*) materialism [1817]; Materialism [1847]
 enquiring after [1817]; inquiring after [1847]
 (i.e. empirical) [1817]; (that is, an empirical) [1847]
 HOBBS [1817]; Hobbes [1847]
 to David Hartley [1817]; to Hartley [1847]

5¶2 Condeliac [1817]; Condilliac [1847, 1983]
 between this gentleman's philosophical creed [1817]; between Sir
 James Mackintosh's philosophical creed [1847]

5¶3 now in his joint [1817]; now in this joint [1847]
 in what consists [1817]; in what consist [1847]
 discoursûs mentalis [1817]; discursion of mind [1847]
 this by causes [1817]; and this by causes [1847]
 are renewed [1817]; is renewed [1847]
 (footnote) *Ιδεα* [1817]; *ιδέα* [1847]; *Ἰδέα* [1983]
 (footnote) Gospel of Matthew [1817]; Gospel of St. Matthew [1847]
 (footnote) *Ειδωλα* [1817]; *εἰδῶλον* [1847]; *εἰδῶλα* [1983]

(footnote) emblems, or mental words [1817]; emblem, or mental word [1847]

(footnote) In this sense the word became [1817]; In this sense the word Idea became [1847]

(footnote) end of Charles 2nd's reign [1817]; end of the reign of Charles II [1847]

(footnote) censor [1817]; censer [1847]

(footnote) Mr. Lock [1817]; Locke [1847]; Mr. Locke [1983]

(footnote) Mr. Hume [1817]; Hume [1847]

5¶4 repræsentare [1817]; representare [1847]

propter victorias ejus in eâ parte Asiæ in [1817]; propter victorias ejus de Asia, in [1847]

5¶5 and of these principally to the [1817]; and of these in particular to the [1847]

“De Anima,” “De Memoria,” and that which is entitled in the old translations “Parva Naturalia.” [1817]; “De Anima,” and “De Memoria,” which last belongs to the series of essays entitled in the old translations “Parva Naturalia.” [1847]

5¶6 Υποποιησεῖς [1817]; ὑποποιησεῖς [1847]; ὑποποιήσεις [1983]

Κινησεῖς [1817]; κινήσεις [1847]; κινήσεις [1983]

Ἐν τόπῳ [1817]; ἐν τόπῳ [1847, 1983]

5¶7 to recal [1817]; to recall [1847]

Psychology [1817]; Psychology [1847]

5¶8 shewed [1817]; showed [1847]

6¶1 Maasse [1817]; Maass [1847]

προπαιευτικον [1817]; προπαιεύτικον [1847]; προπαιευτικόν [1983]

6¶2 differently colored [1817]; differently coloured [1847]

black, &c. and [1817]; black, and [1847]

6¶6 rabinical dialect [1817]; rabbinical dialect [1847]

from him learnt [1817]; from him learned [1847]

Anxious enquiries [1817]; Anxious inquiries [1847]

6¶7 to all whose links, [1817]; with all the links of which, [1847]

μηδέποτε [1817]; μηδὲ [1847]

καλά [1817, 1847]; καλά [1983]

τῇ ἐα [1817]; τῇ θέα [1847]

Ἡλιον [1817]; ἥλιον [1847]

ἡλιοειδῆς [1817]; ἡλιοειδῆς [1847]

Καλον [1817]; καλὸν [1847]; Καλὸν [1983]

In 1847, the footnote follows directly after the Greek in the main body of the text.

7¶1 whose function it is to controul [1817]; the function of which it is to control [1847]

phantasma chaos [1817]; phantasmal chaos [1847]

tho' this [1817]; though this [1847]

elements are reduced [1817]; elements, is reduced [1847]

B' another name [1817]; By another name [1847]

7¶2 inventor of the watch did not [1817]; inventor of the watch, if this doctrine be true, did not [1847]

7¶4 An hundred [1817]; A hundred [1847]

7¶5 aids the force [1817]; may aid the force [1847]

controul over it [1817]; control over it [1847]

7¶6 mackarel [1817]; mackerel [1847]

chearful [1817]; cheerful [1847]

that disposes us to notice [1817]; disposing us to notice [1847]

8¶1 its opposite [1817]; its contrary [1847]

towards his child? [1817]; towards his child. [1847]

8¶4 Price! He stript [1817]; Price. He stripped [1847]

8¶5 The hypothesis [1817]; That the hypothesis [1847]

whence? and why? is no answer to the how? [1817]; Whence and Why is no answer to the How, [1847]

a mere sophisma pigrum [1817]; a *sophisma pigrum* [1847]

9¶1 find in neither of them [1817]; find in none of them [1847]

Condillac: and what Hume [1817]; Condillac: and then what Hume [1847]

(footnote) Vide Kritik der reinen Vernunft, p.95, and 106. [1817]; See *Kritik der reinen Vernunft*. [1847] See Kritik der reinen Vernunft, p.95, and 106. [1983]

Σόφισμα Ἐτεροζήτησεως [1817]; σόφισμα ἑτεροζήτησεως [1847]; σόφισμα Ἐτεροζήτησεως [1983]

9¶2 Gemistius Pletho [1817, 1847]; Gemistus Pletho [1983]

in the year 1660 [1817]; in the year 1600 [1847]

9¶4 inrolled in the guilds [1817]; enrolled in the guilds [1847]

priviledges [1817]; privileges [1847]

moneychangers [1817]; *money-changers* [1847]

- 9¶5 DE THOYRAS [1817]; Thaulerus [1847]
- 9¶6 the “METAPHISICAL ELEMENTS [1817]; the Metaphysical Elements [1847]
- 9¶7 Φώνησε Συνέτοισιν [1817]; Φώνησε συνετοῖσιν [1847, 1983]
- 9¶8 (footnote) ΕΓΩΝΚΑΙΠΙΑΝ [1817]; ἘΓΩΝΚΑΙΠΙΑΝ’ [1847, 1983]
 (footnote) Gymnasio [1817]; Gymnasic [1847]
 (footnote) scoff’d [1817]; scoffed [1847]
- 9¶10 for the honors so [1817]; for the honours so [1847]
 (footnote) honorable name [1817]; honourable name [1847]
 (footnote) compleatly [1817]; completely [1847]
 the 1st volume [1817]; the first volume [1847]
- 9¶11 quám dedit Barbaries [1817]; *quam dedit barbaries* [1847]
 circumducit [1817]; *circumducens* [1847]
- 9¶12 rebus humanis commodorum [1817]; commodorum rebus humanis [1847]
 ut ita dicam [1817]; ut sic dicam [1847]
 et usum [1817]; ac usum [1847]
- 9¶13 know to be fittest [1817]; know to be the fittest [1847]
 Impatience [1817]; impatency [1847]
- 9¶14 or received [1817]; nor received [1847]
 calcular [1817]; calcolar [1847]
- 10¶1 εις εν πλαττειν [1817]; εις εν πλαττειν [1847, 1983]
 musæum [1817]; museum [1847]
 cloyster [1817]; cloister [1847]
- 10¶3 canvas [1817]; canvass [1847]
- 10¶5 journies [1817]; journeys [1847]
 an hardship [1817]; a hardship [1847]
- 10¶6 humor [1817]; humour [1847]
- 10¶7 cloysters [1817]; cloisters [1847]
- 10¶8 κατ’ εμφασιν [1817]; κατ’ εμφασιν [1847, 1983]
 a strait line [1817]; a straight line [1847]
 that I suppose [1817]; which I suppose [1847]
 and, (I was informed) had [1817]; and, as I was informed, had [1847]
 hums and haas [1817]; hums and has [1847]
 I prophecied [1817]; I prophesied [1847]

odors snatched from beds of Amaranth [1817]; odours snatched from
beds of amaranth [1847]

chrystal river [1817]; crystal river [1847]

10¶10 canvas [1817]; canvass [1847]

10¶11 I sunk back [1817]; I sank back [1847]

there dropt [1817]; there dropped [1847]

to an early hour [1817]; till an early hour [1847]

that the employment was neither fit for me [1817]; that neither was
the employment fit for me [1847]

10¶12 so completely hag-ridden [1817]; so completey hag-ridden
[1847]

10¶14 (footnote) Συκουσ φαινειν [1817]; entire footnote omitted in
1847; Σύκουσ φαίνειν [1983]

10¶15 to prize and honor [1817]; to prize and honour [1847]

10¶16 that/——he went [1817]; that he/——went [1847]

10¶18 “honourable men” [1817]; “honourable men” [1847]

common people! [1817]; common people? [1847]

No, your honor! [1817]; No, your Honour! [spelt and capitalised thus
throughout this paragraph in 1847]

tufts of Bent [1817]; tufts of bent [1847, 1983]

sloping coombs [1817]; sloping coombes [1847]

10¶19 differs from them in one [1817]; differs from them but in one
[1847]

10¶20 peasant’s war [1817]; Peasants’ war [1847]

Anabaptist’s [1817]; Anabaptists’ [1847]

he might deceive [1817]; he should deceive [1847]

vigor [1817]; vigour [1847]

10¶22 my mind sunk [1817]; my mind sank [1847]

10¶23 governor [1817]; governour [1847]

10¶26 false shew [1817]; false show [1847]

logical. [1817]; logical.* [1847; with additional footnote]

10¶27 Hereticorum [1817]; Hæreticorum [1847]

10¶29 WEDGEWOOD [1817]; WEDGWOOD [1847, 1983]

- 10¶30 cobbler [1817]; cobbler [1847]
- 10¶34 perusal of the work [1817]; perusal of the works of Opitz [1847]
- 10¶36 Mr. Percival . . . of the Percival [1817]; Mr. Perceval . . . of the Perceval [1847]
 (footnote) intoxicated and bewildered [1817]; intoxicated with alarm and bewildered [1847]
 (footnote) learnt [1817]; learned [1847]
 (footnote) shrunk appalled [1817]; shrank appalled [1847]
- 10¶37 the night [1817]; that night [1847]
 CARTWRIGHT'S *Prol. To the Royal Slave* [1817]; not in 1847
- 10¶38 remuneration, or [1817]; remuneration, nor [1847]
 acknowledgement [1817]; acknowledgment [1847]
 (second footnote) θηρα' [1817]; θηρα̃ [1847, 1983]
- 10¶40 crambe [1817]; *cramben* [1847]
- 10¶41 self-controul [1817]; self-control [1847]
- 11¶1 “suppose yourself . . . the question. [1817]; “suppose yourself . . . the question.” [1847, 1983]
 cotemporary [1817]; contemporary [1847]
- 11¶2 self-controul [1817]; self-control [1847]
- 11¶3 phenomenon [1817]; *phaenomenon* [1847]
 amelioration [1817]; melioration [1847]
 unburthensome [1817]; unburdensome [1847]
- 11¶4 escutchion! [1817]; escutcheon! [1847]
- 11¶5 woefully [1817]; wofully [1847]
- 12¶6 all men, or [1817]; all men, nor [1847]
 (first footnote) surprized [1817]; surprised [1847]
 (first footnote) compleat it [1817]; complete it [1847]
 (first footnote) Synonimes . . . synonymes [1817]; synonymes . . . synonymes [1847]
 have learnt [1817]; have learned [1847]
 (second footnote) γενόμενον [1817, 1847]; γενόμενόν [1983]
 (second footnote) σιωπησις . . . σιωπώσης [1817]; σιώπησις . . . σιωπώσης [1847, 1983]
 (second footnote) γενομένη ἐκ θεώριας [1817]; γενομένη ἐκ θεώριας [1847, 1983]

(second footnote) *υπαρχει* (*mallet*, *καί μοι ἦε γενομένη ἐκ θεωρίας* [1817];
ὑπάρχει (*mallet*, *καί μοι ἦ γενομένη ἐκ θέωρίας* [1847, 1983])

(second footnote) *Ὡδὶς ἰρα, Ἀρρητε Γονδ.* [1817]; *Ὡδὶς ἱερά, Ἄρρητε Γονά.*
 (indented as two lines of verse) [1847]; with the same accents and
 breathings as 1847, but re-embedded in the body of the text [1983]

12¶7 to enquire [1817]; to inquire [1847]

12¶9 (footnote) *Εἴν . . . Εἴν . . . Εἴν* [1817]; *Ἐν . . . Ἐν . . . Ἐν* [1847, 1983]
 (footnote) *πσντων* [1817]; *Πάντων* [1847, 1983]

(footnote) *Μύσας δέ Νόος* [1817, 1847]; *Μύστας δέ Νόος* [1983]

(footnote) *Ἀμφιχορέυων* [1817, 1847]; *Ἀμφιχορύων* [1983]

(footnote) *Σὺ τὸ φωτίζιον* [1817]; *Σὺ τὸ φωτίζον* [1847]; *Σὺ τὸ φῶτιζον*
 [1983]

(footnote) calling God *Φυσις ἐν Νοεροις* [1817]; calling God *Φύσις ἐν*
Νοεροῖς [1847, 1983]

(footnote) Hymn [1817]; Hymns [1847, 1983]

(footnote) 15th [1817]; fifteenth [1847]

reconcilable [1817]; reconcilable [1847]

J'ai trouvé . . . de ce qu'elles . . . en ce qu'elles [1817]; *J'ai trouvé . . . de*
ce qu'elles . . . ce qu'elles [1847, 1983]

12¶10 strait line [1817]; straight line [1847, *passim*]

12¶13 *Γνωθι σεαυτον* [1817]; *Γνώθι σεαυτόν* [1847, 1983]

12¶18 voluntary [1817]; voluntarily [1847]

et preter [1817]; et præter [1847]

12¶28 fills at the intervening spaces [1817]; fills up the intervening
 spaces [1847]; fills out the intervening spaces [1983]

12¶35 (footnote) J. Newton [1817, 1847]; I. Newton [1983]

12¶39 enquire [1817]; inquire [1847]

12¶40 the fixt point [1817]; the fixed point [1847]

morticed [1817]; mortised [1847]

already been shown in pages 115–16 [1817]; already been shown in
 pages 258, 259 [1847]

whirl'd [1817]; whirled [1847]

πατηρ αυτοπατωρ, ιος εαυτου [1817]; *πατήρ αὐτοπάτωρ, υἱὸς ἑαυτοῦ* [1847,
 1983]

Malbranche [1817]; Malebranche [1847]

12¶42 metaphysicks [1817]; metaphysics [1847]

(footnote) seduce the incautious [1817]; seduces the incautious [1847]

- 12¶45 Γνώθι σέαυτον [1817]; Γνώθι σεαυτόν [1847]
- 12¶46 Condiliac [1817]; Condillac [1847]; Condilliac [1983]
- 12¶48 Wordsworth's "only objection is [1817]; Wordsworth's "objection is only [1847]
to evoke and combine [1817]; to evoke and to combine [1847]
Mr. W. [1817]; Mr. Wordsworth [1847]
such readers. [1817]; such readers! [1847]
- 13¶2 Berkley [1817]; Berkeley [1847]
Wolff [1817]; Wolf [1847]
- 13¶6 *in your note*, p. 75, 76 [1817]; *in your note in Chap. IV* [1847]
- 13¶7 what shadow seem'd [1817]; that shadow seem'd [1847]
- 13¶10 *Bishop Berkley's Siris* [1817]; *Bishop Berkeley's Siris* [1847]
- 13¶13 The secondary I consider [1817]; The secondary Imagination I consider [1847]
- 13¶14 time and space; and blended [1817]; time and space; while it is blended [1847]
it must receive [1817]; the Fancy must receive [1847]
- 13¶15 Whatever more than this . . . END OF VOLUME FIRST. [1817]; This whole paragraph is omitted in 1847.
- 14¶4 in what points I coincide with his opinions, and [1817]; in what points I coincide with the opinions supported in that preface, and [1847]
explain my ideas, [1817]; explain my views, [1847]
- 14¶5 of a different object proposed [1817]; of a different object being proposed [1847]
- 14¶8 distichs [1817]; distiches [1847]
makes it separate whole, instead of an harmonizing part; [1817];
forms a separate whole, instead of a harmonizing part; [1847]
Precipitandus [1817]; Præcipitandus [1847]
says Petronius Arbiter [1817]; says Petronius [1847]
- 14¶9 or ought [1817]; nor ought [1847]
- 14¶10 in the preceding disquisition on the fancy and imagination. [1817]; in some of the remarks on the Fancy and Imagination in the early part of this work. [1847]
controul [1817]; control [1847]
balance or reconciliation [1817]; balance or reconcilement [1847]

- 15¶1 appraisal [1817]; appraisalment [1847]
 Shakspear [1817]; Shakspeare [1847]
 Αἴνρη μυριονοῦς [1817]; Ἀνήρ μυριόνους [1847]; Ἄνῆρ μυριόνους [1983]
- 15¶3 fervor [1817]; fervour [1847]
 Hence it is, that from [1817]; Hence it is, from [1847]
- 15¶8 in his Sonnet 98 [1817]; in his 98th Sonnet [1847]
- 15¶9 Γονίμου μὲν Ποιητου [1817]; Γονίμου μὲν Ποιητοῦ [1847, 1983]
 οσις ρημα γενναιον λακαι [1817]; ὅστις ῥῆμα γενναῖον λάκαι [1847, 1983]
 fair arms, that held him to her heart, [1817]; fair arms, which bound
 him to her breast, [1847]
 dark lawns [1817]; dark laund [1847]
- 15¶10 Must *we* be free or die [1817]; *We* must be free or die [1847]
- 16¶1 even the stile [1817]; even the style [1847]
 “De la nobile volgare eloquenza,” [1817]; *De la volgare Eloquenza*, [1847]
 “Animadvertē, quam . . . circa res!” HOBBS: *Exam. et Emend. hod. Math*
 [1817]; *Animadvertē*, says Hobbes, *quam . . . circa ipsas res!* [1847]
 opus non est. [1817]; opus non sit. [1847]
 “Sat vero, . . . vivat.” SENNERTUS *de Puls: Differentiâ*. [1817]; *Sat [vero]*,
says Sennertus . . . vivat. [1847]
 ος αν τα ονοματα ειδει, ισεται και τα πραγματα . . . αρχη παιδευσως η των
 ονοματων επισκεψις . . . η των ονοματων χρησις παραχθεισα και την των
 πραγματων επιταραττει γνωσιν, [1817]; ὅς ἂν τὰ ὀνόματα εἶδει ἐπίτητα ἴσεται
 καὶ τὰ πράγματα . . . ἀρχὴ παιδεύσως ἢ τῶν ὀνομάτων ἐπίσκεψις . . . ἢ τῶν
 ὀνομάτων χρήσις παραχθεῖσα καὶ τὴν τῶν πράγματῶν ἐπιταράττει γνῶσιν,
 [1847, 1983]
- 16¶3 15th and 16th century, especially with those [1817]; fifteenth
 and sixteenth centuries, especially those [1847]
 (footnote) 1st May 1593 [1817]; in May, 1593 [1847]
 (footnote) to their deceased paternal uncle [1817]; to their paternal
 uncle [1847]
 (footnote) yet in the perusal [1817]; yet to the perusal [1847]
 (footnote) of the doric, the lyric [1817]; of the Doric for the lyric [1847]
 (footnote) why, that . . . slovenly thing.” [1817]; “Why, that . . . slovenly
 thing.” [1847]
 (footnote) Quintilian [1817]; Quinctilian [1847]
 (footnote) 1847 omits the subtitle ‘MADRIGALE’ before each separate
 poem, and runs the first and second poems together.
 (footnote) Festa ed Allegrezza [1817]; festa et allegrezza [1847]
 (footnote) hor dell vago . . . Hor dell serene [1817]; hor del vago . . .

- Hor del serene [1847]
 (footnote) diceudo? Io mi par pruovo [1817]; dicendo? Io mi pur
 pruovo [1847]
 (footnote) l'Eco [1817]; l'Ecco [1847]
- 17¶1 accompanying truth [1817]; accompanying truths [1847]
- 17¶2 yet as a *rule* it is useless [1817]; it is yet as a *rule* useless
 [1847]
- 17¶5 footnote omitted in its entirety in 1847
- 17¶6 Green-head Gill [1817]; Green-head Ghyll [1847]
- 17¶7 a real and native [1817]; the real and native [1847]
- 17¶8 pourtrayed [1817]; portrayed [1847]
 Nurse itself can be deemed [1817]; Nurse can be deemed [1847]
- 17¶9 appears to be its real defects [1817]; appear to be its real defects
 [1847, 1983]
- 17¶11 life) *I have* [1817]; life) “has been adopted; I have [1847]
 New paragraph starts at ‘Between the language . . .’ in 1847
- 17¶12 Neither one or [1817]; Neither one nor [1847]
 or barber [1817]; and barber [1847]
- 17¶13 Henry VIIIth [1817]; Henry VIII [1847]
- 18¶2 public road alone [1817]; public roads, alone [1847]
- 18¶4 And compare this with [1817]; 1847 does not begin a new para-
 graph here, but runs on ¶3 with ‘and compare . . .’
- 18¶5 (footnote) a difference. The [1817]; a difference, the [1847]
 dolefully chaunts [1817]; dolefully chants [1847]
- 18¶7 burthen of the proof [1817]; burden of the proof [1847]
 wonted tributes [1817]; wonted tribute [1847]
- 18¶9 gilly-flowers [1817]; gilliflowers [1847]
 mean. So, ev’n that art, [1817]; mean; so, o’er that art, [1847]
 ruder kind [1817]; baser kind [1847]
- 18¶10 surprize [1817]; surprise [1847]
- 18¶11 Welch ‘Squire [1817]; Welsh Squire [1847]
- 18¶14 BEGGARS, AND THE SAILOR’S [1817]; BEGGARS, and THE SAILOR’S
 [1847, 1983]

18¶16 Now run-down [1817]; Now ran down [1847]

18¶24 hacknied [1817]; hackneyed [1847]

18¶25 waggoner [1817]; wagoner [1847]

wandering are. [1817]; wandering arre. [1847]

chanticleer [1817]; chaunticleer [1847]

room [1817]; roome [1847]

Book I. Can. 2. St. 2. and *B. I. Can 5, St. 2.* [1817]; not in 1847

18¶30 distinction of rhyme and metre is voluntary and uniform [1817]; distinction of rhyme and metre is regular and uniform [1847]

havock [1817]; havoc [1847]

μορφωσις, not ποιησις [1817]; μόρφωσις, not ποιησις [1847, 1983]

smiles or frowns! [1817]; smiles nor frowns! [1847]

18¶32 harp-controuling [1817]; harp-controlling [1847]

19¶1 passed too current with too many [1817]; passed current with too many [1847]

phenomenon [1817]; phænomenon [1847; and throughout this chapter]

19¶2 Spencer [1817]; Spenser [1847]

Fairy Queen [1817]; FAERY QUEEN [1847]

19¶3 Chaucer's Troilus and Creseide. [1817]; Chaucer's TROILUS AND CRESEIDE. [1847]; Chaucer's "Troilus and Creseide"? [1983]

went [1817]; wente [1847]

yondir hill [1817]; yonder hil [1847]

my leave [1817]; my leve [1847]

which mine hearte [1817]; whiche mine hert [1847]

heviness? [1817]; hevinesse? [1847]

they saien [1817]; thei saien [1847]

full soon [1817]; ful soon [1847]

19¶5 cloathing [1817]; clothing [1847]

19¶6 dye . . . dye . . . dye [1817]; die . . . die . . . die [1847]

A nest, where sweets [1817]; A box, where sweets [1847]

Lookt on [1817]; Look'd on [1847]

you knew me [1817]; you know me [1847]

washt [1817]; wash'd [1847]

Walkt [1817]; Walk'd [1847]

20¶1 Mr W.'s [1817]; Mr Wordsworth's [1847]

- 20¶3 sand-lark chaunts [1817]; sand-lark chants [1847]
- 20¶7 (footnote) vallies [1817]; valleys [1847]
(footnote) BROADWATER [1817]; Brodwater [1847]
- 20¶8 *rusting in the halls* [1817]; *rusting in his halls* [1847]
- 20¶9 ἀσυναρτητὸν [1817]; ἀσυνάρτητον [1847, 1983]
- 21¶5 cheerfully than if I could enquire [1817]; cheerfully than if I
could inquire [1847]
nor utter ought [1817]; nor utter aught [1847]
- 21¶11 The happiest, gayest attitude of things. [1817]; The gayest,
happiest attitude of things. [1847]
- 21¶12 didactick [1817]; didactic [1847]
journies [1817]; journeys [1847]
- 22¶2 sometimes does [1817]; sometimes doth [1847]
- 22¶6 colors [1817]; colours [1847]
atchieved [1817]; achieved [1847]
- 22¶8 myself chearfully [1817]; myself cheerfully [1847]
- 22¶12 φιλοσοφικώτατον [1817]; φιλοσοφώτατον [1847, 1983]
Hobbs [1817]; Hobbes [1847]
- 22¶15 chuse [1817]; choose [1847]
a laurel'd bard &c. or [1817]; a laurelled bard, or [1847]
leach-gatherer [1817]; Leech-gatherer [1847]
- 22¶16 The vision send the faculty divine [1817]; The vision and the
faculty divine [1847]
Eschylus [1817]; Æschylus [1847]
- 22¶21 the Sixth Book of the Excursion. [1817]; the VIth Book of THE
EXCURSION. [1847]
- 22¶23 Vol. I. p. 320. [1817]; Vol. i. p. 328. [1847]; Vol. I. p. 329.
[1983]
- 22¶24 *gypsies* [1817]; Gipsies [1847]
- 22¶25 presence that is not [1817]; presence which is not [1847]
- 22¶27 and J. answered [1817]; and Jacobi answered [1847]
- 22¶33 Mr. W.'s [1817]; Mr. Wordsworth's [1847]

22¶35 See page 25, vol. 2nd: [1817]; See page 25, vol. ii.: [1847]
 Buonoparte, page 202, vol. 2; [1817]; Bonaparte, page 202, vol. ii.;
 [1847]

vol. 2, p. 312. [1817]; vol. ii. p. 312. [1847]

22¶36 Elizabethian [1817]; Elizabethan [1847]
 privileged [1817]; privileged [1847]

22¶37 io credo, [1817]; i' credo, [1847]
 Che tua ragione [1817]; Color, che tua ragione [1847]

22¶38 Πολλα οἱ ὑπ' ἀγκῶ [1817]; Πολλά οἱ ὑπ' ἀγκῶ- [1847, 1983]
 εντι [1817]; ἐντι [1847, 1983]
 παν ερμηνέως [1817]; πᾶν ἐρμηνέων [1847]; πᾶν ἐρμηνέως [1983]
 —λα εἰδῶς [1817]; λὰ εἰδῶς [1847, 1983]

22¶41 vol. I. page 42 to 47, [1817]; vol. i. page 42 to 47, [1847]; vol.
 I. page 44 to 47, [1983]

22¶47 prophane [1817]; profane [1847]
 Glanamara's [1817]; Glazamara's [1847]; Glaramara's [1983]

22¶52 magnolia magniflora [1817]; magnolia grandi-flora [1847];
 magnolia magniflora [1983]

22¶54 “men of palsied . . . languid; [1817]; ***men of palsied . . . lan-
 guid;*** [1847]
 feel as the many direct [1817]; feed as the many direct [1847]

22¶55 This entire paragraph (“Let not Mr. Wordsworth be charged
 . . . *the white of their eye?*”) is omitted in 1847.

22¶56 accelerated or [1817]; accelerated nor [1847]

22¶58 present volumes, [1817]; present volume, [1847]

SL1¶1 Pacquet [1817]; packet [1847; here and *passim*]

SL1¶2 than of of those *with* whom [1817]; than of those *with* whom
 [1847]

awaked by one [1817]; awakened by one [1847]
 could not talk so of presens [1817]; could not talk so of præsens [1847]

SL1¶4 ANSW [1817]; ANSWER [1847; throughout this paragraph]

SL1¶6 7 o'clock [1817]; seven o'clock [1847]
 tete a tete [1817]; *tête-à-tête* [1847]

SL1¶12 This holme [1817]; This holm [1847]
 facade . . . facade [1817]; *façade . . . façade* [1847]

SL2¶1 Amptschreiberin [1817]; Amtsschreiberin [1847]

SL2¶3 chearful expression of surprize [1817]; cheerful expression of surprise [1847]

SL2¶5 smoaking [1817]; smoking [1847]
bole [1817]; bowl [1847]
ancles [1817]; ankles [1847]
satyrist [1817]; satirist [1847]
humourous [1817]; humorous [1847]

SL2¶6 spoke with extacy [1817]; spoke with ecstasy [1847]
origination of this disastrous war [1817]; organization of this disastrous war [1847]

SL2¶7 Buonaparte [1817]; Bonaparte [1847]
fullness [1817]; fulness [1847]
entrusted [1817]; intrusted [1847]

SL2¶11 Shakespeare [1817]; Shakspeare [1847; throughout this paragraph]
pourtray [1817]; portray [1847]
cloathed [1817]; clothed [1847]

SL2¶17 surprized [1817]; surprised [1847]

SL2¶18 Sestine [1817]; Sixtine [1847]; Sistine [1983]

SL2¶21 courtezans [1817]; courtesans [1847]

SL2¶23 Sampson [1817]; Samson [1847, 1983]

SL2¶26 heighth and vigour [1817]; height and vigor [1847]

SL3¶1 Amptman [1817]; Amptmamn [1847, throughout this paragraph]
unplaistered [1817]; unplastered [1847]

SL3¶4 enormously swoln [1817]; enormously swollen [1847]
chearful [1817]; cheerful [1847]
perriwig . . . perriwig [1817]; periwig . . . periwig [1847]

SL3¶6 Priestly [1817]; Priestley [1847, 1983]
increase its romantic character [1817]; increase its romantic character [1847]

SL3¶7 Koenigsburg [1817]; Königsberg [1847]; Koenigsberg [1983]
sacrificed it to the Greek [1817]; sacrificed it to the Greeks [1847]
Burgher [1817]; Bürger [1847, 1983]

Grey, except his Essay in the churchyard [1817]; Gray, except his ELEGY written in a country CHURCH-YARD [1847]; Gray, except his Elegy in the churchyard [1983]

rhymes of Pope [1817]; rhyme of Pope [1847]

no language could ever be [1817]; no language could be [1847]

SL3¶9 these notes &c. are [1817]; these notes are [1847]

23¶3 *lucri bonus ordor* [1817]; *lucri bonus odor* [1847, 1983]

23¶4 take the author's words [1817]; take the authors' words [1847]

23¶6 phenomenon [1817]; phænomenon [1847]

23¶7 The latter gives its *living* interest [1817, 1847]; The latter gives it its *living* interest [1983, following *Courier*]

compleatly [1817]; completely [1847]

23¶8 it is among the miseries [1817, 1847]; it is among the mysteries [1983, following *Courier*]

23¶10 Shakespeare's male . . . Shakespear's own gigantic intellect [1817]; Shakspeare's male . . . Shakspeare's own gigantic intellect [1847]

23¶19 (second footnote) thus doth women love [1817, 1847]; thus doth woman love [1983, following *Courier*]

23¶22 tete-a-tete [1817]; *tête-à-tête* [1847]

Lord St. Aldobrand [1817, 1847]; Lord Aldobrand [1983]

23¶23 on account of the St. Aldobrand's absence! [1817, 1847]; on account of St. Aldobrand's absence! [1983, following *Courier*]

23¶25 4th act [1817]; fourth act [1847]

choirister boys [1817]; chorister boys [1847]

wizzard [1817]; wizard [1847]

gipsey incantations [1817]; gipsy incantations [1847]

Jack o'Lanthorn-lights [1817]; Jack o' Lantern-lights [1847]

I died no felon's death, [1817]; I die no felon's death, [1847]

24¶1 chearfulness [1817]; cheerfulness [1847]

Fugerit ocus [1817]; Fugerit ocus [1847]

Cura volat [1817]; Cura volat [1847]

24¶2 the ludicrous effect which the first sentence [1817]; the ludicrous effect produced on my mind by the first sentence [1847]; the ludicrous effect of the first sentence [1983]

- I rose into exist on [1817]; I rose into existence on [1847, 1983]
 Faery Tale [1817]; Fairy Tale [1847]
 In the Edinburgh Review it was assailed . . . of its kind in the language
 [1817]; this whole sentence was cut in 1847
 (footnote) Γνώθι σέαυτον [1817]; Γνώθι σεαυτόν [1847, 1983]
 (footnote) licet et in Deo [1817]; licet inque Deo [1847; the Latin is set
 out as verse]
 King Emerich! [1817]; King Emerick! [1847]
- 24¶3 Ah! surer than [1817]; O surer than [1847]
- 24¶4 overt-act [1817]; overt action [1847, 1983]
 was chosen to review it [1817]; undertook to review it [1847]
- 24¶7 compleatly [1817]; completely [1847]
 mens amore [1817]; mens hoc amore [1847]
- 24¶8 God only can know [1817]; God can only know [1847]
 PINDAR Nem. Ode xi.: [1817 prints this stanza without accents or
 breathings; 1847 and 1983 print it as follows]:
- Ἄλλὰ βροτῶν
 Τὸν μὲν κενεόφρονες [1847; κενόφρονες 1983] αὐχαι
 Ἐξ ἀγαθῶν ἔβαλον.
 Τὸν δ' αὖ καταμεμφθέντ' ἄγαν
 Ἴσχυν οἰκείων παρέσφαλεν [κατέσφαλεν, 1983] καλῶν,
 Χειρὸς ἔλκων ὀπίσσω θυμὸς ἄτολμος ἐών. [last word not in 1983]
- 24¶9 shewing [1817]; showing [1847]
 awful depth [1817]; awful depth [1847]
 ΘΕΩ ΜΟΝΩ ΔΟΞΑ. [1817]; ΘΕΩι ΜΟΝΩι ΔΟΞΑ. [1847, 1983]

