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# LYRICAL BALLADS 1798 AND 1800

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Review Copy

LYRICAL BALLADS  
1798 AND 1800

William Wordsworth and  
Samuel Coleridge

*edited by Michael Gamer and Dahlia Porter*



broadview editions

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## Abbreviations

The following standard editions are cited parenthetically in the text and notes using the following abbreviations.

- CLB* William Wordsworth and Samuel Coleridge, *Lyrical Ballads and Other Poems 1797–1800*, ed. James Butler and Karen Green (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1992).
- CMLL* *Letters of Charles and Mary Anne Lamb*, ed. Edwin Marrs (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1975).
- JCR* Joseph Cottle, *Reminiscences of Samuel Coleridge and Robert Southey* (London: Houlston & Stoneman, 1847).
- MM* Mary Moorman, *William Wordsworth: A Biography*, 2 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon, 1957).
- STCL* *Collected Letters of Samuel Coleridge*, 6 vols., ed. Earl Leslie Griggs (Oxford: Clarendon, 1956–71).
- STCW* *Collected Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge: Poetical Works*, 6 vols., ed. J.C.C. Mays (Princeton: Princeton UP, 2001).
- WJ* Dorothy Wordsworth, *The Grasmere and Alfoxden Journals*, ed. Pamela Woof (Oxford and New York: Oxford UP, 2002).
- WL* *The Letters of William and Dorothy Wordsworth*, 2nd ed., ed. Ernest de Selincourt. Volume 1: *The Early Years, 1797–1805*, rev. Chester L. Shaver (Oxford: Clarendon, 1967); Volume 2: *The Middle Years, Part I, 1806–1811*, rev. Mary Moorman (Oxford: Clarendon, 1969); Volume 3: *The Middle Years, Part II, 1812–1820*, rev. Mary Moorman and Alan G. Hill (Oxford: Clarendon, 1970); Volume 4: *The Later Years, Part I, 1821–1828*, rev. Alan G. Hill (Oxford: Clarendon, 1978); Volume 5: *The Later Years, Part II, 1829–1834*, rev. Alan G. Hill (Oxford: Clarendon, 1979); Volume 6: *The Later Years, Part III, 1835–1839*, rev. Alan G. Hill (Oxford: Clarendon, 1982); Volume 7: *The Later Years, Part IV, 1840–1853*, rev. Alan G. Hill (Oxford: Clarendon, 1988).
- WP* *The Prose Works of William Wordsworth*, 3 vols., ed. W.J.B. Owen and Jane Worthington Smyser (Oxford: Clarendon, 1974).

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## Introduction

### “reckoned as *nothing*”

Given its iconic position within histories of British Romanticism, it is easy to forget that readers did not always value *Lyrical Ballads* to the degree we value it now—or to imagine that at any point in its literary life a work of William Wordsworth and Samuel Coleridge could have been considered worthless by publishers. Yet, this was exactly the case in October 1799, when Bristol printer Joseph Cottle formally gave up the publishing part of his business and moved to sell his copyrights to T.N. Longman, a bookseller of London. Having made his appraisal, Longman informed Cottle that the value of *Lyrical Ballads* was “reckoned as *nothing*” (*JCR*, 259; *MM*, I:487), and so Cottle retained the copyright and presented it as a gift to Wordsworth.

Part of the reason Cottle left publishing no doubt stemmed from this kind of generosity. He had opened his bookstore and print shop in Bristol in 1791 at the age of twenty-one and, three years later, had met Coleridge and Robert Southey at a time when the two were planning to set up a radical utopian community called Pantisocracy on the banks of the Susquehanna River in Pennsylvania.<sup>1</sup> Cottle was charmed with the two poets and with their scheme of emigration, selling tickets to Coleridge’s Pantisocracy lectures and commissioning portraits of each. To facilitate their respective marriages to Sara and Edith Fricker, he generously had offered Coleridge and Southey thirty guineas each for the right to print their poems, and an additional fifty guineas to Southey to publish his *Joan of Arc* (1796). A year later, the idea for Pantisocracy had fallen through but the marriages had not, and during the rest of the 1790s Cottle continued to

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1 Borrowing from Jean-Jacques Rousseau’s idea of primitive man’s purity, Coleridge and Southey imagined a community beyond the reach of the corruptions of European civilization in which communal property, equal say in government, and equal shares of labor would ensure virtue and intellectual freedom. The idealism of the scheme is captured in Southey’s 1794 effusion: “When Coleridge and I are sawing down a tree we shall discuss metaphysics; criticize poetry while hunting a buffalo, and write sonnets whilst following the plough.” See *New Letters of Robert Southey, Volume One: 1792–1810*, ed. Kenneth Curry (New York: Columbia UP, 1965), 72.

publish not only Coleridge and Southey but also Coleridge's friends Charles Lamb, Charles Lloyd, and (in 1800) Mary Robinson. He remains a figure perhaps unique in the history of literature: a provincial bookseller who, though publishing fewer than one hundred books in his lifetime, commissioned formative and key works by five of the most important writers of British Romanticism: Coleridge, Lamb, Southey, Robinson, and Wordsworth.

During the spring and summer of 1799, however, things looked particularly bleak for both Cottle and *Lyrical Ballads*. Early reviews had not been auspicious, and delays in production meant that neither Coleridge nor Wordsworth had been able to be present at the time of publication to help market the book. Instead, with Wordsworth's sister Dorothy Wordsworth, the two had sailed for Germany on 16 September 1798, commencing a long-planned trip to learn the German language and to read the country's poetry and philosophy. Landing at Hamburg, they conversed with the German poet Friedrich Gottlieb Klopstock; but, finding the city and surrounding country prohibitively expensive, the party abandoned its original plans and split up. Coleridge, buoyed by an annuity given to him by Thomas and Josiah Wedgwood, departed for the more expensive cultural centers of Ratzeburg and Göttingen. The Wordsworths traveled into Saxony to the market town of Goslar, where they spent an inexpensive but miserably cold winter, with neither making progress in the language but with William writing many of the poems that would eventually find their ways into the second volume of the 1800 *Lyrical Ballads*.

While abroad, it is unlikely that either poet received detailed news about the book's reception; the surviving correspondence, at least, suggests little. What we do know is that Wordsworth, by the time he returned to England in May 1799, was surprised to find the *Lyrical Ballads* published by neither Cottle nor his preferred London publisher Joseph Johnson, but by J. & A. Arch of London.<sup>1</sup> Still owed twenty guineas for the sale of the copyright, Wordsworth wrote to Cottle for an explanation, determined to repair what he called, in a letter to his brother Richard, "sad mismanagement in the case" (*WL* I:259).

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1 See *CLB* 15. For a detailed discussion of Cottle's sale of *Lyrical Ballads* to Arch, see James Butler, "Wordsworth, Cottle, and the *Lyrical Ballads*: Five Letters, 1797–1800," *Journal of English and German Philology* 75 (1976): 139–53.



Coleridge returned from Germany in July, and by late October he and Cottle had journeyed north for a walking tour of the Lake District with Wordsworth. What happened on this trip remains largely unknown. The three certainly spoke about *Lyrical Ballads*—Cottle presenting its copyright to Wordsworth, probably as a peace offering—and Cottle departed from the group shortly thereafter. His *Reminiscences* remains the only account we have of the meeting:

[T]he subject of the “Lyrical Ballads” was mentioned but once, and that casually, and only to account for its failure! which Mr. W ascribed to two causes; first the “Ancient Mariner,” which, he said, no one seemed to understand; and secondly, the unfavorable notice of most of the reviews. (*JCR* 259)

It is easy to imagine the tension and reserve of this moment. At the very least, Cottle’s account suggests a trip at times hampered by defensiveness and restraint, feelings all the more striking for the ways they contrast to the tenor of earlier walking tours.

For we usually celebrate *Lyrical Ballads* not just as a watershed moment in literary history but also as a monument to a remarkable friendship so memorably begun when Coleridge visited William and Dorothy Wordsworth in the summer of 1797 at their house in Racedown. On that day in late June, Coleridge “leapt over a gate and bounded down the pathless field” (*WL* VII:719) to the house, and within days the Wordsworths were returning the visit to Coleridge’s house in Nether Stowey. It was supposed to be a visit of only a few weeks; but, remarkably, William and Dorothy never returned to Racedown. During those weeks they discovered a house (Alfoxden House) for rent only a few miles away from Coleridge’s, and by 7 July had signed a one-year lease. Ten days later, the Wordsworths were established at Alfoxden and permanent neighbors of the Coleridges.

By any account, the year that followed was remarkable. In each other’s company nearly every day, Coleridge and Wordsworth not only produced *Lyrical Ballads* but also each finished a full-length tragedy in blank verse. The summer months of 1797 were also energetically social, dominated by visiting, by writing and talking about poetry, and, above all, by walking. With the countryside around Stowey remarkable for its beauty, the two poets wandered the hills and coastline at all hours—frequently with Sara Coleridge and Dorothy Wordsworth, and often with visitors such

as Charles Lamb, Charles Lloyd, Basil Montagu, Thomas Poole, and John Thelwall, all of whom visited during the summer of 1797. Even Coleridge's "This Lime-Tree Bower My Prison," written when an injury had temporarily halted his rambles, is at its heart an imaginative stroll, fancifully surveying the feelings of William, Dorothy, and Charles Lamb while they are on a walk he cannot take.

As a portrait of life at Stowey during these months, "This Lime-Tree Bower" celebrates its fraternal sympathy and communal exuberance. But with much of the country fearing invasion from France, the Stowey party was attracting other kinds of notice as well. Coleridge and Wordsworth's late-night strolls, inquisitive interest in local topography, and steady stream of visitors had excited the suspicion of local authorities who suspected them of spying for the French—so much so that a government agent was dispatched from the Home Office to spy on them in turn.<sup>1</sup> Known as the famous "Spy Nosy" affair (for one eavesdropper's imperfect report of an overheard conversation about Dutch philosopher Spinoza), the incident instructively darkens an otherwise golden summer.

In subsequent years, Coleridge made light of the business, working it up into a staple of his dinner conversation. Yet the affair's mixture of paranoia and black farce helps us also to recall that these months did not witness an outpouring of lyrics and ballads, but rather of two blank-verse tragedies whose plots hinge on similar cases of disastrous misinformation. November 1797 saw Coleridge complete *Osorio* and Wordsworth *The Borderers*, and the two plays were shipped off to London's two main theaters, Drury Lane and Covent Garden, in hopes of their being staged that season. The weather remaining fine, Coleridge, Wordsworth, and Dorothy Wordsworth embarked on two celebratory walking trips, their plan being to hike westward to Lynton and the Valley of the Stones. The former trip, cut short by Coleridge's stomach ailment, likely produced "Kubla Khan"; the anticipated expenses of the latter, longer trip inspired the two poets to collaborate on a ballad for *The Monthly Magazine*, from which Coleridge was confident they could net five pounds. While their hopes of writing the poem jointly never came to fruition, the ballad eventually produced ("The Rime of the Ancyent

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1 For a full account of the affair, see Nicholas Roe, *Wordsworth and Coleridge: The Radical Years* (New York: Oxford UP, 1988), 248-62.

Marinere,” by Coleridge) became the basis of a collaborative volume, the 1798 *Lyrical Ballads*.

Such a volume, however, was a long way off in December 1797, a month of disappointments and distractions. Both *Osorio* and *The Borderers* were rejected by London’s Theatre Royals (*WL* I:196–97), and resulting financial pressures threatened to derail any ideas of producing a volume together as Coleridge scrambled for immediate funds. As James Butler and Karen Green have demonstrated, the winter months of 1797–98 for Coleridge and Wordsworth were full of activity, but still little of it concerned *Lyrical Ballads* (*CLB* 5–12). Both instead worked primarily on “philosophic poems” in blank verse; Coleridge’s “Frost at Midnight” likely dates from this time, as do a number of episodes that would later find their ways into Wordsworth’s *Excursion* (1814). Mid-March saw Coleridge negotiating possible book deals for Wordsworth and himself with Cottle—none of which involved any of the poems in *Lyrical Ballads*—and so it was probably not until April 1798 that any plan for a collaborative volume began to take definite shape.

Part of what finally determined matters was a burst of productivity on the part of Wordsworth. Beginning in early March, he left off blank verse and shifted to shorter poems, and by the end of May he had written several lyrics, including “Lines Written at a Small Distance from My House,” “The Mad Mother,” “The Complaint of the Forsaken Indian Woman,” “Lines Written in Early Spring,” “Expostulation and Reply,” and “The Tables Turned.” He also began experimenting with another form—one narrative in its voice, ballad in its stanza and meter, sparse in its complexity of plot, and determinedly plain in its language. “The Idiot Boy” and “Goody Blake and Harry Gill” number among these poems, as does “Simon Lee,” which contains an address to its reader that reads as a kind of summary challenge for all of the poems Wordsworth wrote in this vein:

My gentle reader, I perceive  
How patiently you’ve waited,  
And I’m afraid that you expect  
Some tale will be related.

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.

What more I have to say is short,  
I hope you'll kindly take it;  
It is no tale; but should you think,  
Perhaps a tale you'll make it. (97)<sup>1</sup>

In their desire to engage readers despite their expectations and prejudices, these stanzas form a powerful counterpart to the Advertisement Coleridge and Wordsworth affixed to the front of the 1798 *Lyrical Ballads*. Do not allow your pre-established codes of decision to blind you to the tale contained within my poem, Wordsworth dares his readers. Belying the poem's simplicity of language, the stanzas that follow—and that close “Simon Lee”—are as cryptic and challenging as the most difficult ode, elegy, or villanelle:

One summer-day I chanced to see  
This old man doing all he could  
About the root of an old tree,  
A stump of rotten wood.  
The mattock totter'd in his hand;  
So vain was his endeavour  
That at the root of the old tree  
He might have worked for ever.

“You're overtasked, good Simon Lee,  
Give me your tool” to him I said;  
And at the word right gladly he  
Received my proffer'd aid.  
I struck, and with a single blow  
The tangled root I sever'd,  
At which the poor old man so long  
And vainly had endeavour'd.

The tears into his eyes were brought,  
And thanks and praises seemed to run  
So fast out of his heart, I thought  
They never would have done.  
—I've heard of hearts unkind, kind deeds  
With coldness still returning.  
Alas! the gratitude of men  
Has oftner left me mourning. (97)

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1 All parenthetical citations in the text, where not otherwise attributed, refer to pages in this Broadview edition.

It is a wonderfully troubling and powerful ending, where the speaker's sudden act and resulting state of mind provide the materials out of which Wordsworth's reader must "make" a tale. For in spite of its plain language, this is not a simple act of neighborly charity; the episode is as psychologically complex as the speaker's response to it. During the description of Simon Lee struggling with the rotten stump—man and stump functioning as uncanny reflections of each other—we become increasingly aware of the speaker's impatience, which mirrors our own desire for some kind of narrative resolution. The speaker's discomfort produces his blunt words ("You're overtasked, good Simon Lee,/Give me your tool") and equally blunt action ("I struck, and with a single blow/The tangled root I sever'd"), both of which bring with them overtones of brutality. After all, the speaker does not ask Simon Lee if he needs help, but instead tells him he is "overtasked" and demands his tool. The "single blow" he strikes with Simon's mattock, meanwhile, forms an apt counterpart to the ambivalence (nicely captured in Simon's tears) and emotional violence of the scene, in which the speaker, though ostentatiously performing an act of kindness, essentially confirms to an old working man that he has become useless as a laborer. The poem's final stanza sustains rather than resolves these mixed feelings. Just as we wonder whether the speaker has been spurred by irritation rather than pity, we are forced to puzzle out why Simon's copious gratitude has left the speaker mourning.

Such invitations to "think" occur throughout *Lyrical Ballads*. They occur perhaps most pointedly in the ballads and pastorals, and in shorter narrative poems such as "Lucy Gray," "The Foster-Mother's Tale," "We Are Seven," and "Anecdote for Fathers," this final poem presenting a spring day so lovely as to spur its speaker "To think, and think, and think again" (98). Such injunctions find their way into the shorter and longer lyrics as well. "Expostulation and Reply," "Lines Written in Early Spring," "The Nightingale," and "Lines Written with a Slate Pencil upon a Stone" place their speakers in dialogue with a landscape, but in each case the landscape plays a secondary role by functioning as a vehicle for thought. Thus, in the "green pastoral landscape" of "Tintern Abbey," Wordsworth finds

A motion and a spirit, that impels  
 All thinking things, all objects of all thought,  
 And rolls through all things. (145)

The words “think,” “thinking,” and “thought” occur in *Lyrical Ballads* so often,<sup>1</sup> in fact, that they can be said to embody one of its central premises. As commentators like James Averill and Don Bialostosky have noted, Coleridge and Wordsworth repeatedly introduce the most sensational elements into their poems—from hauntings and imprisonment to madness and murder—only to insist that their readers “think” beyond the passive pleasures of suspense and wonder.<sup>2</sup> Thus, “The Thorn” does not focus so much on the actions of Martha Ray or the fate of her infant as on how her remorse affects the mental states of her fellow villagers. Even the volume’s longest narrative poems, “The Rime of the Ancient Mariner” and “The Idiot Boy,” defy easy didacticism by telling stories so strange that it becomes impossible to extract clear morals from them. Though near opposites in tone and in their handling of the supernatural, each demands the same kind of activity from its reader by providing an apparent resolution that neither makes nor explains its tale. Johnny’s concluding speech (“The cocks did crow to-whoo, to-whoo,/And the sun did shine so cold” [132]) may be a tale told by an idiot, but it is hardly less satisfying than the Ancient Mariner’s own concluding moral (“He prayeth well who loveth well,/Both man and bird and beast” [72]). Neither exhortation remotely begins to explain what has happened in the several hundred lines preceding it.

While only one thematic preoccupation among many, this concern with *how* readers make meaning comprises one of the most self-consciously experimental features of the collection. It is an aspect, moreover, conspicuously highlighted not just in the poems themselves but also in the Advertisement that opens the 1798 edition, which extends the challenge of making tales to the problem of defining Poetry in general:

Readers accustomed to the gaudiness and inane phraseology of many modern writers, if they persist in reading this book to its conclusion, will perhaps frequently have to struggle with feelings of strangeness and awkwardness: they will look round for poetry, and will be induced to enquire by what species of

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- 1 The words occur 73 times in the 1798 edition, and 140 times through the two volumes of the 1800 edition.
  - 2 See James Averill, *Wordsworth and the Poetry of Human Suffering* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1980), 180–84; and Don Bialostosky, *Making Tales: The Poetics of Wordsworth’s Narrative Experiments* (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1984), 70.

courtesy these attempts can be permitted to assume that title. It is desirable that such readers, for their own sakes, should not suffer the solitary word Poetry, a word of very disputed meaning, to stand in the way of their gratification; but that, while they are perusing this book, they should ask themselves if it contains a natural delineation of human passions, human characters, and human incidents; and if the answer be favorable to the author's wishes, that they should consent to be pleased in spite of that most dreadful enemy to our pleasures, our own pre-established codes of decision. (47)

Clothed as an appeal to readers to shed their prejudices, the passage's critical power arises in part from the neatness of its dualisms. Where modern poetry's "gaudiness and inane phraseology" are opposed to the "natural" and to the "human," the task of writing with a fresh eye becomes one of writing without artifice. Put another way, readers are urged to seek pleasure through their affective responses to the characters and situations of the poems rather than through artificial constructions of language. It is a striking shift in focus. When one rejects ornamental language as a false or empty pleasure, one moves from valuing a poetry that is chiefly descriptive to preferring one both narrative and dramatic. We see this same shift mirrored, furthermore, in the trajectory of Wordsworth's own career, moving as it does from early locodescriptive poems (such as *An Evening Walk* and *Descriptive Sketches*) to narrative tragedies (such as *Salisbury Plain*, *The Borderers*, and *The Ruined Cottage*) to the self-conscious performances that are *Lyrical Ballads*.

Yet the 1798 Advertisement also attracted notice among contemporary readers and reviewers because it smacked of something like a manifesto. Periodicals inclined to review the volume positively took its dismissals of "modern writers" as a cue and praised *Lyrical Ballads* as a corrective to various decadent contemporary poetic trends. While the *Monthly Mirror*'s reviewer singled out "the pompous and high-sounding phraseology of the *Della Cruscan school*" for special censure, the *British Critic*'s found in *Lyrical Ballads* an antidote to the heroic couplets and heightened diction of Erasmus Darwin's *Loves of the Plants* (1789).<sup>1</sup> "We infinitely

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1 While originating in the privately distributed *Florence Miscellany* (compiled by Hester Thrale Pizolli in 1785 and including verse by British and Italian poets), the "Della Cruscan school" derived its fame from the poetic exchanges of Robert Merry ("Della Crusca") and dramatist

prefer the simplicity, even of the most unadorned tale in the volume,” he declared, “to all the meretricious frippery of the Darwinian taste” (162).

Such comparisons did not end with issues of language and style. That aesthetic preferences—and the poems embodying them—might express political beliefs as well soon became a central point of speculation for many reviewers. As a result, notices of *Lyrical Ballads* provide a fairly comprehensive map of British literary politics at the end of the eighteenth century. Conspicuously politicized in these reviews is the ballad, that most populist and common of poetic forms. Thus, we find the most radical of the established monthlies, the *Analytical Review*, praising the “simplicity or tenderness [...] of ‘The Thorn,’ ‘The Mad Mother,’ ‘The Idiot Boy,’ and ... ‘Goody Blake and Harry Gill’” (151). The more conservative *New London Review*, meanwhile, berates these same poems and the ballad form in general for gross familiarity and colloquial diction, arguing that they are too low and vulgar to be considered poetry (153-54). Even Charles Burney’s extended notice in the long-lived and liberal *Monthly Review*, while praising “The Nightingale,” still voices doubts over whether the ballads can be called “poetry” at all (156). In short, the very poems that ask the reader to “think” most emphatically—and those that take up pressing social issues such as poverty, the effects of war, and the social subjugation of women—are those that inspire the most virulent responses from conservative critics.

In the political climate that produced the “Spy Nosy” affair, this wide range of critical responses should not be surprising, especially when we remember that the 1798 *Lyrical Ballads* opened with a prose Advertisement inviting readers to reject established literary authority. One of the ways we must understand the 1798 edition, then, is as occupying a fairly explicit position within liberal and radical writing of the time. Featuring poems of social protest such as “The Female Vagrant,” “The Last of the Flock,” “The Dungeon,” and “The Convict,” the collection signaled its allegiances in ways easily legible to contemporary

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Hannah Cowley (“Anna Matilda”) published in *The World* in 1787. The poets’ highly wrought figures drew the ire of satirists like William Gifford, whose *Baviad* (1791) attacked their subjects, style, and poetic creed. Erasmus Darwin’s long allegorical poem, *Loves of the Plants* (see Appendix G, 515-17), makes use of similar poetic conventions; it was initially lauded and later disparaged by Coleridge and Wordsworth.



readers. Faced with a book daring to privilege the writings of “Poets themselves” over the “writings of Critics,” many reviewers could not but consider such statements as insulting not only to their own authority but also to authority in general. Where most eighteenth-century poetic prefaces made a show of humility and self-effacement, Coleridge and Wordsworth’s sent an explicit challenge to readers and critics alike to put aside presumptions and prejudices, and to embrace a new, experimental poetry.

### Reception and Revision

Coleridge was aware that *Lyrical Ballads* would ruffle the feathers of established literati; that much is clear from his correspondence, as well as from William Hazlitt’s retrospective portrait of him, “On My First Acquaintance with Poets”:

He said the Lyrical Ballads were an experiment about to be tried by him and Wordsworth, to see how far the public taste would endure poetry written in a more natural and simple style than had hitherto been attempted; totally discarding the artifices of poetical diction, and making use only of such words as had probably been common in the most ordinary language since the days of Henry II. (479)

Given the self-consciousness of Coleridge and Wordsworth’s poetic experimentation, the decision to publish anonymously in many ways accorded with the aims of the volume. In a collection wishing to strip away a century and a half of poetic artifice—one asking readers to peruse without prejudice—it makes sense to remove that most powerful of all mediators, the author’s reputation. But the two had practical reasons for their decision as well. In what remains one of the most wonderful letters of his correspondence, Coleridge wrote to Cottle on 28 May 1798 to explain how they wished themselves and their volume to appear to the public:

As to anonymous Publications, depend on it, you are deceived.—Wordsworth’s name is nothing—to a large number of persons mine *stinks* [...] Cottle, my dear Cottle, I meant to have written you an Essay on the Metaphysics of Typography; but I have not time.—Take a few hints without the abstruse reasons for them which I mean to favor you—18 lines a page,

the lines closely printed, certainly, more closely than those of the Joan—(Oh by all means closer! W. Wordsworth) *equal ink; & large margins*. That is *beauty*—it may even under your immediate care mingle the sublime! (456-57)

Composed jointly with Wordsworth, the letter testifies to the degree to which both poets concerned themselves with every aspect of literary production. It also helps to anticipate the intensity of Wordsworth's interest in the details of the volume's reception on his arrival from Germany.

Returning to find *Lyrical Ballads* in the hands of another publisher, Wordsworth first wrote to Cottle in early June 1799, inquiring about sales. Three weeks later, he wrote again, this time more insistently, "to know *what number* have been sold" and to voice anxiety over the collection's reception and reputation (*WL* I:264). He was worried with good reason. Even with the precaution of publishing anonymously, the first review of *Lyrical Ballads* had been personal. Robert Southey's notice had appeared in the October 1798 *Critical Review* barely a fortnight after publication, just as Coleridge and Wordsworth landed in Germany. It remains the most vitriolic of the reviews of *Lyrical Ballads*, attacking the experimental poems and pithily singling out the "Rime of the Ancyent Marinere" as "a Dutch attempt at German sublimity" (149) and the "Idiot Boy" as "a Flemish picture in the worthlessness of its design and the excellence of its execution" (148). When Wordsworth finally read the text of the review some ten months later in the summer of 1799, he was livid:

Southey's review I have seen. He knew that I published those poems for money and money alone. He knew that money was of importance to me. If he could not conscientiously have spoken differently of the volume, in common delicacy he ought to have declined the task of reviewing it.

The bulk of the poems he has described as destitute of merit. Am I recompensed for this by vague praises of my talents? I care little for the praise of any other professional critic, but as it may help me to pudding. (*WL* I:267-68)

After having twice declared *Lyrical Ballads* to have "failed" irrevocably in his review, Southey's applause of individual poems such as "The Nightingale," "Expostulation and Reply," and "Tintern Abbey" did little to placate Wordsworth. Yet, with Cottle reporting "the poems had not sold ill," Wordsworth was determined

never again to risk his “pudding” by ignoring popular tastes. “From what I can gather,” he reasoned, “The Ancient Marinere has upon the whole been an injury to the volume, I mean that the old words and the strangeness of it have deterred readers from going on. If the volume should come to a second Edition I would put in its place some little things which would be more likely to suit the common taste” (*WL* I:264).

While this desire to “suit the common taste” no doubt signaled a shift in strategy, Wordsworth was hardly reversing his principles. Certainly his partiality for the “common” (also articulated in the 1800 Preface) had not changed, nor had his desire to bypass critical and institutional authority. His lifelong concern with revision and reputation, at times bordering on the obsessive, is also symptomatic of the transitional time in which he wrote, when “Poet” was becoming an occupation. With the nineteenth century ready to turn, literature had become a profession. The professional author who made a living by the pen and press, once a rare creature, was now an identifiable figure on the social landscape. At such a volatile moment in the history of authorship, we can begin to understand Wordsworth’s reasoning and the compromise he sought in the second edition of *Lyrical Ballads*. If one is to make a living writing poetry, then one must sell poems. The question becomes how to do so while maintaining creative autonomy and avoiding critical censure. With the copyright in his own hands as of October 1799, Wordsworth set himself the task of marketing the second edition—and in a manner very different from the “sad mismanagement” of the first.

Books that create controversy often sell well, at least in the short term. As an act of literary valuation, the appraisal of *Lyrical Ballads* by Longman tells us little about its value other than that Longman did not wish to purchase its copyright. Still, part of what brought the *Lyrical Ballads* copyright back into Wordsworth’s hands was simply luck and good timing. For at the time Cottle was transferring ownership to Wordsworth, things began to look up for the collection. First, a positive review appeared in the October 1799 *British Critic*. Then in November, Coleridge returned to London and began to write for Daniel Stuart’s newspaper, the *Morning Post*, talking up the poems to key reviewers and journalists. By the following spring Stuart was reprinting poems from the collection. With many readers giving the volume a second look, another positive notice appeared in the April 1800 *Anti-Jacobin Review*, and within two months the first edition had sold out. June 1800 brought Coleridge and

Wordsworth a sweet moment of irony and satisfaction: Longman wrote to Wordsworth to offer him £80 for a second edition (*WL* 1:283).

While in Germany, Wordsworth had composed a number of short poems—among them “Ellen Irwin,” “There was a Boy,” and “Poor Susan”—not to mention the haunting lyrics often grouped together as the “Lucy Poems,” which either imagine or lament the loss of a loved one. Like the 1798 *Lyrical Ballads*, the German poems primarily focus on death, on mad and marginal figures, and on superstition and the supernatural. On his return to England, Wordsworth’s spurt of creativity continued; but, whether in response to the initial negative reviews of *Lyrical Ballads* or because of his happiness to be back in his own country, the subject matter of the poetry now changed. Part of this change is confirmed by Wordsworth’s own generic demarcations for these poems: five are dubbed “pastorals” (“The Brothers,” “The Oak and the Broom,” “The Pet Lamb,” “The Idle Shepherd Boys,” and “Michael”); five are collected under the heading *Poems on the Naming of Places*, and the remaining seven could sit easily under either rubric: “Hart-Leap Well,” “The Waterfall and the Eglantine,” “Rural Architecture,” “The Two Thieves,” “Lines Written with a Slate-pencil upon a Stone,” and two “Inscription” poems. These are the seventeen poems that have led Stephen Parrish to conclude in *The Art of the Lyrical Ballads* that “the program of *Lyrical Ballads* ... is a program centered on the pastoral mode.”<sup>1</sup> We only wish to add a qualification to Parrish’s assertion: that this pastoral center was grafted onto the *Lyrical Ballads* project after Wordsworth returned from Germany, and that it inevitably changed the character of the entire collection.

By July of 1800 Wordsworth, Coleridge, and Dorothy Wordsworth were ready to devote themselves to a second edition. Coleridge was just completing his translation of Schiller’s *Wallenstein*;<sup>2</sup> and, though his own financial obligations were pressing, he

1 Stephen Parrish, *The Art of the Lyrical Ballads* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1973), 262.

2 German dramatist, poet, historian, and aesthetic theorist Friedrich von Schiller (1759–1805) published the *Wallenstein* cycle in 1798–99; the trilogy follows the fate of Albrecht Wenzel Eusebius von Wallenstein, commander of a mercenary army during the Thirty Years War (1618–48). Coleridge translated the play from manuscript copies supplied by Schiller; upon its appearance in 1800, it was either ignored or dismissed by British reviewers.

still committed himself to the project. Aside from providing notes for a longer Preface that would replace the 1798 edition's Advertisement, Coleridge added his poem "Love" to the first volume, while his long poem "Christabel" would close the second. For Wordsworth, the first task was to reorder the poems of the first volume. His poem "The Convict" was removed and Coleridge's "Ancient Mariner" demoted; it would now appear near the end of the first volume just before "Tintern Abbey," its spelling modernized and (much to Charles Lamb's dismay<sup>1</sup>) carrying the subtitle "A Poet's Reverie." Preceded by the Preface, two short poems, "Expostulation and Reply" and "The Tables Turned," would now open volume one, setting a radically different tone for the expanded collection and, in Wordsworth's estimation, more likely suiting the "common taste."

The opening poem of the second volume, moreover, would confirm this change of focus. "Hart-Leap Well," after narrating in its opening section the tale of Sir Walter's chase and the Hart's death, opens "Part Second" with a kind of statement of purpose:

The moving accident is not my trade.  
 To curl the blood I have no ready arts;  
 'Tis my delight, alone in summer shade,  
 To pipe a simple song to thinking hearts. (296)

These lines ask readers to do a specific kind of thinking—not only about how different kinds of stories bring with them different kinds of pleasure, but also about whether some forms of pleasure are higher and more dignified than others. For Wordsworth, the "moving accident"—writing that moves readers only through suspense, surprise, and other contingencies of plot—is a lower form of "trade," as is writing to "curl the blood." In place of these cheaper pleasures, he promises instead the more philosophical "delight" of reconnecting thought to feeling, embodied in the oxymoronic term, "thinking hearts." Rejecting the "ready arts" of the gothic, the second part of "Hart-Leap Well" sweeps away its medieval knight, hall, chase, and pleasure dome, and replaces them with the "simple song" of a pastoral shepherd reflecting on the Hart's suffering and death. As such, the poem nicely embodies many of the changes Wordsworth introduced into the 1800 *Lyrical Ballads*, particularly into its second volume. Consisting of conversation poems, elegies, songs,

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1 See Appendix C, pp. 461-63.

inscriptions, and epitaphs, this second volume shies away from the ballad and its supernatural associations, and instead emphasizes the lyricism of pastoral narrative—a “simple song” for “thinking hearts.”

“The Brothers, a Pastoral Poem,” for example, tells the potentially chilling tale of James’s death by sleepwalking off a precipice. However, we learn of this event virtually at the end of the poem, only after it has become clear to his brother Leonard and the reader that James is already dead. Acting as an addendum to the Priest’s description of the brothers’ early life and separation, the episode, like the entire poem, achieves its effect through our awareness that Leonard is being told his own history unwittingly by the Priest, who thinks him a stranger. As such, its drama lies in Leonard’s emotional responses and his desire not to betray his identity. His feelings are not of one (as the Priest thinks) stopping in his travels “to hear a stranger talking about strangers” (308), but rather of one deeply invested in the outcome of the story. For the Priest who narrates the story, Leonard’s tears testify to his capacity for disinterested sentiment. The reader, however, understands the “true” significance of Leonard’s response, and is privy to the doubly painful situation he has created by not revealing his identity and thus being cut off from sympathy for his grief. We read Leonard’s increasingly potent feelings through his fragmented interruptions of the Priest’s narrative, and through the image of James’s “mangled limbs.” Our involvement in Leonard’s emotional state, however, makes this image a source of pity rather than horror.

In writing a new Preface for the second edition, Wordsworth described “The Brothers” as a poem in which he sought to display “the strength of fraternal ... attachment when early associated with the great and beautiful objects of nature” (176). The poem also exemplifies an aim he hoped would distinguish *Lyrical Ballads* from other poetic collections: “that the feeling therein developed gives importance to the action and situation and not the action and situation to the feeling” (176). In choosing poems for the second volume, Wordsworth appears to have taken this idea to heart—so much so that, after being “exceedingly delighted” with Part Two of “Christabel” on 4 October 1800, he decided two days later not to print it in the edition (*WJ* 24). Coleridge’s tale of a lamia—a mythological creature with the head and torso of a woman and the body of a serpent, who uses the “lovely lady” Christabel to gain access to her father’s castle—now seemed out of synch with the new direction of the collection.

Replete with priestly invocations, maternal ghosts, divining bards, and mastiffs howling on the quarter hour, Coleridge's playful supernatural setting could not comport well with Wordsworth's pastorals, and would likely create even greater discord among reviewers than the "Rime of the Ancyent Marinere." At least, this was the way Wordsworth saw it. "Upon mature deliberation," he explained to Longman, "I found that the Style of this Poem was so discordant from my own that it could not be printed along with my poems with any propriety" (*WL* I:309). Wordsworth immediately set to work on a new, less "discordant" poem to close the volume, his sense of "propriety" nicely captured by its title: "Michael: a Pastoral Poem."

Publicly, Coleridge appeared entirely in concordance with Wordsworth's views. Breaking the news to the chemist Humphry Davy, who was correcting the page proofs for the 1800 edition, he explained that "the poem was in direct opposition to the very purpose for which the Lyrical Ballads were published—viz—an experiment to see how far those passions, which alone give any value to extraordinary Incidents, were capable of interesting, in & for themselves, in the incidents of common Life" (459). "Christabel," he said, would instead be published separately, perhaps with Wordsworth's poem "The Pedlar." Still, at such a tense and complex moment in their friendship, other feelings could not help but be in play. At the time when Wordsworth had been composing the Preface with the help of Coleridge's notes, Coleridge had worked selflessly to forward the edition, and had struggled with his own writer's block to finish the second part of "Christabel." While wishing not to exaggerate the impact of this episode, we find, with the rejection of the poem, the beginnings of a breach with Wordsworth in Coleridge's correspondence, the first site of difference being the Preface itself.

Before the excision of "Christabel," Coleridge had claimed the Preface "contain[s] ... our joint opinions on Poetry" (*STCL* I:627), a sentiment echoed by Wordsworth in the Preface. By 1802, however, Coleridge was reporting to fellow poet William Sotheby that he and Wordsworth "had lately some little controversy" (*STCL* II:811) about the ideas expressed in the Preface. To Robert Southey he was more explicit:

I am far from going all lengths with Wordsworth / He has written lately a number of Poems (32 in all) some of them of considerable Length / (the longest 160 Lines) the greater number of these to my feelings very excellent Composi-

tions/but here & there a daring Humbleness of Language & prolixity, that startled me / his alterations likewise in Ruth perplexed me / and I have thought & thought again / & have not had my doubts solved by Wordsworth / On the contrary, I rather suspect that somewhere or other there is a radical Difference in our theoretical opinions respecting Poetry—this I shall endeavour to go to the Bottom of—. (466-67)

Yet even these differences were ultimately productive, shaping each poet's career for two decades. With Wordsworth, we see the effect of these conversations in his *Poems, in Two Volumes* (1807), which contain some of his starkest work, including "Resolution and Independence" and "Ode: Intimations on Immortality." For Coleridge, they mark the beginnings of what would become *Biographia Literaria* (1817), his innovative hybrid of literary theory and autobiography.<sup>1</sup>

By the account of both poets, the Preface was as much a collaborative project as the collection itself. Though written by Wordsworth, much of it shows Coleridge's influence, especially the criticisms of popular gothic, German, and sentimental writing, which echo Coleridge's own literary criticism from the late 1790s.<sup>2</sup> In addition, many of its statements about poetic purpose, language, and sensibility find their sources in publications of the time. The association of ideas in the mind, for example, was developed as a philosophical concept by David Hartley in *Observations on Man* (1749). By the 1790s the term had become part of the critical vocabulary of works as diverse as Mary Wollstonecraft's *Vindications of the Rights of Woman* (1792), Erasmus Darwin's *Zoönomia; or, The Laws of Organic Life* (1794–96), and Joanna Baillie's "Introductory Discourse" to *A Series of Plays ... on the Passions* (1798). Along other lines, we find many of the Preface's ideas about the relationship between Art and Nature in the prose of Joshua Reynolds and James Beattie, while writers such as George Dyer and Edmund Burke, among others, anticipate many of the issues confronted in *Lyrical Ballads* concerning the plight of the poor and its possible solutions.<sup>3</sup>

The poems, too, declare various allegiances to works, both

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1 See Appendix D, pages 469–75.

2 See especially Coleridge's review of Matthew Lewis's *The Monk*, which appeared in *Critical Review* 19 (1797), 194–200.

3 Selections from these and other writers are provided in Appendix F: Prose Contemporaries.



remembered and forgotten, published around the same time as *Lyrical Ballads*. Both poets were avid readers of the *Monthly* and *European* magazines, whose pages were stocked with popular tales of shipwrecked mariners, abandoned mothers, and world-weary hermits. Anthologies published at the turn of the nineteenth century reprinted these contemporary ballads, elegies, odes, and epitaphs intermingled with extracts from canonical poets such as Alexander Pope, Oliver Goldsmith, and Matthew Prior. Like the title of *Lyrical Ballads* itself, these miscellanies regularly juxtaposed different poetic forms to achieve an effect of variety and novelty. *Beauties of British Poetry* (1801) and *Flowers of British Poetry* (1802), for instance, set poems by Coleridge and Wordsworth alongside Charlotte Smith's "The Forest Boy," Mary Robinson's "Old Beggar" and "Haunted Beach," William Cowper's "Crazy Kate" and "The Castaway," George Crabbe's "The Parish Poor-house," Matthew Lewis's "The Felon," Charles Lloyd's "The Maniac," Amelia Opie's "Orphan Boy's Tale," Thomas Campbell's "The Beech Tree's Petition," and "A Razor-Seller and Country Bumkin" by John Wolcott, known to his readers as the wildly popular Peter Pindar. In short, the orphans, convicts, mariners, forsaken women, beggars, and talking plants populating *Lyrical Ballads* found ample company in the work of other contemporary poets.<sup>1</sup>

*Lyrical Ballads* was clearly a product of its historical moment, positioned within a network of experimental and popular poetry. Acclaimed volumes such as Charlotte Smith's *Elegiac Sonnets* (1784), William Cowper's *The Task* (1785), and William Lisle Bowles's *Fourteen Sonnets* (1789) were praised by Coleridge and Wordsworth for innovatively joining natural description to personal reflection, a trademark of the lyrics in their own collection. Southey's *Poems* (1799) and Robinson's *Lyrical Tales* (1800) contain explicit responses to poems in *Lyrical Ballads*; they also clearly appropriate the materials of popular periodicals and anthologies. What these contemporary sources show us is a situation more akin to a wide-ranging conversation between poets than a simple split between innovator and imitator. Thus, we find Charlotte Smith in a note to her poem "The Forest Boy" (1797) acknowledging that she has borrowed her meter from Southey's "Mary, Maid of the Inn" (1797), a popular ballad about the "real

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1 We provide a representative selection in Appendix G: Verse Contemporaries.

life” gothic situation of a young woman who unwittingly exposes her lover as a murderer. At the same time, the content of Smith’s pastoral poem more closely resembles Wordsworth’s “The Female Vagrant” (composed 1793-97) and “Michael” (1800): sharing with the former a stringent critique of the effects of war on domestic life; and anticipating the latter’s careful delineation of the wholesome toils of peasant life and the dangers of the town. As this suggests, what may look like mere borrowing is better seen as a series of formal and thematic exchanges between poets carried on across print culture.

### A Dynamic Edition

More than two centuries after its initial publication, *Lyrical Ballads* is one of the few collections of Romantic poetry to remain in print as it was originally published. During their lifetimes, Coleridge and Wordsworth incorporated its poems into their own collected works after the edition of 1805;<sup>1</sup> but since Earnest Dowden’s *Lyrical Ballads: Reprinted from the First Edition of 1798* (1890), its popularity among readers as an intact collection has steadily increased. Only Robert Burns’s *Songs: Chiefly in the Scottish Dialect* (1786) and William Blake’s *Songs of Innocence and Experience* (1794) have claimed similar levels of affection from modern audiences, and neither of these collections has marshaled the same assertions of historical importance and representative power from commentators.

Few works ever acquire that rare status of heralding a literary movement, let alone one as important as British Romanticism. Amounting to a kind of canonical superstardom, the status of *Lyrical Ballads* reached its peak in the 1960s and 1970s through the critical work of M.H. Abrams, Geoffrey Hartman, John O. Jordan, Stephen Parrish, Paul Sheats, and other scholars. We see the effects of this cultural standing most clearly in the anthologies that dominated literature classrooms through the 1980s, particularly *The Norton Anthology of British Literature*, which Abrams edited and which dated the Romantic period as beginning in 1798 with the poetic “revolution” of *Lyrical Ballads* rather than with the American or French revolutions. If more recent scholarship has shied away from this fever pitch of enthusiasm, it nevertheless has maintained many of these foundational claims, not to

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1 For details, see Appendix E.

mention producing the monumental Princeton Coleridge<sup>1</sup> and Cornell Wordsworth editions,<sup>2</sup> which have renewed our interest in the early work of both poets and in the often haphazard processes by which books like *Lyrical Ballads* came into being.

The collection's haphazard beginnings, however, comprise only one of the problems *Lyrical Ballads* presents to anyone wishing to edit it. As a collaborative project between two talented poets—and as a collection with a complex history of composition, arrangement, and revision—*Lyrical Ballads* underwent considerable transformations over its four editions. For scholars interested in its publication and reception history, the main difficulties have resided in the pronounced differences existing between the 1798 and 1800 editions. Faced with mixed reviews and uneven sales, Wordsworth effectively took creative control of *Lyrical Ballads* in the autumn of 1799 and transformed its second edition. Critics from Charles Lamb forward have lamented several of these changes; while generally preferring to read the 1798 volume in its original order, they nevertheless have hailed the 1800 Preface as the first important theoretical treatise of British Romanticism. They also have marveled at the poetic achievement of Wordsworth's second volume, praising its short lyrics and works such as "Lucy Gray," "Ruth," and "Michael."

With both editions possessing distinct strengths, choosing a base text has meant choosing not just one version of a poem over another, but also privileging one edition and one historical moment. It amounts to an editorial no-win situation. On one hand, one wishes to celebrate the 1798 *Lyrical Ballads* as a foundational text of early Romanticism and as marking the culmination of a decade of revolutionary poetry. On the other hand, one

- 1 *The Collected Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, published by Princeton University Press beginning in 1969, comprises meticulously annotated editions of Coleridge's poetry, drama, lectures, essays, and marginalia; the series (now totaling 23 volumes) includes all Coleridge known writings, with the exception of the letters and notebooks, published separately by Princeton.
- 2 Under the general editorship of Steven Parrish, Cornell University Press has published 22 volumes of Wordsworth's poetry. Individual volumes such as *Lyrical Ballads, and Other Poems, 1797–1800*, ed. James Butler and Karen Green (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1992), include reading texts as well as photographic reproductions and transcriptions of manuscript pages, enabling readers to track Wordsworth's many revisions to individual poems over the course of his career.

wishes to include the 1800 poems and to acknowledge that edition's role in establishing the reputations of both *Lyrical Ballads* and Wordsworth. Faced with an all but impossible choice, the majority of editors, perhaps understandably, have followed Ernest Dowden's example. Limiting themselves to the 1798 edition, they have chosen editorial simplicity and revolutionary heft, usually printing the Preface as an appendix. As the first modern edition to print both volumes, R.L. Brett and A.R. Jones's *Lyrical Ballads: The Text of the 1798 Edition with the Additional 1800 Poems and the Prefaces* (1963), sought to provide a kind of compromise, one in many ways duplicated by the more recent Cornell edition. Unwilling to ignore the collection's beginnings, Brett and Jones printed volume one of the 1798 text and volume two of the 1800 text. Its notes then attempted to make it possible, with time, for adventurous students to transform the 1798 poems into volume one of the 1800 version. Even so, their edition does not provide a sense of the development of *Lyrical Ballads* between 1798 and 1800, let alone show the ways in which market forces affected its evolution across its four editions.

Rather than choosing between these two key texts or providing a limited compromise between them, our own edition maps this process of becoming. We provide the full 1798 and 1800 editions of *Lyrical Ballads*, reprinting editorial footnotes and cross-referencing significant revisions to the poems of volume one, and noting significant changes to both volumes made by Wordsworth in 1802 and 1805. Our aim has been to produce a truly authoritative and transparent text, one that makes it possible to read either edition on its own or comparatively. At the same time, we have sought to capture Coleridge and Wordsworth's concern with the business of literature and with reviews. We therefore present our reading texts as follows: first, the 1798 Advertisement and poems, followed by contemporary reviews of that edition; second, the 1800 Preface and poems, followed by a second round of contemporary reviews.

We also provide some additional materials for readers wishing to know more about the production history of *Lyrical Ballads* and its contemporary influences. Certainly the part of *Lyrical Ballads* that affected the subsequent careers of Coleridge and Wordsworth most strongly was the Preface, especially after Wordsworth further expanded it in 1802 in response to the second edition's reception. In Appendix A, we therefore print the two substantial passages Wordsworth added in 1802. Appendix B then provides the full texts of the two poems by Coleridge origi-

nally intended for *Lyrical Ballads*: “Lewti” (dropped from the 1798 edition) and “Christabel” (dropped from the 1800 edition). Appendices C and D make available for readers important selections from the lively private correspondence and public commentary that circulated about *Lyrical Ballads*. In the correspondence, we include accounts of Coleridge’s first visit to Racedown, Coleridge’s negotiations with Joseph Cottle, Wordsworth’s responses to initial reviews, Charles Lamb and Robert Southey’s responses to the 1800 edition, and Coleridge’s and Wordsworth’s later misgivings about one another and about the final form the collection took. In the commentary, we include three selections: Coleridge’s account of the inception of *Lyrical Ballads* in his critical autobiography, *Biographia Literaria* (1817); William Hazlitt’s portrait of Coleridge and Wordsworth, “My First Acquaintance with Poets” (1823); and Wordsworth’s notes dictated to Isabella Fenwick (published 1857). Appendix E then shows readers how the poems of *Lyrical Ballads* were dispersed into the collected works of both poets. Given the elaborate classificatory systems Wordsworth and Coleridge adopted in 1815 and 1817 respectively, the final placement of these poems is as fascinating as it is suggestive. Finally, in appendices F and G we include two short selections, entitled “Prose Contemporaries” and “Verse Contemporaries,” featuring texts known to have influenced (or to have been influenced by) *Lyrical Ballads*. Appendix H then maps the poems by location.

Printing the texts in this manner, we hope, will create a truly dynamic text, one that will help readers to understand the textual revisions to individual poems, as well as providing insight into why Wordsworth so radically reordered the contents of the first volume. The selection of contemporary responses to *Lyrical Ballads*, particularly the reviews but also the letters, offers a context for considering these changes. For even as Coleridge and Wordsworth boldly proclaimed the poet to be the ultimate judge of poetry in the 1798 Advertisement and 1800 Preface, their private correspondence reveals the extent to which the 1800 changes were also responses to the reception—by family, friends, critics and other poets—of the 1798 edition. In this sense, *Lyrical Ballads* was and continues to be a revolutionary work: a potent example of the impact of publishing on both poetry and its authors.

## *William Wordsworth and Samuel Coleridge: A Chronology*

- 1770 William Wordsworth (WW) born 7 April at Cocker-  
mouth, Cumberland, to John and Ann Wordsworth.
- 1771 Dorothy Wordsworth (DW) born 25 September at  
Cockermouth.
- 1772 Samuel Taylor Coleridge (STC) born 21 October at  
Ottery St. Mary's, Devonshire, to John and Anne  
Coleridge.
- 1778 Ann Wordsworth, mother of WW and DW, dies. WW  
sent to Hawkshead Grammar School (until 1787);  
DW sent to Halifax to live with grandparents. STC  
attends Ottery Grammar School (until 1782).
- 1781 John Coleridge, father of STC, dies.
- 1782 STC attends school at Christ's Hospital in London  
(until 1791).
- 1783 John Wordsworth, father of WW and DW, dies.
- 1787 WW's first published poem, "Sonnet on Seeing Miss  
Helen Maria Williams Weep at a Tale of Distress,"  
appears in the *European Magazine* in March. WW  
attends St. John's College, Cambridge (until 1791).
- 1789 Fall of the Bastille begins the French Revolution.  
WW vacations with DW and Mary Hutchinson in  
Penrith.
- 1790 STC publishes his first poem, "The Abode of Love,"  
in *The World*. WW goes on walking tour in France and  
Switzerland with his friend Robert Jones during the  
summer vacation, witnessing the celebrations of the  
first anniversary of the French Revolution. French  
King Louis XVI accepts new Constitution, but is  
arrested trying to leave the country. The publication  
of Edmund Burke's *Reflections on the Revolution in  
France* late in the year sets off a storm of political  
controversy.
- 1791 STC enters Jesus College, Cambridge, in October  
(until 1794); his prize-winning Greek ode on the  
slave trade is read at Commencement the following  
spring. In November 1791 WW returns to France, is  
influenced by Michel Beaupuy, and falls in love with  
Annette Vallon.

- 1792 WW likely leaves Annette Vallon and returns to London in November; their daughter Anne-Caroline is born 15 December 1792. France abolishes monarchy and declares itself a republic. Thomas Paine in absentia found guilty of sedition for publishing *The Rights of Man* (Part II).
- 1793 French King Louis XVI executed in January; war declared between England and France in February effectively bars WW from returning to France. WW publishes *An Evening Walk* and *Descriptive Sketches*; he writes, but does not publish, his revolutionary *Letter to the Bishop of Llandaff* and his radical poem, *Salisbury Plain*. The Terror begins in France. With debts mounting at Cambridge, STC flees to London in December 1793 and volunteers for the 15th Light Dragoons under the name S.T. Comberbach; his brothers eventually purchase his discharge, and he returns to Cambridge.
- 1794 WW reunited with DW, and nurses his friend Raisley Calvert, who on his death leaves WW £900. British government continues to crack down on radicals. Habeas Corpus suspended and the Treason Trials begin as three secretaries of the London Corresponding Society (Adams, Hardy, and Thelwall) and two of the Society for Constitutional Information (Holcroft and Horne Tooke) are arrested, tried, and acquitted. STC meets and befriends Robert Southey in Oxford; the two begin planning Pantisocracy. Robespierre executed without trial 28 July, ending the Terror. STC and Southey publish their play, *The Fall of Robespierre*, in September. STC leaves Cambridge in December; meets Joseph Cottle late in year.
- 1795 WW mixes with radical circles in London. STC lectures on religion and politics in Bristol; publishes *Moral and Political Lecture* and *Consciones ad Populum*; he and Southey abandon the Pantisocracy scheme in August. WW meets STC and Southey in Bristol in August, and settles with DW at Racedown in September. STC marries Sara Fricker (SFC) on 4 October. Parliament passes the “Gagging Acts,” effectively outlawing public assemblies and speeches critical of the government.

- 1796 Napoleon conquers most of Italy. STC begins publishing *The Watchman*; this journal and his *Poems on Various Subjects* published by Cottle. Birth of Hartley to SFC and STC in September; the three move to Nether Stowey in December. Threats of French invasion of England.
- 1797 WW visits STC in March; STC returns the visit in late June, and WW and DW move to Alfoxden to be nearer to STC in July. Naval mutinies at Spithead and Nore; Bank of England suspends cash payments; the Home Office sends a spy to Alfoxden to investigate reports of suspicious activity by STC and WW. STC publishes an expanded second edition of *Poems*, including works by his friends Charles Lamb and Charles Lloyd. STC begins "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner"; he and WW begin talking of a collaborative project. STC completes *Osorio* and WW completes *The Borderers*; both plays are sent to London theaters but rejected. In December STC accepts a Unitarian ministry in Shrewsbury. Napoleon negotiates treaty with Austria.
- 1798 STC receives an annuity of £150 in January from Thomas and Josiah Wedgwood; resigns his ministry. STC publishes *Fears in Solitude*. Birth of Berkeley to SFC and STC in May. WW completes the bulk of the poems published in *Lyrical Ballads*, as well as "Peter Bell" and "The Ruined Cottage." Rebellion in Ireland; French invasion of Ireland defeated at Ballinamuck in September. STC, DW, and WW leave for Germany 16 September; *Lyrical Ballads* published by Arch 4 October. In Germany WW begins *The Prelude* and writes many poems for *Lyrical Ballads* (1800). Joseph Johnson, publisher of WW's *An Evening Walk* and *Descriptive Sketches*, imprisoned for seditious libel.
- 1799 WW and DW return to England in April and settle at Dove Cottage, Grasmere, in December. Berkeley Coleridge dies in February. STC tours the Lake District with WW in the autumn; STC meets and falls in love with Sara Hutchinson. Napoleon overthrows the Directory and becomes the First Consul of France in November, effectively ending the French Revolution.



- 1800 STC moves to Greta Hall in Keswick; publishes his translations of *The Piccolimini* and *The Death of Wallenstein* by Schiller.
- 1801 WW publishes an expanded second edition of *Lyrical Ballads* in January 1801; writes “Home at Grasmere.” Union of Great Britain and Ireland takes effect 1 January 1801. Peace of Amiens (1801–03) momentarily suspends war with France.
- 1802 Napoleon becomes Life Consul of France in April 1802. WW publishes third edition of *Lyrical Ballads*. Peace of Amiens allows WW in August to visit Annette Vallon and his daughter Anne-Caroline in Calais; WW arranges for annual child-support payments, and then returns and marries Mary Hutchinson (MHW) on 4 October 1802. STC publishes “Dejection: An Ode” on WW’s wedding day. DW, WW, and STC tour Scotland. Birth of Sara to SFC and STC in 23 September 1802.
- 1803 STC publishes new edition of *Poems* in June 1803. Resumption of war causes renewed fears of invasion.
- 1804 Birth of Dora to MHW and WW. Ill-health causes STC to seek a better climate; sails for Malta 9 April; by July is private secretary to Alexander Ball, High Commissioner of Malta. Napoleon crowns himself Emperor of France; Spain declares war on Britain.
- 1805 STC appointed Acting Public Secretary in Malta. WW’s and DW’s brother Jonathan Wordsworth, Captain of the *Abergavenny*, drowns off the coast of England. WW publishes the fourth edition of *Lyrical Ballads*, and finishes but does not publish *The Prelude*. Admiral Nelson wins stunning victory at Trafalgar in October. In December, Napoleon defeats the Austrians and Russians at Austerlitz.
- 1806 Birth of Thomas to MHW and WW. STC in Italy; sails home from Livorno in June, his health unimproved. WW composes *The Waggoner*.
- 1807 WW composes *The White Doe of Rylstone* and publishes *Poems, in Two Volumes*. After several decades of activism, Parliament abolishes the Slave Trade in May 1807. France invades Spain and Portugal.
- 1808 Birth of Caroline to MHW and WW. The Wordsworths move to Allan Bank. The Convention of Cintra negotiates French withdrawal from Portugal.

- 1809 STC begins the journal *The Friend*. WW publishes *The Convention of Cintra*. Coronation of Joseph Bonaparte in Spain; Vienna falls to the French.
- 1810 Birth of William to MHW and WW. *The Friend* ceases publication in March. Misunderstanding over STC's opium addiction causes breach between him and WW; STC moves to London. First version of WW's *Guide to the Lakes* published as an anonymous Preface to *Select Views in Cumberland, Westmoreland and Lancashire* by Joseph Wilkinson.
- 1811 Deaths of Thomas and Caroline Wordsworth; the Wordsworths move to the Rectory in Grasmere. In January, the Prince of Wales becomes Regent due to George III's incapacity to rule. STC lectures on Shakespeare and Milton at Scot's Corporation Hall, London.
- 1812 STC lectures on drama in Willis's Rooms in London; revises *Osorio* as *Remorse*. Quarrel with WW patched up by Charles Lamb and Henry Crabbe Robinson. Napoleon invades Russia in June 1812, but begins his retreat that autumn.
- 1813 *Remorse* debuts at Drury-Lane Theatre in January and enjoys an outstanding run of twenty nights. WW becomes distributor of Stamps for Westmoreland; moves to Rydal Mount. Robert Southey named Poet Laureate. In retreat, Napoleon loses badly at Leipzig; Wellington victorious in Spain and Portugal.
- 1814 STC lecturing in Bristol. WW publishes *The Excursion*; tours Scotland. Allied troops invade France and conquer Paris; Napoleon abdicates 6 April.
- 1815 Napoleon escapes from exile in Elba and raises new army; Wellington defeats Napoleon at Waterloo. WW publishes *The White Doe of Rylstone* and his collected *Poems*. Enlarged and revised editions of WW's *Poems* subsequently published in 1820, 1827, 1836, 1845, and 1849–50.
- 1816 STC goes to live with Dr. James Gillman to treat his opium addiction; publishes a small volume of three poems (*Christabel*; *Kubla Khan, a Vision*; *The Pains of Sleep*) and *The Statesman's Manual*. WW publishes a *Letter to a Friend of Robert Burns*.
- 1817 STC publishes *Sibylline Leaves*, *Biographia Literaria*, *Zapolya*, and *Lay Sermon*. WW in London; meets John Keats.

- 1818 STC lectures on literature and philosophy in London; publishes "Treatise on Method" in *Encyclopaedia Metropolitana* and a three-volume version of *The Friend*; *Zapolya* runs for ten nights at the Surrey Theatre. For the General Election, WW campaigns in Westmoreland for the Tory interest.
- 1819 WW publishes *Peter Bell* and *Benjamon the Waggoner*. STC's publisher, Rest Fenner, bankrupt; STC lectures on literature and the history of philosophy.
- 1820 WW publishes *The River Duddon* sonnet sequence. Prince Regent becomes George IV.
- 1822 STC seriously ill at Highgate. WW publishes *Memoirs of a Tour on the Continent, 1820* and *Ecclesiastical Sketches*.
- 1824 STC elected Royal Associate, Royal Society of Literature, with an annuity of 100 guineas.
- 1825 STC publishes *Aids to Reflection*; lectures on Aeschylus to the Royal Society of Literature.
- 1828 WW and STC reconcile and tour the Rhineland. STC publishes *Poetical Works*.
- 1829 STC publishes *On the Constitution of Church and State*; second edition of *Poetical Works*. Catholic Relief Bill passed.
- 1832 First Reform Bill is passed.
- 1834 Third edition of *Poetical Works* published. STC dies 25 July.
- 1835 WW publishes *Yarrow Revisited, and Other Poems*. *Table Talk of Samuel Coleridge* published.
- 1837 Queen Victoria succeeds George IV.
- 1838–39 WW receives honorary Doctor of Civil Law degrees from Durham and Oxford University.
- 1842 WW publishes *Poems, Chiefly of Early and Late Years*. Resigns Stamp Distributorship.
- 1843 WW succeeds Robert Southey as Poet Laureate; dictates notes to his poems to Isabella Fenwick.
- 1847 WW's daughter Dora dies.
- 1850 WW dies 23 April. *The Prelude* published in July by MHW and executors.

## *A Note on the Text*

After examining some twenty copies of the 1798 and 1800 editions of *Lyrical Ballads*, we have based our 1798 copytext on the copy held in Wells Wordsworth Collection of Swarthmore College, and our 1800 copytext on the copy held by the British Library, shelfmark Ashley 2253. The former contains the 1798 Errata leaf; the latter is one of two copies in existence to contain a paste-in of the missing lines from “Michael,” and includes all the matter published in the 1800 edition. Among the copies consulted are two other notable ones: British Library shelfmark C.58.c.12, a copy of the 1798 edition that includes both “The Nightingale” (pp. 63-69) and “Lewti” (pp. 63-67) in succession before continuing its pagination with page 70; and British Library shelfmark Ashley 2254, a copy of the 1800 edition that contains the canceled leaf of the earlier version of the Preface that mentions “Christabel.”

In general we have sought to produce the 1798 and 1800 editions as they were published. Throughout, we have noted all changes to the text, except in the case of quotation marks (which have been silently regularized) and obvious typesetters’ errors (which have been silently corrected). In making our corrections, we have sought to follow the editorial principles of the Cornell edition of *Lyrical Ballads and Other Poems, 1797-1800*, edited by James Butler and Karen Green.

Review Copy

LYRICAL BALLADS, 1798 EDITION

Review Copy

LYRICAL BALLADS,

WITH

*A FEW OTHER POEMS.*

LONDON:

PRINTED FOR J. & A. ARCH, GRACECHURCH-STREET,

1798.

## ADVERTISEMENT

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It is the honourable characteristic of Poetry that its materials are to be found in every subject which can interest the human mind. The evidence of this fact is to be sought, not in the writings of Critics, but in those of Poets themselves.

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 purposes of poetic pleasure. Readers accustomed to the gaudiness and inane phraseology of many modern writers, if they persist in reading this book to its conclusion, will perhaps frequently have to struggle with feelings of strangeness and awkwardness: they will look round for poetry, and will be induced to enquire by what species of courtesy these attempts can be permitted to assume that title. It is desirable that such readers, for their own sakes, should not suffer the solitary word Poetry, a word of very disputed meaning, to stand in the way of their gratification; but that, while they are perusing this book, they should ask themselves if it contains a natural delineation of human passions, human characters, and human incidents; and if the answer be favorable to the author's wishes, that they should consent to be pleased in spite of that most dreadful enemy to our pleasures, our own pre-established codes of decision.

Readers of superior judgment may disapprove of the style in which many of these pieces are executed; it must be expected that many lines and phrases will not exactly suit their taste. It will perhaps appear to them, that wishing to avoid the prevalent fault of the day, the author has sometimes descended too low, and that many of his expressions are too familiar, and not of sufficient dignity. It is apprehended, that the more conversant the reader is with our elder writers, and with those in modern times who have been the most successful in painting manners and passions, the fewer complaints of this kind will he have to make.

An accurate taste in poetry, and in all the other arts, Sir Joshua Reynolds<sup>1</sup> has observed, is an acquired talent, which can only be produced by severe thought, and a long continued intercourse

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1 *Sir Joshua Reynolds*] (1723–92), English portrait painter and first president of the Royal Academy of Art (1768–90), author of *Seven Discourses* (1778) and *Works* (1797). See Appendix F, pp. 493–95.

with the best models of composition. This is mentioned not with so ridiculous a purpose as to prevent the most inexperienced reader from judging for himself; but merely to temper the rashness of decision, and to suggest that if poetry be a subject on which much time has not been bestowed, the judgment may be erroneous, and that in many cases it necessarily will be so.

The tale of Goody Blake and Harry Gill is founded on a well-authenticated fact which happened in Warwickshire. Of the other poems in the collection, it may be proper to say that they are either absolute inventions of the author, or facts which took place within his personal observation or that of his friends. The poem of the Thorn, as the reader will soon discover, is not supposed to be spoken in the author's own person: the character of the loquacious narrator will sufficiently shew itself in the course of the story.<sup>1</sup> The Rime of the Ancyent Marinere was professedly written in imitation of the *style*, as well as of the spirit of the elder poets; but with a few exceptions, the Author believes that the language adopted in it has been equally intelligible for these three last centuries. The lines entitled Expostulation and Reply, and those which follow, arose out of conversation with a friend<sup>2</sup> who was somewhat unreasonably attached to modern books of moral philosophy.

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1 *Thorn ... story*] In 1800, Wordsworth added a Note on "The Thorn"; see pp. 287–89.

2 *friend*] Probably William Hazlitt (1778–1830), English critic, essayist, and journalist, who visited Coleridge and Wordsworth in 1797 and 1798.



THE RIME  
OF THE  
ANCYENT MARINERE,  
IN SEVEN PARTS.<sup>1</sup>

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1 By Coleridge. 1800: title changed to “The Ancient Mariner, a Poet’s Reverie,” with spelling modernized throughout the poem.

**ARGUMENT**<sup>1</sup>

How a Ship having passed the Line<sup>2</sup> was driven by Storms to the cold Country towards the South Pole; and how from thence she made her course to the tropical Latitude of the Great Pacific Ocean; and of the strange things that befell; and in what manner the Ancyent Marinere came back to his own Country.

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1 *ARGUMENT*] 1800: “How a Ship, having first sailed to the Equator, was driven by Storms, to the cold Country towards the South Pole; how the Ancient Mariner cruelly, and in contempt of the laws of hospitality, killed a Sea-bird; and how he was followed by many and strange Judgements; and in what manner he came back to his own Country.”

2 *Line*] The equator.

THE RIME  
OF THE  
ANCYENT MARINERE,  
IN SEVEN PARTS

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I

=====

It is an ancyent Marinere,  
And he stoppeth one of three:  
"By thy long grey beard and thy glittering eye  
Now wherefore stoppest me?"

The Bridegroom's doors are open'd wide  
And I am next of kin;  
The Guests are met, the Feast is set,—  
May'st hear the merry din."

But still he holds the wedding-guest—  
There was a Ship, quoth he— 10  
"Nay, if thou'st got a laughsome tale,  
Marinere! come with me."

He holds him with his skinny hand,  
Quoth he, there was a Ship—  
"Now get thee hence, thou grey-beard Loon!  
Or my Staff shall make thee skip."

He holds him with his glittering eye—  
The wedding guest stood still  
And listens like a three year's child;  
The Marinere hath his will. 20

The wedding-guest sate on a stone,  
He cannot chuse but hear:  
And thus spake on that ancyent man,  
The bright-eyed Marinere.

The Ship was cheer'd, the Harbour clear'd—  
Merrily did we drop  
Below the Kirk,<sup>1</sup> below the Hill,  
Below the Light-house top.

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1 *Kirk*] The name for a church in northern England and Scotland.

The Sun came up upon the left,  
Out of the Sea came he: 30  
And he shone bright, and on the right  
Went down into the Sea.

Higher and higher every day,  
Till over the mast at noon—<sup>1</sup>  
The wedding-guest here beat his breast,  
For he heard the loud bassoon.

The Bride hath pac'd into the Hall,  
Red as a rose is she;  
Nodding their heads before her goes  
The merry Minstralsy.<sup>2</sup> 40

The wedding-guest he beat his breast,  
Yet he cannot chuse but hear:  
And thus spake on that ancvent Man,  
The bright-eyed Marinere.

Listen, Stranger! Storm and Wind,  
A Wind and Tempest strong!  
For days and weeks it play'd us freaks<sup>3</sup>—  
Like Chaff we drove along.

Listen, Stranger! Mist and Snow,<sup>4</sup>  
And it grew wond'rous cauld: 50  
And Ice mast-high came floating by  
As green as Emerauld.

And thro' the drifts the snowy clifts  
Did send a dismal sheen;<sup>5</sup>

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1 *Higher ... noon*] As the ship travels further south, the sun appears higher in the sky each day.  
2 *Minstralsy*] “Minstrelsy,” a group of musicians.  
3 *Listen ... freaks*] 1800: “But now the Northwind came more fierce,/There came a Tempest strong!/And Southward still for days and weeks.” *freaks*] Tricks.  
4 *Listen ... Snow*] 1800: “And now there came both Mist and Snow,”  
5 *sheen*] A gleam, as of something reflecting light.

Ne shapes of men ne<sup>1</sup> beasts we ken<sup>2</sup>—  
The Ice was all between.

The Ice was here, the Ice was there,  
The Ice was all around:  
It crack'd and growl'd, and roar'd and howl'd—  
Like noises of a swound.<sup>3</sup> 60

At length did cross an Albatross,  
Thorough the Fog it came;  
And an<sup>4</sup> it were a Christian Soul,  
We hail'd it in God's name.

The Mariners gave it biscuit-worms,  
And round and round it flew:  
The Ice did split with a Thunder-fit;  
The Helmsman steer'd us thro'.

And a good south wind sprung up behind,  
The Albatross did follow; 70  
And every day for food or play  
Came to the Marinere's hollo!

In mist or cloud on mast or shroud  
It perch'd for vespers nine,  
Whiles all the night thro' fog-smoke white  
Glimmer'd the white moon-shine.

“God save thee, ancye[n]t Marinere!  
From the fiends that plague thee thus—  
Why look'st thou so?”—with my cross bow  
I shot the Albatross. 80

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1 *Ne ... ne*] Neither, nor. 1800: “ne” is changed to “nor” throughout the poem.

2 *ken*] Recognize, discover.

3 *Like ... swound*] 1800: “A wild and ceaseless sound.” *swound*] Swoon.

4 *an*] As if.

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## II

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The Sun came up upon the right,  
 Out of the Sea came he;  
 And broad as a weft<sup>1</sup> upon the left<sup>2</sup>  
 Went down into the Sea.

And the good south wind still blew behind,  
 But no sweet Bird did follow  
 Ne any day for food or play  
 Came to the Marinere's hollo!

And I had done an hellish thing  
 And it would work 'em woe: 90  
 For all averr'd, I had kill'd the Bird  
 That made the Breeze to blow.

Ne dim ne red, like God's own head,<sup>3</sup>  
 The glorious Sun uprist:<sup>4</sup>  
 Then all averr'd, I had kill'd the Bird  
 That brought the fog and mist.  
 'Twas right, said they, such birds to slay  
 That bring the fog and mist.

The breezes blew, the white foam flew,  
 The furrow<sup>5</sup> follow'd free: 100  
 We were the first that ever burst  
 Into that silent Sea.

Down dropt the breeze, the Sails dropt down,  
 'Twas sad as sad could be  
 And we did speak only to break  
 The silence of the Sea.

1 *weft*] A streak of cloud or thin layer of mist.

2 *And ... left*] 1800: "Still hid in mist; and on the left"

3 *Ne ... head*] 1800: "Nor dim nor red, like an Angel's head,"

4 *uprist*] Arose; in medieval English, the word also meant "to rise from the dead."

5 *furrow*] A trench in the earth made by a plow; here, the track of a vessel on the sea.

All in a hot and copper sky  
The bloody sun at noon,  
Right up above the mast did stand,  
No bigger than the moon. 110

Day after day, day after day,  
We stuck, ne breath ne motion,  
As idle as a painted Ship  
Upon a painted Ocean.

Water, water, every where  
And all the boards did shrink;  
Water, water, every where,  
Ne any drop to drink.

The very deeps did rot: O Christ!  
That ever this should be! 120  
Yea, slimy things did crawl with legs  
Upon the slimy Sea.

About, about, in reel and rout  
The Death-fires danc'd at night;  
The water, like a witch's oils,  
Burnt green and blue and white.<sup>1</sup>

And some in dreams assured were  
Of the Spirit<sup>2</sup> that plagued us so:  
Nine fathom deep he had follow'd us  
From the Land of Mist and Snow. 130

And every tongue thro' utter drouth<sup>3</sup>  
Was wither'd at the root;  
We could not speak no more than if  
We had been choked with soot.

---

1 *About ... white*] Referring to the luminous appearance of the sea caused by dinoflagellates, greenish-white microscopic organisms.

2 *Spirit*] The sailors are likely thinking of the *Each Uisge* or the Kelpie, a malignant water spirit of Scottish mythology. See also line 147 of this poem.

3 *drouth*] Thirst.

Ah wel-a-day! what evil looks  
Had I from old and young;  
Instead of the Cross the Albatross  
About my neck was hung.

=====

III

=====

I saw a something in the Sky  
No bigger than my fist;<sup>1</sup> 140  
At first it seem'd a little speck  
And then it seem'd a mist:  
It mov'd and mov'd, and took at last  
A certain shape, I wist.<sup>2</sup>

A speck, a mist, a shape, I wist!  
And still it ner'd and ner'd;  
And, an it dodg'd a water-sprite,  
It plung'd and tack'd and veer'd.

With throat unslack'd, with black lips bak'd  
Ne could we laugh, ne wail: 150  
Then while thro' drouth all dumb they stood  
I bit my arm and suck'd the blood  
And cry'd, A sail! a sail!

With throat unslack'd, with black lips bak'd  
Agape they hear'd me call:  
Gramercy!<sup>3</sup> they for joy did grin  
And all at once their breath drew in  
As they were drinking all.

She doth not tack from side to side—<sup>4</sup>  
Hither to work us weal<sup>5</sup> 160

---

1 *I saw ... fist*] 1800: "So past a weary time; each throat/Was parch'd, and glaz'd each eye,/When, looking westward, I beheld/A something in the sky." Lines 141–44 then follow in a new stanza.

2 *wist*] Thought.

3 *Gramercy!*] A shortened form of "God grant mercy on us!"

4 *She ... side—*] 1800: "See! See! (I cry'd) she tacks no more!"

5 *weal*] Good.



Withouten wind, withouten tide<sup>1</sup>  
 She steddies with upright keel.

The western wave was all a flame,  
 The day was well nigh done!  
 Almost upon the western wave  
 Rested the broad bright Sun;  
 When that strange shape drove suddenly  
 Betwixt us and the Sun.

And strait the Sun was fleck'd with bars  
 (Heaven's mother send us grace) 170  
 As if thro' a dungeon grate he peer'd  
 With broad and burning face.

Alas! (thought I, and my heart beat loud)  
 How fast she neres and neres!  
 Are those *her* Sails that glance in the Sun  
 Like restless gossameres?<sup>2</sup>

Are those *her* naked ribs, which fleck'd  
 The sun that did behind them peer?  
 And are those two all, all the crew,  
 That woman and her fleshless Pheere?<sup>3</sup> 180

*His* bones were black with many a crack,  
 All black and bare, I ween;<sup>4</sup>  
 Jet-black and bare, save where with rust  
 Of mouldy damps and charnel crust  
 They're patch'd with purple and green.

*Her* lips are red, *her* looks are free,  
*Her* locks are yellow as gold:  
 Her skin is white as leprosy,  
 And she is far liker Death than he;  
 Her flesh makes the still air cold. 190

---

1 *Withouten ... tide*] 1798: "Without a breeze, without a tide"

2 *gossameres*] Any sheer cloth; also, filmy cobwebs often seen floating in the air in calm weather.

3 *Are those ... Pheere*] 1800: "Are those *her* Ribs, thro' which the Sun/Did peer, as thro' a grate?/And are those two all, all her crew,/That Woman, and her Mate?" *Pheere*] variant of "fere," meaning "companion" or "mate."

4 *ween*] Believe.

The naked Hulk alongside came  
And the Twain were playing dice;  
“The Game is done! I’ve won, I’ve won!”  
Quoth she, and whistled thrice.

A gust of wind sterte up behind  
And whistled thro’ his bones;  
Thro’ the holes of his eyes and the hole of his mouth  
Half-whistles and half-groans.

With never a whisper in the Sea  
Off darts the Spectre-ship; 200  
While clombe above the Eastern bar  
The horned Moon, with one bright Star  
Almost atween the tips.<sup>1</sup>

One after one by the horned Moon  
(Listen, O Stranger! to me)  
Each turn’d his face with a ghastly pang  
And curs’d me with his ee.<sup>2</sup>

Four times fifty living men,  
With never a sigh or groan,  
With heavy thump, a lifeless lump 210  
They dropp’d down one by one.

Their souls did from their bodies fly,—  
They fled to bliss or woe;  
And every soul it pass’d me by,  
Like the whiz of my Cross-bow.

=====  
IV  
=====

“I fear thee, ancyeut Marinere!  
I fear thy skinny hand;  
And thou art long and lank and brown  
As is the ribb’d Sea-sand.

---

1 *The horned ... tips*] Presumably a crescent moon rising in the Eastern sky  
with a bright star, probably Mars or Venus.

2 *ee*] Eye.

I fear thee and thy glittering eye  
And thy skinny hand so brown—”  
Fear not, fear not, thou wedding guest!  
This body dropt not down. 220

Alone, alone, all all alone  
Alone on the wide wide Sea;  
And Christ would take no pity on  
My soul in agony.

The many men so beautiful,  
And they all dead did lie!  
And a million million slimy things  
Liv'd on—and so did I. 230

I look'd upon the rotting Sea,  
And drew my eyes away;  
I look'd upon the eldritch<sup>1</sup> deck,  
And there the dead men lay.

I look'd to Heaven, and try'd to pray;  
But or ever a prayer had gusht,  
A wicked whisper came and made  
My heart as dry as dust.

I clos'd my lids and kept them close,  
Till the balls like pulses beat;  
For the sky and the sea, and the sea and the sky  
Lay like a load on my weary eye,  
And the dead were at my feet. 240

The cold sweat melted from their limbs,  
Ne rot, ne reek did they;  
The look with which they look'd on me,  
Had never pass'd away.

An orphan's curse would drag to Hell  
A spirit from on high: 250  
But O! more horrible than that  
Is the curse in a dead man's eye!  
Seven days, seven nights I saw that curse,  
And yet I could not die.

---

1 *eldritch*] 1800: “ghastly”

The moving Moon went up the sky  
And no where did abide:  
Softly she was going up  
And a star or two beside—

Her beams bemock'd the sultry main  
Like morning frosts yspread;<sup>1</sup> 260  
But where the ship's huge shadow lay,  
The charmed water burnt away  
A still and awful red.

Beyond the shadow of the ship  
I watch'd the water-snakes:  
They mov'd in tracks of shining white;  
And when they rear'd, the elfish light  
Fell off in hoary flakes.

Within the shadow of the ship  
I watch'd their rich attire: 270  
Blue, glossy green, and velvet black  
They coil'd and swam; and every track  
Was a flash of golden fire.

O happy living things! no tongue  
Their beauty might declare:  
A spring of love gush't from my heart,  
And I bless'd them unaware!  
Sure my kind saint took pity on me,  
And I bless'd them unaware.

The self-same moment I could pray; 280  
And from my neck so free  
The Albatross fell off, and sank  
Like lead into the sea.

=====  
V  
=====

O sleep, it is a gentle thing  
Belov'd from pole to pole!

---

1 *Like ... yspread*] 1800: "Like April hoar-frost spread;"

To Mary-queen<sup>1</sup> the praise be yeven<sup>2</sup>  
She sent the gentle sleep from heaven  
That slid into my soul.

The silly<sup>3</sup> buckets on the deck  
That had so long remain'd, 290  
I dreamt that they were fill'd with dew  
And when I awoke it rain'd.

My lips were wet, my throat was cold,  
My garments all were dank;  
Sure I had drunken in my dreams  
And still my body drank.

I mov'd and could not feel my limbs,  
I was so light, almost  
I thought that I had died in sleep,  
And was a blessed Ghost. 300

The roaring wind! it roar'd far off,<sup>4</sup>  
It did not come anear;  
But with its sound it shook the sails  
That were so thin and sere.

The upper air<sup>5</sup> bursts into life,  
And a hundred fire-flags<sup>6</sup> sheen  
To and fro they are hurried about;  
And to and fro, and in and out  
The stars dance on between.

The coming wind doth roar more loud; 310  
The sails do sigh, like sedge:<sup>7</sup>

---

1 *Mary-queen*] The Virgin Mary.

2 *yeven*] Given.

3 *silly*] Plain or rustic.

4 *The roaring ... far off*] 1800: "And soon I heard a roaring wind,"

5 *upper air*] Upper atmosphere.

6 *fire-flags*] Meteoric flames.

7 *sedge*] Coarse, rush-like plants found in swamps.

The rain pours down from one black cloud  
And the Moon is at its edge.<sup>1</sup>

Hark! hark! the thick black cloud is cleft,  
And the Moon is at its side:  
Like waters shot from some high crag,  
The lightning falls with never a jag  
A river steep and wide.<sup>2</sup>

The strong wind reach'd the ship: it roar'd  
And dropp'd down, like a stone!<sup>3</sup> 320  
Beneath the lightning and the moon  
The dead men gave a groan.

They groan'd, they stirr'd, they all uprose,  
Ne spake, ne mov'd their eyes:  
It had been strange, even in a dream  
To have seen those dead men rise.

The helmsman steer'd, the ship mov'd on;  
Yet never a breeze up-blew;  
The Mariners all 'gan work the ropes,  
Where they were wont to do: 330  
They rais'd their limbs like lifeless tools—  
We were a ghastly crew.

The body of my brother's son  
Stood by me knee to knee:  
The body and I pull'd at one rope,  
But he said nought to me—  
And I quak'd to think of my own voice  
How frightful it would be!<sup>4</sup>

---

1 *The upper ... edge*] The 1800 edition revises these lines into the past tense.  
2 *The ... wide*] The 1800 edition revises these lines into the past tense.  
3 *The ... stone*] 1800: "The loud wind never reach'd the Ship,/Yet now the Ship mov'd on!"  
4 *And ... be!]* 1800: deletes these lines and replaces them with an additional stanza: "I fear thee, ancient Mariner!'/Be calm, thou wedding guest!'/Twas not those souls, that fled in pain,/Which to their corpses came again,/But a troop of Spirits blest:"

The day-light<sup>1</sup> dawn'd—they dropp'd their arms,  
And cluster'd round the mast: 340  
Sweet sounds rose slowly thro' their mouths  
And from their bodies pass'd.

Around, around, flew each sweet sound,  
Then darted to the sun:  
Slowly the sounds came back again  
Now mix'd, now one by one.

Sometimes a dropping from the sky  
I heard the Lavrock<sup>2</sup> sing;  
Sometimes all little birds that are  
How they seem'd to fill the sea and air 350  
With their sweet jargoning,

And now 'twas like all instruments,  
Now like a lonely flute;  
And now it is an angel's song  
That makes the heavens be mute.

It ceas'd: yet still the sails made on  
A pleasant noise till noon,  
A noise like of a hidden brook  
In the leafy month of June,  
That to the sleeping woods all night 360  
Singeth a quiet tune.

Listen, O listen, thou Wedding-guest!  
“Marinere! thou hast thy will:  
For that, which comes out of thine eye, doth make  
My body and soul to be still.”

Never sadder tale was told  
To a man of woman born:  
Sadder and wiser thou wedding-guest!  
Thou'lt rise to morrow morn.

---

1 *The day-light*] 1800: “For when it”

2 *Lavrock*] 1800: “Sky-lark”

Never sadder tale was heard 370  
 By a man of woman born:  
 The Mariners all return'd to work  
 As silent as before.

The Mariners all 'gan pull the ropes,  
 But look at me they n'old:<sup>1</sup>  
 Thought I, I am as thin as air—  
 They cannot me behold.<sup>2</sup>

Till noon we silently sail'd on  
 Yet never a breeze did breathe:  
 Slowly and smoothly went the ship 380  
 Mov'd onward from beneath.

Under the keel nine fathom deep  
 From the land of mist and snow  
 The spirit slid: and it was He  
 That made the Ship to go.  
 The sails at noon left off their tune  
 And the Ship stood still also.

The sun right up above the mast  
 Had fix'd her to the ocean:  
 But in a minute she 'gan stir 390  
 With a short uneasy motion—  
 Backwards and forwards half her length  
 With a short uneasy motion.

Then, like a pawing horse let go,  
 She made a sudden bound:  
 It flung the blood into my head,  
 And I fell into a swoond.

How long in that same fit I lay,  
 I have not to declare;  
 But ere my living life return'd, 400  
 I heard and in my soul discern'd  
 Two voices in the air,

---

1 *n'old*] An archaic form of “nill,” meaning “would not.”

2 *Listen ... behold*] 1800: lines 362-77 deleted.



“Is it he?” quoth one, “Is this the man?  
By him who died on cross,  
With his cruel bow he lay’d full low  
The harmless Albatross.

The spirit who ’bideth by himself  
In the land of mist and snow,  
He lov’d the bird that lov’d the man  
Who shot him with his bow.”

410

The other was a softer voice,  
As soft as honey-dew:  
Quoth he, “The man hath penance done,  
And penance more will do.”

=====  
VI  
=====

FIRST VOICE

“But tell me, tell me! speak again,  
Thy soft response renewing—  
What makes that ship drive on so fast?  
What is the Ocean doing?”

SECOND VOICE

“Still as a Slave before his Lord,  
The Ocean hath no blast:  
His great bright eye most silently  
Up to the moon is cast—

420

If he may know which way to go,  
For she guides him smooth or grim.  
See, brother, see! how graciously  
She looketh down on him.”

FIRST VOICE

“But why drives on that ship so fast  
Withouten wave or wind?”

## SECOND VOICE

“The air is cut away before,  
And closes from behind. 430

Fly, brother, fly! more high, more high,  
Or we shall be belated:  
For slow and slow that ship will go,  
When the Marinere’s trance is abated.”

I woke, and we were sailing on  
As in a gentle weather:  
’Twas night, calm night, the moon was high;  
The dead men stood together.

All stood together on the deck,  
For a charnel-dungeon fitter: 440  
All fix’d on me their stony eyes  
That in the moon did glitter.

The pang, the curse, with which they died,  
Had never pass’d away:  
I could not draw my een<sup>1</sup> from theirs  
Ne turn them up to pray.

And in its time the spell was snapt,  
And I could move my een:<sup>2</sup>  
I look’d far-forth, but little saw  
Of what might else be seen. 450

Like one, that on a lonely road  
Doth walk in fear and dread,  
And having once turn’d round, walks on  
And turns no more his head:  
Because he knows, a frightful fiend  
Doth close behind him tread.

But soon there breath’d a wind on me,  
Ne sound ne motion made:

---

1 *een*] 1800: “eyes”

2 *And in ... een*] 1800: “And now this spell was snapt: once more/I view’d  
the ocean green,”

Its path was not upon the sea  
 In ripple or in shade. 460

It rais'd my hair, it fann'd my cheek,  
 Like a meadow-gale of spring—  
 It mingled strangely with my fears,  
 Yet it felt like a welcoming.

Swiftly, swiftly flew the ship,  
 Yet she sail'd softly too:  
 Sweetly, sweetly blew the breeze—  
 On me alone it blew.

O dream of joy! is this indeed  
 The light-house top I see? 470  
 Is this the Hill? Is this the Kirk?  
 Is this mine own countrée?

We drifted o'er the Harbour-bar,  
 And I with sobs did pray—  
 “O let me be awake, my God!  
 Or let me sleep away!”

The harbour-bay was clear as glass,  
 So smoothly it was strewn!  
 And on the bay the moon light lay,  
 And the shadow of the moon. 480

The moonlight bay was white all o'er,  
 Till rising from the same,  
 Full many shapes, that shadows were,  
 Like as of torches came.

A little distance from the prow  
 Those dark-red shadows were;  
 But soon I saw that my own flesh  
 Was red as in a glare.

I turn'd my head in fear and dread,  
 And by the holy rood,<sup>1</sup> 490

---

1 *holy rood*] The cross of the Crucifixion.

The bodies had advanc'd, and now  
Before the mast they stood.

They lifted up their stiff right arms,  
They held them strait and tight;  
And each right-arm burnt like a torch,  
A torch that's borne upright.  
Their stony eye-balls glitter'd on  
In the red and smoky light.

I pray'd and turn'd my head away  
Forth looking as before. 500  
There was no breeze upon the bay,  
No wave against the shore.<sup>1</sup>

The rock shone bright, the kirk no less  
That stands above the rock:  
The moonlight steep'd in silentness  
The steady weathercock.

And the bay was white with silent light,  
Till rising from the same  
Full many shapes, that shadows were,  
In crimson colours came. 510

A little distance from the prow  
Those crimson shadows were:  
I turn'd my eyes upon the deck—  
O Christ! what saw I there?

Each corse lay flat, lifeless and flat;  
And by the Holy rood  
A man all light, a seraph-man,  
On every corse there stood.

This seraph-band, each wav'd his hand:  
It was a heavenly sight: 520  
They stood as signals to the land,  
Each one a lovely light:

This seraph-band, each wav'd his hand,  
No voice did they impart—

---

1 *The moonlight ... shore*] 1800: lines 481–502 deleted.

No voice; but O! the silence sank,  
Like music on my heart.

Eftsones<sup>1</sup> I heard the dash of oars,  
I heard the pilot's cheer:  
My head was turn'd perforce away  
And I saw a boat appear. 530

Then vanish'd all the lovely lights;  
The bodies rose anew:  
With silent pace, each to his place,  
Came back the ghastly crew.  
The wind, that shade nor motion made,  
On me alone it blew.<sup>2</sup>

The pilot, and the pilot's boy  
I heard them coming fast:  
Dear Lord in Heaven! it was a joy,  
The dead men could not blast. 540

I saw a third—I heard his voice:  
It is the Hermit good!  
He singeth loud his godly hymns  
That he makes in the wood.  
He'll shrieve my soul, he'll wash away  
The Albatross's blood.

=====  
VII  
=====

This Hermit good lives in that wood  
Which slopes down to the Sea.  
How loudly his sweet voice he rears!  
He loves to talk with Marineres 550  
That come from a far Contrée.

He kneels at morn and noon and eve—  
He hath a cushion plump:

---

1 *Eftsones*] Again. 1800: "But soon"

2 *Then ... blew*] 1800: lines 531-36 deleted.

It is the moss, that wholly hides  
The rotted old Oak-stump.

The Skiff-boat ner'd: I heard them talk,  
"Why, this is strange, I trow!  
Where are those lights so many and fair  
That signal made but now?"

"Strange, by my faith!" the Hermit said— 560  
"And they answer'd not our cheer.  
The planks look warp'd, and see those sails  
How thin they are and sere!  
I never saw aught like to them  
Unless perchance it were

The skeletons of leaves that lag  
My forest brook along:  
When the Ivy-tod<sup>1</sup> is heavy with snow,  
And the Owllet whoops to the wolf below  
That eats the she-wolf's young." 570

"Dear Lord! it has a fiendish look—"  
(The Pilot made reply)  
"I am a-fear'd."—"Push on, push on!"  
Said the Hermit cheerily.

The Boat came closer to the Ship,  
But I ne spake ne stirr'd!  
The Boat came close beneath the Ship,  
And strait a sound was heard!

Under the water it rumbled on,  
Still louder and more dread: 580  
It reach'd the Ship, it split the bay;  
The Ship went down like lead.

Stunn'd by that loud and dreadful sound,  
Which sky and ocean smote:  
Like one that hath been seven days drown'd  
My body lay afloat:  
But, swift as dreams, myself I found  
Within the Pilot's boat.

---

1 *Ivy-tod*] An ivy bush; also, a place of concealment.

Upon the whirl, where sank the Ship,  
 The boat spun round and round: 590  
 And all was still, save that the hill  
 Was telling of the sound.

I mov'd my lips: the Pilot shriek'd  
 And fell down in a fit.  
 The Holy Hermit rais'd his eyes  
 And pray'd where he did sit.

I took the oars: the Pilot's boy,  
 Who now doth crazy go,  
 Laugh'd loud and long, and all the while  
 His eyes went to and fro, 600  
 "Ha! ha!" quoth he—"full plain I see,  
 The devil knows how to row."

And now all in mine own Countrée  
 I stood on the firm land!  
 The Hermit stepp'd forth from the boat,  
 And scarcely he could stand.

"O shrieve me, shrieve me, holy Man!"  
 The Hermit cross'd his brow—  
 "Say quick," quoth he, "I bid thee say  
 What manner man art thou?" 610

Forthwith this frame of mine was wrench'd  
 With a woeful agony,  
 Which forc'd me to begin my tale  
 And then it left me free.

Since then at an uncertain hour,  
 Now oftimes and now fewer,  
 That anguish comes and makes me tell  
 My ghastly aventure.<sup>1</sup>

I pass, like night, from land to land;  
 I have strange power of speech; 620  
 The moment that his face I see  
 I know the man that must hear me;  
 To him my tale I teach.

---

1 *Now ... aventure*] 1800: "That agony returns;/And till my ghastly tale is told/This heart within me burns."

What loud uproar bursts from that door!  
The Wedding-guests are there;  
But in the Garden-bower the Bride  
And Bride-maids singing are:  
And hark the little Vesper-bell  
Which biddeth me to prayer.

O Wedding-guest! this soul hath been 630  
Alone on a wide wide sea:  
So lonely 'twas, that God himself  
Scarce seemed there to be.

O sweeter than the Marriage-feast,  
'Tis sweeter far to me  
To walk together to the Kirk  
With a goodly company.

To walk together to the Kirk  
And all together pray,  
While each to his great father bends, 640  
Old men, and babes, and loving friends,  
And Youths, and Maidens gay.

Farewell, farewell! but this I tell  
To thee, thou wedding-guest!  
He prayeth well who loveth well  
Both man and bird and beast.

He prayeth best who loveth best,  
All things both great and small:  
For the dear God, who loveth us,  
He made and loveth all. 650

The Marinere, whose eye is bright,  
Whose beard with age is hoar,  
Is gone; and now the wedding-guest  
Turn'd from the bridegroom's door.

He went, like one that hath been stunn'd  
And is of sense forlorn:  
A sadder and a wiser man  
He rose the morrow morn.



THE  
*FOSTER-MOTHER'S TALE,*

A DRAMATIC FRAGMENT<sup>1</sup>

=====

FOSTER-MOTHER

I never saw the man whom you describe.

MARIA

'Tis strange! he spake of you familiarly  
As mine and Albert's common Foster-mother.

FOSTER-MOTHER

Now blessings on the man, whoe'er he be,  
That joined your names with mine! O my sweet lady,  
As often as I think of those dear times  
When you two little ones would stand at eve  
On each side of my chair, and make me learn  
All you had learnt in the day; and how to talk  
In gentle phrase, then bid me sing to you— 10  
'Tis more like heaven to come than what *has* been.

MARIA

O my dear Mother! this strange man has left me  
Troubled with wilder fancies, than the moon  
Breeds in the love-sick maid who gazes at it,  
Till lost in inward vision, with wet eye  
She gazes idly! —But that entrance, Mother!

FOSTER-MOTHER

Can no one hear? It is a perilous tale!

---

1 By Coleridge; from the play *Osorio*, composed 1797 and revised as *Remorse*, which debuted at the Drury Lane Theatre in 1813. 1800: title changed to "The Foster-Mother's Tale. A Narration in Dramatic Blank Verse" and lines 1–16 deleted.

## MARIA

No one.

## FOSTER-MOTHER

My husband's father told it me,  
 Poor old Leoni!—Angels rest his soul!  
 He was a woodman, and could fell and saw 20  
 With lusty arm. You know that huge round beam  
 Which props the hanging wall of the old chapel?  
 Beneath that tree, while yet it was a tree  
 He found a baby wrapt in mosses, lined  
 With thistle-beards, and such small locks of wool  
 As hang on brambles. Well, he brought him home,  
 And reared him at the then Lord Velez' cost.  
 And so the babe grew up a pretty boy,  
 A pretty boy, but most unteachable—  
 And never learnt a prayer, nor told a bead, 30  
 But knew the names of birds, and mocked their notes,  
 And whistled, as he were a bird himself.<sup>1</sup>  
 And all the autumn 'twas his only play  
 To get the seeds of wild flowers, and to plant them  
 With earth and water, on the stumps of trees.  
 A Friar, who gathered simples<sup>2</sup> in the wood,  
 A grey-haired man—he loved this little boy,  
 The boy loved him—and, when the Friar taught him,  
 He soon could write with the pen: and from that time,  
 Lived chiefly at the Convent or the Castle. 40  
 So he became a very learned youth.  
 But Oh! poor wretch!—he read, and read, and read,  
 'Till his brain turned—and ere his twentieth year,  
 He had unlawful thoughts of many things:  
 And though he prayed, he never loved to pray  
 With holy men, nor in a holy place—  
 But yet his speech, it was so soft and sweet,  
 The late Lord Velez ne'er was wearied with him.

---

1 *But ... himself*] Wordsworth suggests a similar relationship between nature, bird-mimicry, and a young boy in "There was a boy." See p. 299. See also the excerpt from Joanna Baillie's *De Monfort* in Appendix G, pp. 526–27.

2 *simples*] Medicinal plants or herbs.

And once, as by the north side of the Chapel  
 They stood together, chained in deep discourse, 50  
 The earth heaved under them with such a groan,  
 That the wall tottered, and had well-nigh fallen  
 Right on their heads. My Lord was sorely frightened;  
 A fever seized him, and he made confession  
 Of all the heretical and lawless talk  
 Which brought this judgment: so the youth was seized  
 And cast into that hole. My husband's father  
 Sobbed like a child—it almost broke his heart:  
 And once as he was working in the cellar,  
 He heard a voice distinctly; 'twas the youth's, 60  
 Who sung a doleful song about green fields,  
 How sweet it were on lake or wild savannah,  
 To hunt for food, and be a naked man,  
 And wander up and down at liberty.<sup>1</sup>  
 He always doted on the youth, and now  
 His love grew desperate; and defying death,  
 He made that cunning entrance I described:  
 And the young man escaped.

## MARIA

'Tis a sweet tale:  
 Such as would lull a listening child to sleep,  
 His rosy face besoiled with unwiped tears.—<sup>2</sup> 70  
 And what became of him?

## FOSTER-MOTHER

He went on ship-board  
 With those bold voyagers, who made discovery  
 Of golden lands. Leoni's younger brother  
 Went likewise, and when he returned to Spain,  
 He told Leoni, that the poor mad youth,  
 Soon after they arrived in that new world,  
 In spite of his dissuasion, seized a boat,  
 And all alone, set sail by silent moonlight

1 *How ... liberty*] Most likely referring to the happy state of the “noble savage,” popularized by Jean-Jacques Rousseau in his *Discourse on the Origin of Inequality* (1755).

2 *Such ... tears*] 1800: deleted.

Up a great river, great as any sea,  
 And ne'er was heard of more: but 'tis supposed, 80  
 He lived and died among the savage men.

LINES  
 LEFT UPON A SEAT IN  
 A YEW-TREE  
 WHICH STANDS NEAR THE LAKE OF ESTHWAITE,<sup>1</sup>  
 ON A DESOLATE PART OF THE SHORE,  
 YET COMMANDING A BEAUTIFUL PROSPECT<sup>2</sup>

=====

—Nay, Traveller! rest. This lonely yew-tree stands  
 Far from all human dwelling: what if here  
 No sparkling rivulet spread the verdant herb;  
 What if these barren boughs the bee not loves;  
 Yet, if the wind breathe soft, the curling waves,  
 That break against the shore, shall lull thy mind  
 By one soft impulse saved from vacancy.

—————Who he was  
 That piled these stones, and with the mossy sod  
 First covered o'er, and taught this aged tree, 10  
 Now wild, to bend its arms in circling shade,  
 I well remember.—He was one who own'd  
 No common soul. In youth, by genius nurs'd,  
 And big with lofty views, he to the world  
 Went forth, pure in his heart,<sup>3</sup> against the taint  
 Of dissolute tongues, 'gainst jealousy, and hate,  
 And scorn, against all enemies prepared,  
 All but neglect:<sup>4</sup> and so, his spirit damped  
 At once, with rash disdain he turned away,

---

1 *Lake of Esthwaite*] Located in the Lake District half a mile south of Hawkshead. See Appendix H, pp. 544–45.

2 By Wordsworth.

3 *In youth ... heart*] 1800: “In youth by science nursed/And led by nature into a wild scene/Of lofty hopes, he to the world went forth,/A favored being, knowing no desire/Which genius did not hallow,”

4 *All but neglect*] Here, the 1800 edition inserts: “The world, for so it thought,/Owed him no service: he was like a plant/Fair to the sun, the darling of the winds,/But hung with fruit which no one, that passed by,/Regarded,”

And with the food of pride sustained his soul 20  
 In solitude.—Stranger! these gloomy boughs  
 Had charms for him; and here he loved to sit,  
 His only visitants a stragglng sheep,  
 The stone-chat, or the glancing sand-piper;  
 And on these barren rocks, with juniper,  
 And heath, and thistle, thinly sprinkled o'er,  
 Fixing his downward eye, he many an hour  
 A morbid pleasure nourished, tracing here  
 An emblem of his own unfruitful life:  
 And lifting up his head, he then would gaze 30  
 On the more distant scene; how lovely 'tis  
 Thou seest, and he would gaze till it became  
 Far lovelier, and his heart could not sustain  
 The beauty still more beauteous. Nor, that time,<sup>1</sup>  
 Would he forget those beings, to whose minds,  
 Warm from the labours of benevolence,  
 The world, and man himself, appeared a scene  
 Of kindred loveliness: then he would sigh  
 With mournful joy, to think that others felt  
 What he must never feel: and so, lost man! 40  
 On visionary views would fancy feed,  
 Till his eye streamed with tears. In this deep vale  
 He died, this seat his only monument.

If thou be one whose heart the holy forms  
 Of young imagination have kept pure,  
 Stranger! henceforth be warned; and know, that pride,  
 Howe'er disguised in its own majesty,  
 Is littleness; that he, who feels contempt  
 For any living thing, hath faculties  
 Which he has never used; that thought with him 50  
 Is in its infancy. The man, whose eye  
 Is ever on himself, doth look on one,  
 The least of nature's works, one who might move  
 The wise man to that scorn which wisdom holds  
 Unlawful, ever. O, be wiser thou!  
 Instructed that true knowledge leads to love,  
 True dignity abides with him alone

---

1 *Nor, that time]* Here, the 1800 edition inserts: "When Nature had subdued him to herself,"

Who, in the silent hour of inward thought,  
 Can still suspect, and still revere himself,  
 In lowliness of heart.

60

## THE NIGHTINGALE;

A CONVERSATIONAL POEM, WRITTEN IN APRIL,

1798<sup>1</sup>

=====

No cloud, no relique of the sunken day  
 Distinguishes the West, no long thin slip  
 Of sullen Light, no obscure trembling hues.  
 Come, we will rest on this old mossy Bridge!  
 You see the glimmer of the stream beneath,  
 But hear no murmuring: it flows silently  
 O'er its soft bed of verdure. All is still,  
 A balmy night! and tho' the stars be dim,  
 Yet let us think upon the vernal showers  
 That gladden the green earth, and we shall find 10  
 A pleasure in the dimness of the stars.  
 And hark! the Nightingale begins its song,  
 "Most musical, most melancholy"\* Bird!  
 A melancholy Bird? O idle thought!  
 In nature there is nothing melancholy.  
 —But some night-wandering Man, whose heart was pierc'd  
 With the remembrance of a grievous wrong,  
 Or slow distemper or neglected love,  
 (And so, poor Wretch! fill'd all things with himself

---

\* "*Most musical, most melancholy.*" This passage in Milton possesses an excellence far superior to that of mere description: it is spoken in the character of the melancholy Man, and has therefore a *dramatic* propriety. The Author makes this remark, to rescue himself from the charge of having alluded with levity to a line in Milton: a charge than which none could be more painful to him, except perhaps that of having ridiculed his Bible. [Coleridge's note. Coleridge refers to lines 61–64 of John Milton's *Il Penseroso* (1645): "Sweet bird, that shunn'st the noise of folly,/Most musical, most melancholy!/Thee, chauntress, oft the woods among/I woo, to hear thy even-song;"]

---

1 By Coleridge. The 1800 edition drops "A Conversational Poem" from the title.

And made all gentle sounds tell back the tale 20  
 Of his own sorrows) he and such as he  
 First nam'd these notes a melancholy strain;  
 And many a poet echoes the conceit,  
 Poet, who hath been building up the rhyme  
 When he had better far have stretch'd his limbs  
 Beside a brook in mossy forest-dell  
 By sun or moonlight, to the influxes  
 Of shapes and sounds and shifting elements  
 Surrendering his whole spirit, of his song  
 And of his fame forgetful! so his fame 30  
 Should share in nature's immortality,  
 A venerable thing! and so his song  
 Should make all nature lovelier, and itself  
 Be lov'd, like nature! —But 'twill not be so;  
 And youths and maidens most poetical  
 Who lose the deep'ning twilights of the spring  
 In ball-rooms and hot theatres, they still  
 Full of meek sympathy must heave their sighs  
 O'er Philomela's<sup>1</sup> pity-pleading strains.  
 My Friend, and my Friend's Sister! we have learnt 40  
 A different lore: we may not thus profane  
 Nature's sweet voices always full of love  
 And joyance! 'Tis the merry Nightingale  
 That crowds, and hurries, and precipitates  
 With fast thick warble his delicious notes,  
 As he were fearful, that an April night  
 Would be too short for him to utter forth  
 His love-chant, and disburthen his full soul  
 Of all its music! And I know a grove  
 Of large extent, hard by a castle huge 50  
 Which the great lord inhabits not: and so  
 This grove is wild with tangling underwood,

---

1 *Philomela's*] Referring to a popular story in Greek mythology and in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. Philomela and Procne were the daughters of King Pandion of Athens. Procne married King Tereus of Thrace, who raped Philomela and cut her out tongue. Though she could not speak, Philomela wove a tapestry to convey her betrayal to Procne. To revenge herself on Tereus, Procne killed and cooked their son Itys, but Tereus discovered the trick and pursued the sisters. Before he could catch them, all three were turned into birds: Tereus became a hoopoe, Procne a swallow, and Philomela a nightingale.

And the trim<sup>1</sup> walks are broken up, and grass,  
 Thin grass and king-cups<sup>2</sup> grow within the paths.  
 But never elsewhere in one place I knew  
 So many Nightingales: and far and near  
 In wood and thicket over the wide grove  
 They answer and provoke each other's songs—  
 With skirmish and capricious passagings,  
 And murmurs musical and swift jug jug 60  
 And one low piping sound more sweet than all—  
 Stirring the air with such an harmony,  
 That should you close your eyes, you might almost  
 Forget it was not day! On moonlight bushes,  
 Whose dewy leafits are but half disclos'd,  
 You may perchance behold them on the twigs,  
 Their bright, bright eyes, their eyes both bright and full,  
 Glistning, while many a glow-worm in the shade  
 Lights up her love-torch.<sup>3</sup>

A most gentle maid

Who dwelleth in her hospitable home 70  
 Hard by the Castle, and at latest eve,  
 (Even like a Lady vow'd and dedicate  
 To something more than nature in the grove)<sup>4</sup>  
 Glides thro' the pathways; she knows all their notes,  
 That gentle Maid! and oft, a moment's space,  
 What time the moon was lost behind a cloud,  
 Hath heard a pause of silence: till the Moon  
 Emerging, hath awaken'd earth and sky  
 With one sensation, and those wakeful Birds  
 Have all burst forth in choral minstrelsy,<sup>5</sup> 80  
 As if one quick and sudden Gale had swept  
 An hundred airy harps! And she hath watch'd  
 Many a Nightingale perch giddily  
 On blosmy twig still swinging from the breeze,  
 And to that motion tune his wanton song,  
 Like tipsy Joy that reels with tossing head.

1 *trim*] Neatly arrayed or dressed.

2 *king-cups*] In England, the name given to the common buttercup.

3 *On moonlight ... love-torch*] 1800: deleted.

4 *Even ... grove*] Echoing lines 23–32 of Coleridge's "Christabel." See Appendix B, p. 436.

5 *minstrelsy*] Harmony.



Farewell, O Warbler! till to-morrow eve,  
 And you, my friends! farewell, a short farewell!  
 We have been loitering long and pleasantly,  
 And now for our dear homes.—That strain again! 90  
 Full fain would it delay me!—My dear Babe,  
 Who, capable of no articulate sound,  
 Mars all things with his imitative lisp,  
 How he would place his hand beside his ear,  
 His little hand, the small forefinger up,  
 And bid us listen! And I deem it wise  
 To make him Nature's playmate. He knows well  
 The evening star: and once when he awoke  
 In most distressful mood (some inward pain  
 Had made up that strange thing, an infant's dream) 100  
 I hurried with him to our orchard plot,  
 And he beholds the moon, and hush'd at once  
 Suspends his sobs, and laughs most silently,  
 While his fair eyes that swam with undropt tears  
 Did glitter in the yellow moon-beam! Well—  
 It is a father's tale. But if that Heaven  
 Should give me life, his childhood shall grow up  
 Familiar with these songs, that with the night  
 He may associate Joy! Once more farewell,  
 Sweet Nightingale! once more, my friends! farewell. 110

THE  
FEMALE VAGRANT<sup>1</sup>

=====

By Derwent's side<sup>2</sup> my Father's cottage stood,  
 (The Woman thus her artless story told)  
 One field, a flock, and what the neighbouring flood  
 Supplied, to him were more than mines of gold.  
 Light was my sleep; my days in transport roll'd:  
 With thoughtless joy I stretch'd along the shore  
 My father's nets, or watched, when from the fold

- 
- 1 By Wordsworth; from *Salisbury Plain*, a long poem begun in 1793 and revised several times, until finally published as *Guilt and Sorrow* (1842).  
 2 *By Derwent's side*] Derwent Water lies immediately south of Keswick in the Lake District.

High o'er the cliffs I led my fleecy store,  
A dizzy depth below! his boat and twinkling oar.<sup>1</sup>

My father was a good and pious man, 10  
An honest man by honest parents bred,  
And I believe that, soon as I began  
To lisp, he made me kneel beside my bed,  
And in his hearing there my prayers I said:  
And afterwards, by my good father taught,  
I read, and loved the books in which I read;  
For books in every neighbouring house I sought,  
And nothing to my mind a sweeter pleasure brought.

Can I forget what charms did once adorn 20  
My garden, stored with pease, and mint, and thyme,  
And rose and lily for the sabbath morn?<sup>2</sup>  
The sabbath bells, and their delightful chime;  
The gambols and wild freaks<sup>3</sup> at shearing time;  
My hen's rich nest through long grass scarce espied;  
The cowslip-gathering<sup>4</sup> at May's dewy prime;  
The swans, that, when I sought the water-side,  
From far to meet me came, spreading their snowy pride.

The staff I yet remember which upbore  
The bending body of my active sire;  
His seat beneath the honeyed sycamore 30  
When the bees hummed, and chair by winter fire;  
When market-morning came, the neat attire  
With which, though bent on haste, myself I deck'd;  
My watchful dog, whose starts of furious ire,  
When stranger passed, so often I have check'd;  
The red-breast known for years, which at my casement peck'd.

---

1 *High ... oar*] 1800: "Saw on the distant lake his twinkling oar/Or watch'd his lazy boat still less'ning more and more."

2 *And rose and lily for the sabbath morn*] The rose cross originated as a Christian symbol in the first century and symbolized the redemptive power of Christ. In medieval iconography, the lily, in the form of a *fleur-de-lis*, often represented the trinity.

3 *gambols and wild freaks*] Dancing or capering; also games or capricious tricks.

4 *cowslip-gathering*] "Cowslip" is the common name of *Primula veris*, or marsh marigold. It is gathered in the spring, and its yellow blossoms are used to make wine.

The suns of twenty summers danced along,—  
 Ah! little marked, how fast they rolled away:  
 Then rose a mansion proud our woods among,  
 And cottage after cottage owned its sway, 40  
 No joy to see a neighbouring house, or stray  
 Through pastures not his own, the master took;  
 My Father dared his greedy wish gainsay;  
 He loved his old hereditary nook,<sup>1</sup>  
 And ill could I the thought of such sad parting brook.

But, when he had refused the proffered gold,  
 To cruel injuries he became a prey,  
 Sore traversed<sup>2</sup> in whate'er he bought and sold:  
 His troubles grew upon him day by day,  
 Till all his substance fell into decay. 50  
 His little range of water was denied;\*  
 All but the bed where his old body lay,  
 All, all was seized, and weeping, side by side,  
 We sought a home where we uninjured might abide.<sup>3</sup>

Can I forget that miserable hour,  
 When from the last hill-top, my sire surveyed,  
 Peering above the trees, the steeple tower,  
 That on his marriage-day sweet music made?  
 Till then he hoped his bones might there be laid,  
 Close by my mother in their native bowers: 60  
 Bidding me trust in God, he stood and prayed,—  
 I could not pray:—through tears that fell in showers,  
 Glimmer'd our dear-loved home, alas! no longer ours!

There was a youth whom I had loved so long,  
 That when I loved him not I cannot say.

---

\* Several of the Lakes in the north of England are let out to different  
 Fishermen, in parcels marked out by imaginary lines drawn from rock  
 to rock. [Wordsworth's note]

---

1 *old hereditary nook*] See Wordsworth's 14 January 1801 letter to Charles  
 James Fox, Appendix C, pp. 459–61.  
 2 *traversed*] Thwarted or opposed.  
 3 *Then rose ... abide*] Likely drawing on chapter nine of William Godwin's  
*Caleb Williams* (1794), which Wordsworth read while rewriting *Salisbury  
 Plain*.

'Mid the green mountains many and many a song  
We two had sung, like little<sup>1</sup> birds in May.  
When we began to tire of childish play  
We seemed still more and more to prize each other:  
We talked of marriage and our marriage day; 70  
And I in truth did love him like a brother,  
For never could I hope to meet with such another.

His father said, that to a distant town  
He must repair, to ply the artist's trade.<sup>2</sup>  
What tears of bitter grief till then unknown!  
What tender vows our last sad kiss delayed!  
To him we turned:—we had no other aid.  
Like one revived, upon his neck I wept,  
And her whom he had loved in joy, he said  
He well could love in grief: his faith he kept; 80  
And in a quiet home once more my father slept.

Four years each day with daily bread was blest,  
By constant toil and constant prayer supplied.  
Three lovely infants lay upon my breast;  
And often, viewing their sweet smiles, I sighed,  
And knew not why. My happy father died  
When sad distress reduced the children's meal:  
Thrice happy! That from him the grave did hide  
The empty loom, cold hearth, and silent wheel,  
And tears that flowed for ills which patience could not heal. 90

'Twas a hard change, an evil time was come;<sup>3</sup>  
We had no hope, and no relief could gain.  
But soon, with proud parade, the noisy drum  
Beat round, to sweep the streets of want and pain.  
My husband's arms now only served to strain  
Me and his children hungering in his view:  
In such dismay my prayers and tears were vain:  
To join those miserable men he flew;  
And now to the sea-coast, with numbers more, we drew.

---

1 *little*] 1800: "gladsome"

2 *Artist's*] Craftsman's or artisan's.

3 *an evil time was come*] Food shortages and low wages plagued Britain in the late eighteenth century, particularly in the 1770s and in 1794–95.

There foul neglect for months and months we bore,                   100  
 Nor yet the crowded fleet its anchor stirred.  
 Green fields before us and our native shore,  
 By fever, from polluted air incurred,  
 Ravage was made, for which no knell was heard.  
 Fondly we wished, and wished away, nor knew,  
 'Mid that long sickness, and those hopes deferr'd,  
 That happier days we never more must view:  
 The parting signal<sup>1</sup> streamed, at last the land withdrew,

But from delay the summer calms were past.  
 On as we drove, the equinoctial deep                                   110  
 Ran mountains-high before the howling blast.<sup>2</sup>  
 We gazed with terror on the gloomy sleep  
 Of them that perished in the whirlwind's sweep,  
 Untaught that soon such anguish must ensue,  
 Our hopes such harvest of affliction reap,  
 That we the mercy of the waves should rue.  
 We reached the western world, a poor, devoted crew.

Oh! dreadful price of being to resign  
 All that is dear *in* being! better far  
 In Want's most lonely cave till death to pine,                       120  
 Unseen, unheard, unwatched by any star;  
 Or in the streets and walks where proud men are,  
 Better our dying bodies to obtrude,  
 Than dog-like, wading at the heels of war,  
 Protract a curst existence, with the brood  
 That lap (their very nourishment!) their brother's blood.

The pains and plagues that on our heads came down,  
 Disease and famine, agony and fear,  
 In wood or wilderness, in camp or town,  
 It would thy brain unsettle even to hear.                               130  
 All perished—all, in one remorseless year,  
 Husband and children! one by one, by sword  
 And ravenous plague, all perished: every tear  
 Dried up, despairing, desolate, on board  
 A British ship I waked, as from a trance restored.

---

1 *parting signal*] A flag flying from a ship indicating departure.

2 *equinoctial deep ... howling blast*] The autumnal equinox, when the day and night are of equal length all over the earth and tropical storms are common in the Atlantic.

Peaceful as some immeasurable plain  
 By the first beams of dawning light impress'd,  
 In the calm sunshine slept the glittering main.  
 The very ocean has its hour of rest,  
 That comes not to the human mourner's breast. 140  
 Remote from man, and storms of mortal care,  
 A heavenly silence did the waves invest;  
 I looked and looked along the silent air,  
 Until it seemed to bring a joy to my despair.

Ah! how unlike those late terrific sleeps!  
 And groans, that rage of racking famine spoke,  
 Where looks inhuman dwelt on festering heaps!  
 The breathing pestilence<sup>1</sup> that rose like smoke!  
 The shriek that from the distant battle broke!  
 The mine's dire earthquake,<sup>2</sup> and the pallid host 150  
 Driven by the bomb's incessant thunder-stroke  
 To loathsome vaults, where heart-sick anguish toss'd,  
 Hope died, and fear itself in agony was lost!

Yet does that burst of woe congeal my frame,  
 When the dark streets appeared to heave and gape,  
 While like a sea the storming army came,  
 And Fire from Hell reared his gigantic shape,  
 And Murder, by the ghastly gleam, and Rape  
 Seized their joint prey, the mother and the child!  
 But from these crazing thoughts my brain, escape! 160  
 —For weeks the balmy air breathed soft and mild,  
 And on the gliding vessel Heaven and Ocean smiled.

Some mighty gulph of separation past,  
 I seemed transported to another world:—  
 A thought resigned with pain, when from the mast  
 The impatient mariner the sail unfurl'd,  
 And whistling, called the wind that hardly curled  
 The silent sea. From the sweet thoughts of home,  
 And from all hope I was forever hurled.  
 For me—farthest from earthly port to roam 170  
 Was best, could I but shun the spot where man might come.

---

1 *breathing pestilence*] Eighteenth-century theories of contagion posited that breathing bad air could cause infection.

2 *Mine's dire earthquake*] Precursors to modern land mines were used as early as the Battle of Agincourt in 1415.

And oft, robb'd of my perfect mind, I thought  
At last my feet a resting-place had found:  
Here will I weep in peace, (so fancy wrought,)  
Roaming the illimitable waters round;  
Here watch, of every human friend disowned,  
All day, my ready tomb the ocean-flood—  
To break my dream the vessel reached its bound:  
And homeless near a thousand homes I stood,  
And near a thousand tables pined, and wanted food. 180

By grief enfeebled was I turned adrift,  
Helpless as sailor cast on desert rock;  
Nor morsel to my mouth that day did lift,  
Nor dared my hand at any door to knock.  
I lay, where with his drowsy mates, the cock  
From the cross timber of an out-house hung;  
How dismal tolled, that night, the city clock!  
At morn my sick heart hunger scarcely stung,  
Nor to the beggar's language could I frame my tongue.

So passed another day, and so the third: 190  
Then did I try, in vain, the crowd's resort,  
In deep despair by frightful wishes stirr'd,  
Near the sea-side I reached a ruined fort:  
There, pains which nature could no more support,  
With blindness linked, did on my vitals fall;  
Dizzy my brain, with interruption short  
Of hideous sense; I sunk, nor step could crawl,  
And thence was borne away to neighbouring hospital.

Recovery came with food: but still, my brain 200  
Was weak, nor of the past had memory.  
I heard my neighbours, in their beds, complain  
Of many things which never troubled me;  
Of feet still bustling round with busy glee,  
Of looks where common kindness had no part,  
Of service done with careless cruelty,  
Fretting the fever round the languid heart,  
And groans, which, as they said, would make a dead man start.

These things just served to stir the torpid sense,  
Nor pain nor pity in my bosom raised.  
Memory, though slow, returned with strength; and thence 210

Dismissed, again on open day I gazed,  
 At houses, men, and common light, amazed.  
 The lanes I sought, and as the sun retired,  
 Came, where beneath the trees a faggot blazed;  
 The wild brood saw me weep, my fate enquired,  
 And gave me food, and rest, more welcome, more desired.

My heart is touched to think that men like these,  
 The rude earth's tenants, were my first relief:  
 How kindly did they paint their vagrant ease!  
 And their long holiday that feared not grief, 220  
 For all belonged to all, and each was chief.  
 No plough their sinews strained; on grating road  
 No wain<sup>1</sup> they drove, and yet, the yellow sheaf<sup>2</sup>  
 In every vale for their delight was stowed:  
 For them, in nature's meads,<sup>3</sup> the milky udder flowed.

Semblance, with straw and panniered<sup>4</sup> ass, they made  
 Of potters wandering on from door to door:  
 But life of happier sort to me pourtrayed,  
 And other joys my fancy to allure;  
 The bag-pipe dinning on the midnight moor 230  
 In barn uplighted, and companions boon  
 Well met from far with revelry secure,  
 In depth of forest glade, when jocund June  
 Rolled fast along the sky his warm and genial moon.

But ill it suited me, in journey dark  
 O'er moor and mountain, midnight theft to hatch;  
 To charm the surly house-dog's faithful bark,  
 Or hang on tiptoe at the lifted latch;  
 The gloomy lantern, and the dim blue match,  
 The black disguise,<sup>5</sup> the warning whistle shrill, 240  
 And ear still busy on its nightly watch,  
 Were not for me, brought up in nothing ill;  
 Besides, on griefs so fresh my thoughts were brooding still.

---

1 *wain*] An open vehicle drawn by horses or oxen for transporting agricultural produce.

2 *sheaf*] A bundle of wheat tied together after reaping.

3 *meads*] Meadows.

4 *panniered ass*] A donkey with a pair of baskets slung across its back.

5 *The black disguise*] The English statute 9 *George I* (1723), known commonly as "the Black Act," made it a capital felony to hunt or steal deer or appear in a public park with the face blackened. It was repealed in 1827.



What could I do, unaided and unblest?  
 Poor Father! gone was every friend of thine:  
 And kindred of dead husband are at best  
 Small help, and, after marriage such as mine,  
 With little kindness would to me incline.  
 Ill was I then for toil or service fit:  
 With tears whose course no effort could confine, 250  
 By high-way side forgetful would I sit  
 Whole hours, my idle arms in moping sorrow knit.

I lived upon the mercy of the fields,  
 And oft of cruelty the sky accused;  
 On hazard, or what general bounty yields,  
 Now coldly given, now utterly refused.  
 The fields I for my bed have often used:  
 But, what afflicts my peace with keenest ruth<sup>1</sup>  
 Is, that I have my inner self abused, 260  
 Foregone the home delight of constant truth,  
 And clear and open soul, so prized in fearless youth.

Three years a wanderer, often have I view'd,  
 In tears, the sun towards that country tend  
 Where my poor heart lost all its fortitude:  
 And now across this moor my steps I bend—  
 Oh! tell me whither—for no earthly friend  
 Have I.—She ceased, and weeping turned away,  
 As if because her tale was at an end  
 She wept;—because she had no more to say  
 Of that perpetual weight which on her spirit lay. 270

GOODY BLAKE,  
 AND  
 HARRY GILL,  
*A TRUE STORY*<sup>2</sup>

=====

Oh! what's the matter? what's the matter?  
 What is't that ails young Harry Gill?  
 That evermore his teeth they chatter,

---

1 *ruth*] Sorrow.

2 By Wordsworth. The story on which the poem is based first appeared in Erasmus Darwin's *Zoönomia; or, The Laws of Organic Life* (1794–96). See Appendix F, p. 500.

Chatter, chatter, chatter still.  
Of waistcoats Harry has no lack,  
Good duffle grey, and flannel fine;  
He has a blanket on his back,  
And coats enough to smother nine.

In March, December, and in July,  
'Tis all the same with Harry Gill; 10  
The neighbours tell, and tell you truly,  
His teeth they chatter, chatter still.  
At night, at morning, and at noon,  
'Tis all the same with Harry Gill;  
Beneath the sun, beneath the moon,  
His teeth they chatter, chatter still.

Young Harry was a lusty drover,<sup>1</sup>  
And who so stout of limb as he?  
His cheeks were red as ruddy clover,  
His voice was like the voice of three. 20  
Auld<sup>2</sup> Goody Blake was old and poor,  
Ill fed she was, and thinly clad;  
And any man who pass'd her door,  
Might see how poor a hut she had.

All day she spun in her poor dwelling,  
And then her three hours' work at night!  
Alas! 'twas hardly worth the telling,  
It would not pay for candle-light.  
—This woman dwelt in Dorsetshire,<sup>3</sup>  
Her hut was on a cold hill-side, 30  
And in that country<sup>4</sup> coals are dear,  
For they come far by wind and tide.

By the same fire to boil their pottage,<sup>5</sup>  
Two poor old dames, as I have known,  
Will often live in one small cottage,

---

1 *drover*] One who drives cattle or sheep to distant markets.

2 *Auld*] “Auld” is an archaic form of “Old”; it functions in this line both as adjective and as rustic title, mirroring “Young Harry” in line 17.

3 *Dorsetshire*] Erasmus Darwin’s *Zoönomia* places the incident in Warwickshire, and makes no mention of the price of fuel.

4 *country*] “County,” in this context.

5 *pottage*] Thick soup.

But she, poor woman, dwelt alone.  
'Twas well enough when summer came,  
The long, warm, lightsome summer-day,  
Then at her door the *canty*<sup>1</sup> dame  
Would sit, as any linnet<sup>2</sup> gay. 40

But when the ice our streams did fetter,  
Oh! then how her old bones would shake!  
You would have said, if you had met her,  
'Twas a hard time for Goody Blake.  
Her evenings then were dull and dead;  
Sad case it was, as you may think,  
For very cold to go to bed,  
And then for cold not sleep a wink.

Oh joy for her! when e'er in winter  
The winds at night had made a rout, 50  
And scatter'd many a lusty splinter,  
And many a rotten bough about.  
Yet never had she, well or sick,  
As every man who knew her says,  
A pile before-hand, wood or stick,  
Enough to warm her for three days.

Now, when the frost was past enduring,  
And made her poor old bones to ache,  
Could any thing be more alluring,  
Than an old hedge<sup>3</sup> to Goody Blake? 60  
And now and then, it must be said,  
When her old bones were cold and chill,  
She left her fire, or left her bed,  
To seek the hedge of Harry Gill.

Now Harry he had long suspected  
This trespass of old Goody Blake,  
And vow'd that she should be detected,  
And he on her would vengeance take.

---

1 *canty*] Cheerful, talkative.

2 *linnet*] A songbird common in Britain.

3 *hedge*] A row of bushes or low trees (usually hawthorn or privet) planted closely and pruned to form a natural fence between fields or between field and road.

And oft from his warm fire he'd go,  
And to the fields his road would take, 70  
And there, at night, in frost and snow,  
He watch'd to seize old Goody Blake.

And once, behind a rick<sup>1</sup> of barley,  
Thus looking out did Harry stand;  
The moon was full and shining clearly,  
And crisp with frost the stubble-land.  
—He hears a noise—he's all awake—  
Again?—on tip-toe down the hill  
He softly creeps—'Tis Goody Blake,  
She's at the hedge of Harry Gill. 80

Right glad was he when he beheld her:  
Stick after stick did Goody pull,  
He stood behind a bush of elder,  
Till she had filled her apron full.  
When with her load she turned about,  
The bye-road<sup>2</sup> back again to take,  
He started forward with a shout,  
And sprang upon poor Goody Blake.

And fiercely by the arm he took her,  
And by the arm he held her fast, 90  
And fiercely by the arm he shook her,  
And cried, "I've caught you then at last!"  
Then Goody, who had nothing said,  
Her bundle from her lap let fall;  
And kneeling on the sticks, she pray'd  
To God that is the judge of all.

She pray'd, her wither'd hand uprearing,  
While Harry held her by the arm—  
"God! who art never out of hearing,  
O may he never more be warm!" 100  
The cold, cold moon above her head,  
Thus on her knees did Goody pray,  
Young Harry heard what she had said,  
And icy-cold he turned away.

---

1 *rick*] A regularly constructed stack.

2 *bye-road*] An unfrequented road.

He went complaining all the morrow  
That he was cold and very chill:  
His face was gloom, his heart was sorrow,  
Alas! that day for Harry Gill!  
That day he wore a riding-coat,  
But not a whit the warmer he: 110  
Another was on Thursday brought,  
And ere the Sabbath he had three.

'Twas all in vain, a useless matter,  
And blankets were about him pinn'd;  
Yet still his jaws and teeth they clatter,  
Like a loose casement in the wind.  
And Harry's flesh it fell away;  
And all who see him say 'tis plain,  
That, live as long as live he may,  
He never will be warm again. 120

No word to any man he utters,  
A-bed or up, to young or old;  
But ever to himself he mutters,  
"Poor Harry Gill is very cold."  
A-bed or up, by night or day;  
His teeth they chatter, chatter still.  
Now think, ye farmers all, I pray,  
Of Goody Blake and Harry Gill.

LINES

WRITTEN AT A SMALL DISTANCE FROM MY HOUSE,  
AND SENT BY MY LITTLE BOY TO THE  
PERSON TO WHOM THEY ARE  
ADDRESSED<sup>1</sup>

=====

It is the first mild day of March:  
Each minute sweeter than before,  
The red-breast sings from the tall larch<sup>2</sup>  
That stands beside our door.

---

1 By Wordsworth.

2 *larch*] Coniferous tree native to the Alps but cultivated in Britain. Unlike other firs and pines, its needles turn golden in the late fall and drop off.

## Review Copy

There is a blessing in the air,  
Which seems a sense of joy to yield  
To the bare trees, and mountains bare,  
And grass in the green field.

My Sister! ('tis a wish of mine)  
Now that our morning meal is done, 10  
Make haste, your morning task resign;  
Come forth and feel the sun.

Edward will come with you, and pray,  
Put on with speed your woodland dress,  
And bring no book, for this one day  
We'll give to idleness.

No joyless forms shall regulate  
Our living Calendar:  
We from to-day, my friend, will date  
The opening of the year. 20

Love, now an universal birth,  
From heart to heart is stealing,  
From earth to man, from man to earth,  
—It is the hour of feeling.

One moment now may give us more  
Than fifty years of reason;  
Our minds shall drink at every pore  
The spirit of the season.

Some silent laws our hearts may make,  
Which they shall long obey; 30  
We for the year to come may take  
Our temper from to-day.

And from the blessed power that rolls  
About, below, above;  
We'll frame the measure of our souls,  
They shall be tuned to love.

Then come, my sister! come, I pray,  
With speed put on your woodland dress,  
And bring no book; for this one day  
We'll give to idleness. 40

SIMON LEE,  
*THE OLD HUNTSMAN*,  
WITH AN INCIDENT IN WHICH HE WAS  
CONCERNED<sup>1</sup>

=====

In the sweet shire of Cardigan,<sup>2</sup>  
Not far from pleasant Ivor-hall,  
An old man dwells, a little man,  
I've heard he once was tall.  
Of years he has upon his back,  
No doubt, a burthen weighty;  
He says he is three score and ten,  
But others say he's eighty.

A long blue livery-coat has he,  
That's fair behind, and fair before; 10  
Yet, meet him where you will, you see  
At once that he is poor.  
Full five and twenty years he lived  
A running huntsman merry;  
And, though he has but one eye left,  
His cheek is like a cherry.

No man like him the horn could sound,  
And no man was so full of glee;  
To say the least, four counties round  
Had heard of Simon Lee; 20  
His master's dead, and no one now  
Dwells in the hall of Ivor;  
Men, dogs, and horses, all are dead;  
He is the sole survivor.

His hunting feats have him bereft  
Of his right eye, as you may see:  
And then, what limbs those feats have left  
To poor old Simon Lee!  
He has no son, he has no child,  
His wife, an aged woman, 30  
Lives with him, near the waterfall,  
Upon the village common.

---

1 By Wordsworth.

2 *Cardigan*] A county in western Wales. See Appendix H, p. 542.

And he is lean and he is sick,  
His little<sup>1</sup> body's half awry,  
His ancles they are swoln and thick;  
His legs are thin and dry.  
When he was young he little knew  
Of husbandry or tillage;  
And now he's forced to work, though weak,  
—The weakest in the village. 40

He all the country could outrun,  
Could leave both man and horse behind;  
And often, ere the race was done,  
He reeled and was stone-blind.  
And still there's something in the world  
At which his heart rejoices;  
For when the chiming hounds are out,  
He dearly loves their voices!

Old Ruth works out of doors with him,  
And does what Simon cannot do; 50  
For she, not over stout of limb,  
Is stouter of the two.  
And though you with your utmost skill  
From labour could not wean them,  
Alas! 'tis very little, all  
Which they can do between them.

Beside their moss-grown hut of clay,  
Not twenty paces from the door,  
A scrap of land they have, but they  
Are poorest of the poor. 60  
This scrap of land he from the heath  
Enclosed when he was stronger;  
But what avails the land to them,  
Which they can till no longer?

Few months of life has he in store,  
As he to you will tell,  
For still, the more he works, the more  
His poor old ancles swell.<sup>2</sup>

---

1 *little*] 1800: “dwindled”

2 *ancles swell*] A symptom of edema, commonly called “dropsy” in the eighteenth century.



My gentle reader, I perceive  
How patiently you've waited, 70  
And I'm afraid that you expect  
Some tale will be related.

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.  
What more I have to say is short,  
I hope you'll kindly take it;  
It is no tale; but should you think,  
Perhaps a tale you'll make it. 80

One summer-day I chanced to see  
This old man doing all he could  
About the root of an old tree,  
A stump of rotten wood.  
The mattock<sup>1</sup> totter'd in his hand;  
So vain was his endeavour  
That at the root of the old tree  
He might have worked for ever.

"You're overtasked, good Simon Lee,  
Give me your tool" to him I said; 90  
And at the word right gladly he  
Received my proffer'd aid.  
I struck, and with a single blow  
The tangled root I sever'd,  
At which the poor old man so long  
And vainly had endeavour'd.

The tears into his eyes were brought,  
And thanks and praises seemed to run  
So fast out of his heart, I thought  
They never would have done. 100  
—I've heard of hearts unkind, kind deeds  
With coldness still returning.  
Alas! the gratitude of men  
Has oftner left me mourning.

---

1 *mattock*] A tool similar to a pick with a chisel edge on one head used for breaking ground or removing tree stumps.

ANECDOTE FOR FATHERS,  
SHEWING HOW THE ART OF LYING MAY BE  
TAUGHT<sup>1</sup>

=====

I have a boy of five years old,  
His face is fair and fresh to see;  
His limbs are cast in beauty's mould,  
And dearly he loves me.

One morn we stroll'd on our dry walk,  
Our quiet house all full in view,  
And held such intermitted talk  
As we are wont to do.

My thoughts on former pleasures ran;  
I thought of Kilve's<sup>2</sup> delightful shore, 10  
My pleasant home, when spring began,  
A long, long year before.

A day it was when I could bear  
To think, and think, and think again;  
With so much happiness to spare,  
I could not feel a pain.

My boy was by my side, so slim  
And graceful in his rustic dress!  
And oftentimes I talked to him,  
In very idleness. 20

The young lambs ran a pretty race;  
The morning sun shone bright and warm;  
"Kilve," said I, "was a pleasant place,  
And so is Liswyn farm."<sup>3</sup>

---

1 By Wordsworth.

2 *Kilve*] An English village on the Bristol Channel in the county of Somerset. See Appendix H, p. 542.

3 *Liswyn farm*] Also "Llys Wen" farm. In a later note to this poem, Wordsworth explained that "The name of Liswyn farm was taken from a beautiful spot on the Wye [River]." In 1797, Coleridge, Wordsworth, and Dorothy Wordsworth visited the political radical and poet John Thelwall at Llys-Wen Farm in Wales. In 1811 this same farm became the home of Percy Shelley, who chose it largely because of its ties to Thelwall. See Appendix H, p. 542.

“My little boy, which like you more,”  
I said and took him by the arm—  
“Our home by Kilve’s delightful shore,  
Or here at Liswyn farm?”

“And tell me, had you rather be,”  
I said and held him by the arm, 30  
“At Kilve’s smooth shore by the green sea,  
Or here at Liswyn farm?”

In careless mood he looked at me,  
While still I held him by the arm,  
And said, “At Kilve I’d rather be  
Than here at Liswyn farm.”

“Now, little Edward, say why so;  
My little Edward, tell me why;”  
“I cannot tell, I do not know.”  
“Why this is strange,” said I. 40

“For, here are woods and green-hills warm;  
There surely must some reason be  
Why you would change sweet Liswyn farm  
For Kilve by the green sea.”

At this, my boy, so fair and slim,  
Hung down his head, nor made reply;  
And five times did I say to him,  
“Why? Edward, tell me why?”

His head he raised—there was in sight,  
It caught his eye, he saw it plain— 50  
Upon the house-top, glittering bright,  
A broad and gilded vane.

Then did the boy his tongue unlock,  
And thus to me he made reply;  
“At Kilve there was no weather-cock,  
And that’s the reason why.”

Oh dearest, dearest boy! my heart  
For better lore would seldom yearn,  
Could I but teach the hundredth part  
Of what from thee I learn. 60

WE ARE SEVEN<sup>1</sup>

=====

A simple child, dear brother Jim,  
That lightly draws its breath,  
And feels its life in every limb,  
What should it know of death?

I met a little cottage girl,  
She was eight years old, she said;  
Her hair was thick with many a curl  
That cluster'd round her head.

She had a rustic, woodland air,  
And she was wildly clad; 10  
Her eyes were fair, and very fair,  
—Her beauty made me glad.

“Sisters and brothers, little maid,  
How many may you be?”  
“How many? seven in all,” she said,  
And wondering looked at me.

“And where are they, I pray you tell?”  
She answered, “Seven are we,  
And two of us at Conway<sup>2</sup> dwell,  
And two are gone to sea. 20

Two of us in the church-yard lie,  
My sister and my brother,  
And in the church-yard cottage, I  
Dwell near them with my mother.”

“You say that two at Conway dwell,  
And two are gone to sea,  
Yet you are seven; I pray you tell  
Sweet Maid, how this may be?”

---

1 By Wordsworth.

2 *Conway*] A town on the Conway River estuary on the Northern coast of Wales. See Appendix H, p. 542.

Then did the little Maid reply,  
“Seven boys and girls are we;  
Two of us in the church-yard lie,  
Beneath the church-yard tree.” 30

“You run about, my little maid,  
Your limbs they are alive;  
If two are in the church-yard laid,  
Then ye are only five.”

“Their graves are green, they may be seen,”  
The little Maid replied,  
“Twelve steps or more from my mother’s door,  
And they are side by side. 40

My stockings there I often knit,  
My ’kerchief there I hem;  
And there upon the ground I sit—  
I sit and sing to them.

And often after sunset, Sir,  
When it is light and fair,  
I take my little porringer,  
And eat my supper there.

The first that died was little Jane;  
In bed she moaning lay, 50  
Till God released her of her pain,  
And then she went away.

So in the church-yard she was laid,  
And all the summer dry,  
Together round her grave we played,  
My brother John and I.

And when the ground was white with snow,  
And I could run and slide,  
My brother John was forced to go,  
And he lies by her side.” 60

“How many are you then,” said I,  
“If they two are in Heaven?”  
The little Maiden did reply,  
“O Master! we are seven.”

“But they are dead; those two are dead!  
Their spirits are in heaven!”  
’Twas throwing words away; for still  
The little Maid would have her will,  
And said, “Nay, we are seven!”

LINES  
WRITTEN IN EARLY SPRING<sup>1</sup>

=====

I heard a thousand blended notes,  
While in a grove I sate reclined,  
In that sweet mood when pleasant thoughts  
Bring sad thoughts to the mind.

To her fair works did nature link  
The human soul that through me ran;  
And much it griev’d my heart to think  
What man has made of man.

Through primrose-tufts, in that sweet bower,  
The periwinkle trail’d its wreathes; 10  
And ’tis my faith that every flower  
Enjoys the air it breathes.

The birds around me hopp’d and play’d:  
Their thoughts I cannot measure,  
But the least motion which they made,  
It seem’d a thrill of pleasure.

The budding twigs spread out their fan,  
To catch the breezy air;  
And I must think, do all I can,  
That there was pleasure there. 20

If I these thoughts may not prevent,  
If such be of my creed the plan,  
Have I not reason to lament  
What man has made of man?

---

1 By Wordsworth.

THE  
THORN<sup>1</sup>

=====

I

There is a thorn; it looks so old,  
In truth you'd find it hard to say,  
How it could ever have been young,  
It looks so old and grey.  
Not higher than a two-years' child,  
It stands erect this aged thorn;  
No leaves it has, no thorny points;  
It is a mass of knotted joints,  
A wretched thing forlorn.  
It stands erect, and like a stone 10  
With lichens it is overgrown.

II

Like rock or stone, it is o'ergrown  
With lichens to the very top,  
And hung with heavy tufts of moss,  
A melancholy crop:  
Up from the earth these mosses creep,  
And this poor thorn they clasp it round  
So close, you'd say that they were bent  
With plain and manifest intent,  
To drag it to the ground; 20  
And all had joined in one endeavour  
To bury this poor thorn for ever.

III

High on a mountain's highest ridge,  
Where oft the stormy winter gale  
Cuts like a scythe, while through the clouds  
It sweeps from vale to vale;  
Not five yards from the mountain-path,  
This thorn you on your left espy;

---

1 By Wordsworth.

And to the left, three yards beyond,  
You see a little muddy pond 30  
Of water, never dry;  
I've measured it from side to side:  
'Tis three feet long, and two feet wide.

IV

And close beside this aged thorn,  
There is a fresh and lovely sight,  
A beauteous heap, a hill of moss,  
Just half a foot in height.  
All lovely colours there you see,  
All colours that were ever seen,  
And mossy network too is there, 40  
As if by hand of lady fair  
The work had woven been,  
And cups,<sup>1</sup> the darlings of the eye,  
So deep is their vermilion dye.

V

Ah me! what lovely tints are there!  
Of olive-green and scarlet bright,  
In spikes, in branches, and in stars,  
Green, red, and pearly white.  
This heap of earth o'ergrown with moss,  
Which close beside the thorn you see, 50  
So fresh in all its beauteous dyes,  
Is like an infant's grave in size  
As like as like can be:  
But never, never any where,  
An infant's grave was half so fair.

VI

Now would you see this aged thorn,  
This pond and beauteous hill of moss,  
You must take care and chuse your time  
The mountain when to cross.  
For oft there sits, between the heap 60

---

1 *cups*] Blossoms.



That's like an infant's grave in size,  
And that same pond of which I spoke,  
A woman in a scarlet cloak,  
And to herself she cries,  
"Oh misery! oh misery!  
Oh woe is me! oh misery!"

VII

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; 70  
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!"

VIII

"Now wherefore thus, by day and night,  
In rain, in tempest, and in snow,  
Thus to the dreary mountain-top 80  
Does this poor woman go?  
And why sits she beside the thorn  
When the blue day-light's in the sky,  
Or when the whirlwind's on the hill,  
Or frosty air is keen and still,  
And wherefore does she cry?—  
Oh wherefore? wherefore? tell me why  
Does she repeat that doleful cry?"

IX

I cannot tell; I wish I could;  
For the true reason no one knows, 90  
But if you'd gladly view the spot,  
The spot to which she goes;  
The heap that's like an infant's grave,  
The pond—and thorn, so old and grey,

Pass by her door—'tis seldom shut—  
And if you see her in her hut,  
Then to the spot away!—  
I never heard of such as dare  
Approach the spot when she is there.

X

“But wherefore to the mountain-top  
Can this unhappy woman go,  
Whatever star is in the skies,  
Whatever wind may blow?”  
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. 100  
110

XI

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<sup>1</sup>)  
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 120  
Whene'er she thought of Stephen Hill.

---

1 *Martha Ray*] As with Liswyn Farm in “Anecdote for Fathers,” Martha Ray of “The Thorn” has a real-life counterpart in the mistress of John Montagu, Forth Earl of Sandwich; Martha Ray was murdered 7 April 1779 by a rejected suitor, James Hackman. Wordsworth's friend Basil Montagu (1770–1851) was the illegitimate son of the Earl and Martha Ray; Wordsworth's ward Basil Montagu Jr. was their grandson.

## XII

And they had fix'd 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 woful day  
 A cruel, cruel fire, they say,  
 Into her bones was sent: 130  
 It dried her body like a cinder,  
 And almost turn'd her brain to tinder.

## XIII

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 140  
 From her exceeding pain.  
 Oh me! ten thousand times I'd rather  
 That he had died, that cruel father!

## XIV

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!  
 Last Christmas when we talked of this,  
 Old Farmer Simpson did maintain,  
 That in her womb the infant wrought 150  
 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.

## XV

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; 160  
 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.

## XVI

And all that winter, when at night  
 The wind blew from the mountain-peak,  
 'Twas worth your while, though in the dark,  
 The church-yard path to seek:  
 For many a time and oft were heard 170  
 Cries coming from the mountain-head,  
 Some plainly living voices were,  
 And others, I've heard many swear,  
 Were voices of the dead:  
 I cannot think, whate'er they say,  
 They had to do with Martha Ray.

## XVII

But that she goes to this old thorn,  
 The thorn which I've described to you,  
 And there sits in a scarlet cloak,  
 I will be sworn is true. 180  
 For one day with my telescope,  
 To view the ocean wide and bright,  
 When to this country first I came,  
 Ere I had heard of Martha's name,  
 I climbed the mountain's height:  
 A storm came on, and I could see  
 No object higher than my knee.

## XVIII

'Twas mist and rain, and storm and rain,  
 No screen, no fence could I discover,  
 And then the wind! in faith, it was 190  
 A wind full ten times over.  
 I looked around, I thought I saw  
 A jutting crag, and off I ran,  
 Head-foremost, through the driving rain,  
 The shelter of the crag to gain,  
 And, as I am a man,  
 Instead of jutting crag, I found  
 A woman seated on the ground.

## XIX

I did not speak—I saw her face,  
 Her face it was enough for me; 200  
 I turned about and heard her cry,  
 “O misery! O misery!”  
 And there she sits, until the moon  
 Through half the clear blue sky will go,  
 And when the little breezes make  
 The waters of the pond to shake,  
 As all the country know,  
 She shudders and you hear her cry,  
 “Oh misery! oh misery!”

## XX

“But what’s the thorn? and what’s the pond? 210  
 And what’s the hill of moss to her?  
 And what’s the creeping breeze that comes  
 The little pond to stir?”  
 I cannot tell; but some will say  
 She hanged her baby on the tree,  
 Some say she drowned it in the pond,  
 Which is a little step beyond,  
 But all and each agree,  
 The little babe was buried there,  
 Beneath that hill of moss so fair. 220

XXI

I've heard the scarlet moss is red  
With drops of that poor infant's blood;  
But kill a new-born infant thus!  
I do not think she could.  
Some say, if to the pond you go,  
And fix on it a steady view,  
The shadow of a babe you trace,  
A baby and a baby's face,  
And that it looks at you;  
Whene'er you look on it, 'tis plain  
The baby looks at you again. 230

XXII

And some had sworn an oath that she  
Should be to public justice brought;  
And for the little infant's bones  
With spades they would have sought.  
But then the beauteous hill of moss  
Before their eyes began to stir;  
And for full fifty yards around,  
The grass it shook upon the ground;  
But all do still aver 240  
The little babe is buried there,  
Beneath that hill of moss so fair.

XXIII

I cannot tell how this may be,  
But plain it is, the thorn is bound  
With heavy tufts of moss, that strive  
To drag it to the ground.  
And this I know, full many a time,  
When she was on the mountain high,  
By day, and in the silent night,  
When all the stars shone clear and bright, 250  
That I have heard her cry,  
"Oh misery! oh misery!  
Oh woe is me! oh misery!"

THE  
LAST OF THE FLOCK<sup>1</sup>

=====

In distant countries I have been,  
 And yet I have not often seen  
 A healthy man, a man full grown,  
 Weep in the public roads alone.  
 But such a one, on English ground,  
 And in the broad high-way, I met;  
 Along the broad high-way he came,  
 His cheeks with tears were wet.  
 Sturdy he seemed, though he was sad;  
 And in his arms a lamb he had. 10

He saw me, and he turned aside,  
 As if he wished himself to hide:  
 Then with his coat he made essay  
 To wipe those briny tears away.  
 I follow'd him, and said, "My friend  
 What ails you? wherefore weep you so?"  
 —"Shame on me, Sir! this lusty lamb,  
 He makes my tears to flow.  
 To-day I fetched him from the rock;  
 He is the last of all my flock. 20

When I was young, a single man,  
 And after youthful follies ran,  
 Though little given to care and thought,  
 Yet, so it was, a ewe I bought;  
 And other sheep from her I raised,  
 As healthy sheep as you might see,  
 And then I married, and was rich  
 As I could wish to be;  
 Of sheep I number'd a full score,  
 And every year encreas'd my store. 30

Year after year my stock it grew,  
 And from this one, this single ewe,  
 Full fifty comely sheep I raised,

---

1 By Wordsworth.

As sweet a flock as ever grazed!  
Upon the mountain did they feed;  
They throve, and we at home did thrive.  
—This lusty lamb of all my store  
Is all that is alive:  
And now I care not if we die,  
And perish all of poverty. 40

Ten children, Sir! had I to feed,  
Hard labour in a time of need!  
My pride was tamed, and in our grief,  
I of the parish ask'd relief.  
They said I was a wealthy man;  
My sheep upon the mountain fed,  
And it was fit that thence I took  
Whereof to buy us bread:  
'Do this; how can we give to you,'  
They cried, 'what to the poor is due?' 50

I sold a sheep as they had said,  
And bought my little children bread,  
And they were healthy with their food;  
For me it never did me good.  
A woeful time it was for me,  
To see the end of all my gains,  
The pretty flock which I had reared  
With all my care and pains,  
To see it melt like snow away!  
For me it was woeful day. 60

Another still! and still another!  
A little lamb, and then its mother!  
It was a vein that never stopp'd,  
Like blood-drops from my heart they dropp'd.  
Till thirty were not left alive  
They dwindled, dwindled, one by one,  
And I may say that many a time  
I wished they all were gone:  
They dwindled one by one away;  
For me it was a woeful day. 70

To wicked deeds I was inclined,  
And wicked fancies cross'd my mind,



And every man I chanc'd to see,  
I thought he knew some ill of me.  
No peace, no comfort could I find,  
No ease, within doors or without,  
And crazily, and wearily,  
I went my work about.  
Oft-times I thought to run away;  
For me it was a woeful day. 80

Sir! 'twas a precious flock to me,  
As dear as my own children be;  
For daily with my growing store  
I loved my children more and more.  
Alas! it was an evil time;  
God cursed me in my sore distress,  
I prayed, yet every day I thought  
I loved my children less;  
And every week, and every day,  
My flock, it seemed to melt away. 90

They dwindled, Sir, sad sight to see!  
From ten to five, from five to three,  
A lamb, a weather,<sup>1</sup> and a ewe;  
And then at last, from three to two;  
And of my fifty, yesterday  
I had but only one,  
And here it lies upon my arm,  
Alas! and I have none;  
To-day I fetched it from the rock;  
It is the last of all my flock." 100

## THE DUNGEON<sup>2</sup>

=====

And this place our forefathers made for man!  
This is the process of our love and wisdom,  
To each poor brother who offends against us—

---

1 *weather*] Or “wether,” a castrated male sheep.

2 By Coleridge. Extracted from the unpublished play *Osorio*, composed in 1797.

Most innocent, perhaps—and what if guilty?  
Is this the only cure? Merciful God!  
Each pore and natural outlet shrivell'd up  
By ignorance and parching poverty,  
His energies roll back upon his heart,  
And stagnate and corrupt; till changed to poison,  
They break out on him, like a loathsome plague-spot;       10  
Then we call in our pamper'd mountebanks<sup>1</sup>—  
And this is their best cure! uncomforted  
And friendless solitude, groaning and tears,  
And savage faces, at the clanking hour,  
Seen through the steams and vapour of his dungeon,  
By the lamp's dismal twilight! So he lies  
Circled with evil, till his very soul  
Unmoulds its essence, hopelessly deformed  
By sights of ever more deformity!

With other ministrations thou, O nature!                       20  
Healest thy wandering and distempered child:  
Thou pourest on him thy soft influences,  
Thy sunny hues, fair forms, and breathing sweets,  
Thy melodies of woods, and winds, and waters,  
Till he relent, and can no more endure  
To be a jarring and a dissonant thing,  
Amid this general dance and minstrelsy;<sup>2</sup>  
But, bursting into tears, wins back his way,  
His angry spirit healed and harmonized  
By the benignant touch of love and beauty.                       30

THE  
MAD MOTHER<sup>3</sup>

=====

Her eyes are wild, her head is bare,  
The sun has burnt her coal-black hair,  
Her eye-brows have a rusty stain,  
And she came far from over the main.<sup>4</sup>

---

1 *mountebanks*] Quack doctors.

2 *minstrelsy*] Harmony.

3 By Wordsworth.

4 *main*] Short for “main sea,” meaning “open sea.”

She has a baby on her arm,  
Or else she were alone;  
And underneath the hay-stack warm,  
And on the green-wood stone,  
She talked and sung the woods among;  
And it was in the English tongue. 10

“Sweet babe! They say that I am mad,  
But nay, my heart is far too glad;  
And I am happy when I sing  
Full many a sad and doleful thing:  
Then, lovely baby, do not fear!  
I pray thee have no fear of me,  
But, safe as in a cradle, here  
My lovely baby! thou shalt be,  
To thee I know too much I owe;  
I cannot work thee any woe. 20

A fire was once within my brain;  
And in my head a dull, dull pain;  
And fiendish faces one, two, three,  
Hung at my breasts, and pulled at me.  
But then there came a sight of joy;  
It came at once to do me good;  
I waked, and saw my little boy,  
My little boy of flesh and blood;  
Oh joy for me that sight to see!  
For he was here, and only he. 30

Suck, little babe, oh suck again!  
It cools my blood; it cools my brain;<sup>1</sup>  
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 press'd.  
The breeze I see is in the tree;  
It comes to cool my babe and me. 40

---

1 *It cools my blood; it cools my brain*] Ancient Greek physicians posited the brain as a cooling plant for the blood; the notion persisted through the seventeenth century but lost credit with eighteenth-century physicians.

Oh! love me, love me, little boy!  
Thou art thy mother's only joy;  
And do not dread the waves below,  
When o'er the sea-rock's edge we go;  
The high crag cannot work me harm,  
Nor leaping torrents when they howl;  
The babe I carry on my arm,  
He saves for me my precious soul;  
Then happy lie, for blest am I;  
Without me my sweet babe would die. 50

Then do not fear, my boy! for thee  
Bold as a lion I will be;  
And I will always be thy guide,  
Through hollow snows and rivers wide.  
I'll build an Indian bower; I know  
The leaves that make the softest bed:  
And if from me thou wilt not go,  
But still be true 'till I am dead,  
My pretty thing! then thou shalt sing,  
As merry as the birds in spring. 60

Thy father cares not for my breast,  
'Tis thine, sweet baby, there to rest:  
'Tis all thine own! and if its hue  
Be changed, that was so fair to view,<sup>1</sup>  
'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 canst not see  
How pale and wan it else would be. 70

Dread not their taunts, my little life!  
I am thy father's wedded wife;  
And underneath the spreading tree  
We two will live in honesty.  
If his sweet boy he could forsake,  
With me he never would have stay'd:

---

1 *and ... view*] Recalling lines 244–47 of Coleridge's "Christabel." See Appendix B, p. 441.

From him no harm my babe can take,  
But he, poor man! is wretched made,  
And every day we two will pray  
For him that's gone and far away. 80

I'll teach my boy the sweetest things;  
I'll teach him how the owlet sings.  
My little babe! thy lips are still,  
And thou hast almost suck'd thy fill.  
—Where art thou gone my own dear child?  
What wicked looks are those I see?  
Alas! alas! that look so wild,  
It never, never came from me:  
If thou art mad, my pretty lad,  
Then I must be for ever sad. 90

Oh! smile on me, my little lamb!  
For I thy own dear mother am.  
My love for thee has well been tried:  
I've sought thy father far and wide.  
I know the poisons of the shade,  
I know the earth-nuts<sup>1</sup> fit for food;  
Then, pretty dear, be not afraid;  
We'll find thy father in the wood.  
Now laugh and be gay, to the woods away!  
And there, my babe; we'll live for aye." 100

---

1 *earth-nuts*] The round tubers of umbelliferous plants, also called “earth-chestnuts” or “pig-nuts”; possibly recalling Caliban’s speech in II.ii of Shakespeare’s *The Tempest*: “I prithee, let me bring thee where crabs grow;/And I with my long nails will dig thee pignuts;/Show thee a jay’s nest and instruct thee how/ To snare the nimble marmoset;”

THE  
IDIOT BOY.<sup>1</sup>

---

1 By Wordsworth.

THE  
IDIOT BOY

=====

'Tis eight o'clock,—a clear March night,  
The moon is up—the sky is blue,  
The owlet in the moonlight air,  
He shouts from nobody knows where;  
He lengthens out his lonely shout,  
Halloo! halloo! a long halloo!<sup>1</sup>

—Why bustle thus about your door,  
What means this bustle, Betty Foy?  
Why are you in this mighty fret?  
And why on horseback have you set 10  
Him whom you love, your idiot boy?

Beneath the moon that shines so bright,  
Till she is tired, let Betty Foy  
With girt<sup>2</sup> and stirrup fiddle-faddle;<sup>3</sup>  
But wherefore set upon a saddle  
Him whom she loves, her idiot boy?

There's scarce a soul that's out of bed;  
Good Betty! put him down again;  
His lips with joy they burr at you,  
But, Betty! what has he to do 20  
With stirrup, saddle, or with rein?

The world will say 'tis very idle,  
Bethink you of the time of night;  
There's not a mother, no not one,  
But when she hears what you have done,  
Oh! Betty she'll be in a fright.

But Betty's bent on her intent,  
For her good neighbour, Susan Gale,

- 
- 1 'Tis ... halloo!] Recalling lines 1–5 of Coleridge's "Christabel." See Appendix B, p. 435.  
2 *girt*] A saddle-girth, the leather strap which secures the saddle on the horse's back.  
3 *fiddle-faddle*] To fuss over petty trifles.

Old Susan, she who dwells alone,  
Is sick, and makes a piteous moan,  
As if her very life would fail. 30

There's not a house within a mile,  
No hand to help them in distress:  
Old Susan lies a bed in pain,  
And sorely puzzled are the twain,  
For what she ails they cannot guess.

And Betty's husband's at the wood,  
Where by the week he doth abide,  
A woodman in the distant vale;  
There's none to help poor Susan Gale,  
What must be done? what will betide? 40

And Betty from the lane has fetched  
Her pony, that is mild and good,  
Whether he be in joy or pain,  
Feeding at will along the lane,  
Or bringing faggots from the wood.

And he is all in travelling trim,  
And by the moonlight, Betty Foy  
Has up upon the saddle set,  
The like was never heard of yet,  
Him whom she loves, her idiot boy. 50

And he must post without delay  
Across the bridge that's in the dale,  
And by the church, and o'er the down,  
To bring a doctor from the town,  
Or she will die, old Susan Gale.

There is no need of boot or spur,  
There is no need of whip or wand,  
For Johnny has his holly-bough,  
And with a hurly-burly<sup>1</sup> now  
He shakes the green bough in his hand. 60

---

1 *hurly-burly*] Commotion or tumult.



And Betty o'er and o'er has told  
The boy who is her best delight,  
Both what to follow, what to shun,  
What do, and what to leave undone,  
How turn to left, and how to right.

And Betty's most especial charge,  
Was, "Johnny! Johnny! mind that you  
Come home again, nor stop at all,  
Come home again, whate'er befall,  
My Johnny do, I pray you do." 70

To this did Johnny answer make,  
Both with his head, and with his hand,  
And proudly shook the bridle too,  
And then! his words were not a few,  
Which Betty well could understand.

And now that Johnny is just going,  
Though Betty's in a mighty flurry,  
She gently pats the pony's side,  
On which her idiot boy must ride, 80  
And seems no longer in a hurry.

But when the pony moved his legs,  
Oh! then for the poor idiot boy!  
For joy he cannot hold the bridle,  
For joy his head and heels are idle,  
He's idle all for very joy.

And while the pony moves his legs,  
In Johnny's left-hand you may see,  
The green bough's motionless and dead;  
The moon that shines above his head 90  
Is not more still and mute than he.

His heart it was so full of glee,  
That till full fifty yards were gone,  
He quite forgot his holly whip,  
And all his skill in horsemanship,  
Oh! happy, happy, happy John.

And Betty's standing at the door,  
And Betty's face with joy o'erflows,  
Proud of herself, and proud of him,  
She sees him in his travelling trim; 100  
How quietly her Johnny goes.

The silence of her idiot boy,  
What hopes it sends to Betty's heart!  
He's at the guide-post—he turns right,  
She watches till he's out of sight,  
And Betty will not then depart.

Burr, burr—now Johnny's lips they burr,<sup>1</sup>  
As loud as any mill, or near it,  
Meek as a lamb the pony moves,  
And Johnny makes the noise he loves, 110  
And Betty listens, glad to hear it.

Away she hies to Susan Gale:  
And Johnny's in a merry tune,  
The owlets hoot, the owlets curr,<sup>2</sup>  
And Johnny's lips they burr, burr, burr,  
And on he goes beneath the moon.

His steed and he right well agree,  
For of this pony there's a rumour,  
That should he lose his eyes and ears,  
And should he live a thousand years, 120  
He never will be out of humour.

But then he is a horse that thinks!  
And when he thinks his pace is slack;  
Now, though he knows poor Johnny well,  
Yet for his life he cannot tell  
What he has got upon his back.

So through the moonlight lanes they go,  
And far into the moonlight dale,  
And by the church, and o'er the down,

---

1 *burr*] To pronounce a strong uvular *r* (instead of a trilled *r*), done in England's northernmost counties; more generally, to speak indistinctly.  
2 *curr*] To make a low murmuring sound, as with the cooing of a dove or the purring of a cat.

To bring a doctor from the town,  
To comfort poor old Susan Gale. 130

And Betty, now at Susan's side,  
Is in the middle of her story,  
What comfort Johnny soon will bring,  
With many a most diverting thing,  
Of Johnny's wit and Johnny's glory.

And Betty's still at Susan's side:  
By this time she's not quite so flurried;  
Demure with porringer and plate  
She sits, as if in Susan's fate 140  
Her life and soul were buried.

But Betty, poor good woman! she,  
You plainly in her face may read it,  
Could lend out of that moment's store  
Five years of happiness or more,  
To any that might need it.

But yet I guess that now and then  
With Betty all was not so well,  
And to the road she turns her ears,  
And thence full many a sound she hears, 150  
Which she to Susan will not tell.

Poor Susan moans, poor Susan groans,  
"As sure as there's a moon in heaven,"  
Cries Betty, "he'll be back again;  
They'll both be here, 'tis almost ten,  
They'll both be here before eleven."

Poor Susan moans, poor Susan groans,  
The clock gives warning for eleven;  
'Tis on the stroke—"If Johnny's near,"  
Quoth Betty "he will soon be here, 160  
As sure as there's a moon in heaven."

The clock is on the stroke of twelve,  
And Johnny is not yet in sight,  
The moon's in heaven, as Betty sees,  
But Betty is not quite at ease;  
And Susan has a dreadful night.

And Betty, half an hour ago,  
On Johnny vile reflections cast;  
“A little idle sauntering thing!”  
With other names, an endless string, 170  
But now that time is gone and past.

And Betty’s drooping at the heart,  
That happy time all past and gone,  
“How can it be he is so late?  
The doctor he has made him wait,  
Susan! they’ll both be here anon.”

And Susan’s growing worse and worse,  
And Betty’s in a sad quandary;  
And then there’s nobody to say  
If she must go or she must stay: 180  
—She’s in a sad quandary.

The clock is on the stroke of one;  
But neither Doctor nor his guide  
Appear along the moonlight road,  
There’s neither horse nor man abroad,  
And Betty’s still at Susan’s side.

And Susan she begins to fear  
Of sad mischances not a few,  
That Johnny may perhaps be drown’d,  
Or lost perhaps, and never found; 190  
Which they must both for ever rue.

She prefaced half a hint of this  
With, “God forbid it should be true!”  
At the first word that Susan said  
Cried Betty, rising from the bed,  
“Susan, I’d gladly stay with you.

I must be gone, I must away,  
Consider, Johnny’s but half-wise;  
Susan, we must take care of him,  
If he is hurt in life or limb”— 200  
“Oh God forbid!” poor Susan cries.

“What can I do?” says Betty, going,  
“What can I do to ease your pain?”

Good Susan tell me, and I'll stay;  
I fear you're in a dreadful way,  
But I shall soon be back again."

"Good Betty go, good Betty go,  
There's nothing that can ease my pain."  
Then off she hies, but with a prayer  
That God poor Susan's life would spare, 210  
Till she comes back again.

So, through the moonlight lane she goes,  
And far into the moonlight dale;  
And how she ran, and how she walked,  
And all that to herself she talked,  
Would surely be a tedious tale.

In high and low, above, below,  
In great and small, in round and square,  
In tree and tower was Johnny seen,  
In bush and brake,<sup>1</sup> in black and green, 220  
'Twas Johnny, Johnny, every where.

She's past the bridge that's in the dale,  
And now the thought torments her sore,  
Johnny perhaps his horse forsook,  
To hunt the moon that's in the brook,  
And never will be heard of more.

And now she's high upon the down,  
Alone amid a prospect wide;  
There's neither Johnny nor his horse,  
Among the fern or in the gorse;<sup>2</sup> 230  
There's neither doctor nor his guide.

"Oh saints! what is become of him?  
Perhaps he's climbed into an oak,  
Where he will stay till he is dead;  
Or sadly he has been misled,  
And joined the wandering gypsey-folk.

---

1 *brake*] Clump of bushes; a thicket.

2 *gorse*] Furze, a spiny evergreen shrub that grows in wastelands.

Or him that wicked pony's carried  
To the dark cave, the goblins' hall,  
Or in the castle he's pursuing,  
Among the ghosts, his own undoing; 240  
Or playing with the waterfall."

At poor old Susan then she railed,  
While to the town she posts away;  
"If Susan had not been so ill,  
Alas! I should have had him still,  
My Johnny, till my dying day."

Poor Betty! in this sad distemper,  
The doctor's self would hardly spare,  
Unworthy things she talked and wild,  
Even he, of cattle the most mild, 250  
The pony had his share.

And now she's got into the town,  
And to the doctor's door she hies;  
'Tis silence all on every side;  
The town so long, the town so wide,  
Is silent as the skies.

And now she's at the doctor's door,  
She lifts the knocker, rap, rap, rap,  
The doctor at the casement shews,  
His glimmering eyes that peep and doze; 260  
And one hand rubs his old night-cap.

"Oh Doctor! Doctor! where's my Johnny?"  
"I'm here, what is't you want with me?"  
"Oh Sir! you know I'm Betty Foy,  
And I have lost my poor dear boy,  
You know him—him you often see;

He's not so wise as some folks be,"  
"The devil take his wisdom!" said  
The Doctor, looking somewhat grim,  
"What, woman! should I know of him?" 270  
And, grumbling, he went back to bed.

"O woe is me! O woe is me!  
Here will I die; here will I die;

I thought to find my Johnny here,  
But he is neither far nor near,  
Oh! what a wretched mother I!”

She stops, she stands, she looks about,  
Which way to turn she cannot tell.  
Poor Betty! it would ease her pain  
If she had heart to knock again; 280  
—The clock strikes three—a dismal knell!<sup>1</sup>

Then up along the town she hies,  
No wonder if her senses fail,  
This piteous news so much it shock’d her,  
She quite forgot to send the Doctor,  
To comfort poor old Susan Gale.

And now she’s high upon the down,  
And she can see a mile of road,  
“Oh cruel! I’m almost three-score;  
Such night as this was ne’er before, 290  
There’s not a single soul abroad.”

She listens, but she cannot hear  
The foot of horse, the voice of man;  
The streams with softest sound are flowing,  
The grass you almost hear it growing,  
You hear it now if e’er you can.

The owlets through the long blue night  
Are shouting to each other still:  
Fond lovers, yet not quite hob nob,<sup>2</sup>  
They lengthen out the tremulous sob, 300  
That echoes far from hill to hill.

Poor Betty now has lost all hope,  
Her thoughts are bent on deadly sin;  
A green-grown pond<sup>3</sup> she just has pass’d,

---

1 *knell*] The sound of a bell rung slowly and solemnly, as immediately after a death or at a funeral.

2 *hob nob*] On familiar terms.

3 *green-grown pond*] Standing water covered with algae.

And from the brink she hurries fast,  
Lest she should drown herself therein.

And now she sits her down and weeps;  
Such tears she never shed before;  
“Oh dear, dear pony! my sweet joy!  
Oh carry back my idiot boy! 310  
And we will ne'er o'erload thee more.”

A thought is come into her head;  
“The pony he is mild and good,  
And we have always used him well;  
Perhaps he's gone along the dell,  
And carried Johnny to the wood.”

Then up she springs as if on wings;  
She thinks no more of deadly sin;  
If Betty fifty ponds should see,  
The last of all her thoughts would be, 320  
To drown herself therein.

Oh reader! now that I might tell  
What Johnny and his horse are doing!  
What they've been doing all this time,  
Oh could I put it into rhyme,  
A most delightful tale pursuing!

Perhaps, and no unlikely thought!  
He with his pony now doth roam  
The cliffs and peaks so high that are,  
To lay his hands upon a star, 330  
And in his pocket bring it home.

Perhaps he's turned himself about,  
His face unto his horse's tail,  
And still and mute, in wonder lost,  
All like a silent horseman-ghost,  
He travels on along the vale.

And now, perhaps, he's hunting sheep,  
A fierce and dreadful hunter he!  
Yon valley, that's so trim and green,  
In five months' time, should he be seen, 340  
A desert wilderness will be.



Perhaps, with head and heels on fire,  
And like the very soul of evil,  
He's galloping away, away,  
And so he'll gallop on for aye,  
The bane of all that dread the devil.<sup>1</sup>

I to the muses have been bound,  
These fourteen years, by strong indentures;  
Oh gentle muses! let me tell  
But half of what to him befel, 350  
For sure he met with strange adventures.

Oh gentle muses! is this kind?  
Why will ye thus my suit repel?  
Why of your further aid bereave me?  
And can you thus unfriended leave me?  
Ye muses! whom I love so well.

Who's yon, that, near the waterfall,  
Which thunders down with headlong force,  
Beneath the moon, yet shining fair,  
As careless as if nothing were, 360  
Sits upright on a feeding horse?

Unto his horse, that's feeding free,  
He seems, I think, the rein to give;  
Of moon or stars he takes no heed;  
Of such we in romances read,  
—'Tis Johnny! Johnny! as I live.

And that's the very pony too.  
Where is she, where is Betty Foy?  
She hardly can sustain her fears;  
The roaring water-fall she hears, 370  
And cannot find her idiot boy.

Your pony's worth his weight in gold,  
Then calm your terrors, Betty Foy!  
She's coming from among the trees,  
And now, all full in view, she sees  
Him whom she loves, her idiot boy.

---

1 *Perhaps ... devil*] Recalling lines 185–96 of “Lenora” by German poet  
Gottfried August Bürger. See Appendix G, p. 523.

And Betty sees the pony too:  
Why stand you thus Good Betty Foy?  
It is no goblin, 'tis no ghost,  
'Tis he whom you so long have lost, 380  
He whom you love, your idiot boy.

She looks again—her arms are up—  
She screams—she cannot move for joy;  
She darts as with a torrent's force,  
She has almost o'erturned the horse,  
And fast she holds her idiot boy.

And Johnny burrs and laughs aloud,  
Whether in cunning or in joy,  
I cannot tell; but while he laughs,  
Betty a drunken pleasure quaffs, 390  
To hear again her idiot boy.

And now she's at the pony's tail,  
And now she's at the pony's head,  
On that side now, and now on this,  
And almost stifled with her bliss,  
A few sad tears does Betty shed.

She kisses o'er and o'er again,  
Him whom she loves, her idiot boy,  
She's happy here, she's happy there,  
She is uneasy every where; 400  
Her limbs are all alive with joy.

She pats the pony, where or when  
She knows not, happy Betty Foy!  
The little pony glad may be,  
But he is milder far than she,  
You hardly can perceive his joy.

“Oh! Johnny, never mind the Doctor;  
You've done your best, and that is all.”  
She took the reins, when this was said,  
And gently turned the pony's head 410  
From the loud water-fall.

By this the stars were almost gone,  
The moon was setting on the hill,  
So pale you scarcely looked at her:  
The little birds began to stir,  
Though yet their tongues were still.

The pony, Betty, and her boy,  
Wind slowly through the woody dale:  
And who is she, be-times abroad,  
That hobbles up the steep rough road? 420  
Who is it, but old Susan Gale?

Long Susan lay deep lost in thought,  
And many dreadful fears beset her,  
Both for her messenger and nurse;  
And as her mind grew worse and worse,  
Her body it grew better.

She turned, she toss'd herself in bed,  
On all sides doubts and terrors met her;  
Point after point did she discuss;  
And while her mind was fighting thus, 430  
Her body still grew better.

“Alas! what is become of them?  
These fears can never be endured,  
I'll to the wood.”—The word scarce said,  
Did Susan rise up from her bed,  
As if by magic cured.

Away she posts up hill and down,  
And to the wood at length is come,  
She spies her friends, she shouts a greeting;  
Oh me! it is a merry meeting, 440  
As ever was in Christendom.

The owls have hardly sung their last,  
While our four travellers homeward wend;  
The owls have hooted all night long,  
And with the owls began my song,  
And with the owls must end.

For while they all were travelling home,  
Cried Betty, "Tell us Johnny, do,  
Where all this long night you have been,  
What you have heard, what you have seen, 450  
And Johnny, mind you tell us true."

Now Johnny all night long had heard  
The owls in tuneful concert strive;  
No doubt too he the moon had seen;  
For in the moonlight he had been  
From eight o'clock till five.

And thus to Betty's question, he  
Made answer, like a traveller bold,  
(His very words I give to you,  
"The cocks did crow to-who, to-who,  
And the sun did shine so cold." 460  
—Thus answered Johnny in his glory,  
And that was all his travel's story.

LINES  
WRITTEN NEAR RICHMOND, UPON THE THAMES,  
AT EVENING<sup>1</sup>

=====

How rich the wave, in front, imprest  
With evening-twilight's summer hues,<sup>2</sup>  
While, facing thus the crimson west,  
The boat her silent path pursues!  
And see how dark the backward stream!  
A little moment past, so smiling!  
And still, perhaps, with faithless gleam,  
Some other loiterer beguiling.

Such views the youthful bard allure,  
But, heedless of the following gloom, 10  
He deems their colours shall endure  
"Till peace go with him to the tomb.  
—And let him nurse his fond deceit,  
And what if he must die in sorrow!  
Who would not cherish dreams so sweet,  
Though grief and pain may come to-morrow?

Glide gently, thus for ever glide,  
O Thames! that other bards may see,  
As lovely visions by thy side  
As now, fair river! come to me. 20  
Oh glide, fair stream! for ever so,<sup>3</sup>

- 1 By Wordsworth. Richmond is a suburb southwest of central London; see Appendix H, p. 542. In the 1800 edition, lines 1–16 become a separate poem, entitled “Lines Written when sailing in a Boat at Evening.” The remaining stanzas appear as “Lines Written near Richmond upon the Thames.” In 1802, both poems were moved to volume two, probably to make room for the expanded Preface.
- 2 *How ... hues*] In Robert Southey’s presentation copy of the 1805 edition of *Lyrical Ballads* (British Library call number C.58.bb.23), lines 1–2 are altered (in what appears Southey’s hand) to: “How richly glows the water’s breast/Before us tinged with evening hues,”
- 3 *Oh glide ... ever so*] Recalling the refrain that concludes each stanza of Edmund Spenser’s *Prothalamion* (1596): “Sweete *Themmes* runne softly, till I end my Song.”

Thy quiet soul on all bestowing,  
'Till all our minds for ever flow,  
As thy deep waters now are flowing.

Vain thought! yet be as now thou art,  
That in thy waters may be seen  
The image of a poet's heart,  
How bright, how solemn, how serene!  
Such heart did once the poet bless,  
Who, pouring here a\* *later* ditty, 30  
Could find no refuge from distress,  
But in the milder grief of pity.

Remembrance! as we glide along,  
For him suspend the dashing oar,  
And pray that never child of Song  
May know his freezing sorrows more.<sup>1</sup>  
How calm! how still! the only sound,  
The dripping of the oar suspended!  
—The evening darkness gathers round  
By virtue's holiest powers attended. 40

EXPOSTULATION

AND  
REPLY<sup>2</sup>

=====

“Why, William, on that old grey stone,  
Thus for the length of half a day,  
Why, William, sit you thus alone,  
And dream your time away?”

---

\* Collins's Ode on the death of Thomson, the last written, I believe, of the poems which were published during his life-time. This Ode is also alluded to in the next stanza. [Wordsworth's note. Collins's "Ode" was published in 1749.]

- 
- 1 *Remembrance! ... more*] Echoing lines 13–16 of Collins's "Ode":  
"Remembrance oft shall haunt the Shore/When Thames in Summer-  
wreaths is drest,/And oft suspend the dashing Oar/To bid his gentle  
Spirit rest!"
- 2 By Wordsworth.

Where are your books? that light bequeath'd  
To beings else forlorn and blind!  
Up! Up! and drink the spirit breath'd  
From dead men to their kind.

You look round on your mother earth,  
As if she for no purpose bore you; 10  
As if you were her first-born birth,  
And none had lived before you!"

One morning thus, by Esthwaite lake,  
When life was sweet I knew not why,  
To me my good friend Matthew spake,  
And thus I made reply.

"The eye it cannot chuse but see,  
We cannot bid the ear be still;  
Our bodies feel, where'er they be,  
Against, or with our will. 20

Nor less I deem that there are powers,  
Which of themselves our minds impress,  
That we can feed this mind of ours,  
In a wise passiveness.

Think you, mid all this mighty sum  
Of things for ever speaking,  
That nothing of itself will come,  
But we must still be seeking?

—Then ask not wherefore, here, alone,  
Conversing as I may, 30  
I sit upon this old grey stone,  
And dream my time away."

THE TABLES TURNED;  
AN EVENING SCENE, ON THE SAME SUBJECT<sup>1</sup>

=====

Up! up! my friend, and clear your looks,  
Why all this toil and trouble?  
Up! up! my friend, and quit your books,  
Or surely you'll grow double.

The sun, above the mountain's head,  
A freshening lustre mellow  
Through all the long green fields has spread,  
His first sweet evening yellow.

Books! 'tis a dull and endless strife,  
Come, hear the woodland linnet, 10  
How sweet his music; on my life  
There's more of wisdom in it.

And hark! how blithe the throstle<sup>2</sup> sings!  
And he is no mean preacher;  
Come forth into the light of things,  
Let Nature be your teacher.

She has a world of ready wealth,  
Our minds and hearts to bless—  
Spontaneous wisdom breathed by health,  
Truth breathed by cheerfulness. 20

One impulse from a vernal wood  
May teach you more of man;  
Of moral evil and of good,  
Than all the sages can.

Sweet is the lore which nature brings;  
Our meddling intellect  
Mishapes the beauteous forms of things;  
—We murder to dissect.

---

1 By Wordsworth.

2 *throstle*] The thrush, a songbird common in Britain.



Enough of science and of art;  
 Close up these barren leaves;  
 Come forth, and bring with you a heart  
 That watches and receives. 30

OLD MAN TRAVELLING;  
 ANIMAL TRANQUILLITY AND DECAY,  
 A SKETCH<sup>1</sup>

=====

The little hedge-row birds,  
 That peck along the road, regard him not.  
 He travels on, and in his face, his step,  
 His gait, is one expression; every limb,  
 His look and bending figure, all bespeak  
 A man who does not move with pain, but moves  
 With thought—He is insensibly subdued  
 To settled quiet: he is one by whom  
 All effort seems forgotten, one to whom  
 Long patience has such mild composure given, 10  
 That patience now doth seem a thing, of which  
 He hath no need. He is by nature led  
 To peace so perfect, that the young behold  
 With envy, what the old man hardly feels.  
 —I asked him whither he was bound, and what  
 The object of his journey; he replied  
 “Sir! I am going many miles to take  
 A last leave of my son, a mariner,  
 Who from a sea-fight has been brought to Falmouth,<sup>2</sup>  
 And there is dying in an hospital.”<sup>3</sup> 20

---

1 By Wordsworth. 1800: the title is shortened to “Animal Tranquility and Decay: A Sketch.”

2 *Falmouth*] A port and shipbuilding center in the English county of Cornwall. See Appendix H, p. 542.

3 *I asked him ... in a hospital*] The 1800 edition removes the quotation marks from lines 17–20 so that they are spoken by the narrator; Wordsworth deleted lines 15–20 from the poem in 1815.

THE COMPLAINT  
OF A FORSAKEN  
INDIAN WOMAN<sup>1</sup>

=====

[When a Northern Indian, from sickness, is unable to continue his journey with his companions; he is left behind, covered over with Deer-skins, and is supplied with water, food, and fuel if the situation of the place will afford it. He is informed of the track which his companions intend to pursue, and if he is unable to follow, or overtake them, he perishes alone in the Desert; unless he should have the good fortune to fall in with some other Tribes of Indians. It is unnecessary to add that the females are equally, or still more, exposed to the same fate. See that very interesting work, Hearne's *Journey from Hudson's Bay to the Northern Ocean*.<sup>2</sup> When the Northern Lights, as the same writer informs us, vary their position in the air, they make a rustling and a crackling noise. This circumstance is alluded to in the first stanza of the following poem.]

=====

THE COMPLAINT, &c.

=====

Before I see another day,  
Oh let my body die away!  
In sleep I heard the northern gleams;  
The stars they were among my dreams;  
In sleep did I behold the skies,  
I saw the crackling flashes drive;  
And yet they are upon my eyes,  
And yet I am alive.  
Before I see another day,  
Oh let my body die away!

10

- 
- 1 By Wordsworth. In 1802, Wordsworth moved this poem to volume two.  
2 *Hearne ... Ocean*] Wordsworth refers to p. 203 of Samuel Hearne, *A Journey from Prince of Wales's Fort in Hudson's Bay to the Northern Ocean ... 1769-1772* (1795): "The poor woman ... came up with us several times, after having been left in the manner described. At length, poor creature! she dropped behind, and no one attempted to go back in search of her."

My fire is dead: it knew no pain;  
Yet is it dead, and I remain.  
All stiff with ice the ashes lie;  
And they are dead, and I will die.  
When I was well, I wished to live,  
For clothes, for warmth, for food, and fire;  
But they to me no joy can give,  
No pleasure now, and no desire.  
Then here contented will I lie;  
Alone I cannot fear to die. 20

Alas! you might have dragged me on  
Another day, a single one!  
Too soon despair o'er me prevailed;  
Too soon my heartless spirit failed;<sup>1</sup>  
When you were gone my limbs were stronger,  
And Oh how grievously I rue,  
That, afterwards, a little longer,  
My friends, I did not follow you!  
For strong and without pain I lay,  
My friends, when you were gone away. 30

My child! they gave thee to another,  
A woman who was not thy mother.  
When from my arms my babe they took,  
On me how strangely did he look!  
Through his whole body something ran,  
A most strange something did I see;  
—As if he strove to be a man,  
That he might pull the sledge for me.  
And then he stretched his arms, how wild!  
Oh mercy! like a little child. 40

My little joy! my little pride!  
In two days more I must have died.  
Then do not weep and grieve for me;  
I feel I must have died with thee.  
Oh wind that o'er my head art flying,

---

1 *Too soon despair ... failed*] In Robert Southey's presentation copy of the 1805 edition of *Lyrical Ballads* (British Library C.58.bb.23), lines 23–24 are altered (in what appears to be Southey's hand) to: "Too soon I yielded to despair/Why did ye listen to my prayer!"

The way my friends their course did bend,  
I should not feel the pain of dying,  
Could I with thee a message send.  
Too soon, my friends, you went away;  
For I had many things to say. 50

I'll follow you across the snow,  
You travel heavily and slow:  
In spite of all my weary pain,  
I'll look upon your tents again.  
My fire is dead, and snowy white  
The water which beside it stood;  
The wolf has come to me to-night,  
And he has stolen away my food.  
For ever left alone am I,  
Then wherefore should I fear to die? 60

My journey will be shortly run,  
I shall not see another sun,  
I cannot lift my limbs to know  
If they have any life or no.  
My poor forsaken child! if I  
For once could have thee close to me,  
With happy heart I then would die,  
And my last thoughts would happy be.  
I feel my body die away,  
I shall not see another day.<sup>1</sup> 70

## THE CONVICT<sup>2</sup>

=====

The glory of evening was spread through the west;  
—On the slope of a mountain I stood,  
While the joy that precedes the calm season of rest  
Rang loud through the meadow and wood.

---

- 1 *My journey ... another day*] In Robert Southey's presentation copy of the 1805 edition of *Lyrical Ballads* (British Library C.58.bb.23), lines 61–70 are crossed out.
- 2 By Wordsworth. The poem was dropped from subsequent editions of *Lyrical Ballads*.

“And must we then part from a dwelling so fair?”  
In the pain of my spirit I said,  
And with a deep sadness I turned, to repair  
To the cell where the convict is laid.

The thick-ribbed walls that o’ershadow the gate  
Resound; and the dungeons unfold: 10  
I pause; and at length, through the glimmering grate,  
That outcast of pity behold.

His black matted head on his shoulder is bent,  
And deep is the sigh of his breath,  
And with stedfast dejection his eyes are intent  
On the fetters that link him to death.

’Tis sorrow enough on that visage to gaze,  
That body dismiss’d from his care;  
Yet my fancy has pierced to his heart, and pourtrays  
More terrible images there. 20

His bones are consumed, and his life-blood is dried,  
With wishes the past to undo;  
And his crime, through the pains that o’erwhelm him, descried,  
Still blackens and grows on his view.

When from the dark synod,<sup>1</sup> or blood-reeking field,  
To his chamber the monarch is led,  
All soothers of sense their soft virtue shall yield,  
And quietness pillow his head.

But if grief, self-consumed, in oblivion would doze,  
And conscience her tortures appease, 30  
’Mid tumult and uproar this man must repose;  
In the comfortless vault of disease.

When his fetters at night have so press’d on his limbs,  
That the weight can no longer be borne,  
If, while a half-slumber his memory bedims,  
The wretch on his pallet should turn,

---

1 *synod*] An assembly or council.

While the jail-mastiff howls at the dull clanking chain,  
From the roots of his hair there shall start  
A thousand sharp punctures of cold-sweating pain,  
And terror shall leap at his heart. 40

But now he half-raises his deep-sunken eye,  
And the motion unsettles a tear;  
The silence of sorrow it seems to supply,  
And asks of me why I am here.

“Poor victim! no idle intruder has stood  
With o’rweening complacence our state to compare,  
But one, whose first wish is the wish to be good,  
Is come as a brother thy sorrows to share.

At thy name though compassion her nature resign,  
Though in virtue’s proud mouth thy report be a stain, 50  
My care, if the arm of the mighty were mine,  
Would plant thee where yet thou might’st blossom again.”<sup>1</sup>

LINES  
WRITTEN A FEW MILES ABOVE  
TINTERN ABBEY,  
ON REVISITING THE BANKS OF THE WYE DURING  
A TOUR,  
JULY 13, 1798<sup>2</sup>

=====

Five years have passed; five summers, with the length  
Of five long winters! and again I hear  
These waters, rolling from their mountain-springs

---

1 *My care ... blossom again*] Referring to transportation instead of corporal punishment or incarceration as punishment for a crime. Transportation from Britain to one of its colonies was a common sentence for convicted criminals in the eighteenth century. After the loss of the American colonies in 1783, Britain started a new penal colony in New South Wales, present-day Australia.

2 By Wordsworth. The ruin of Tintern Abbey is located in Monmouthshire, Wales, on the west bank of the River Wye. Founded by Cistercian monks in 1131, enlarged between 1220 and 1287, and completed in the fourteenth century, it was dissolved in 1537 and given to the Lord of Chepstow. See Appendix H, p. 542.

With a sweet inland murmur.\*—Once again  
 Do I behold these steep and lofty cliffs,  
 Which on a wild secluded scene impress  
 Thoughts of more deep seclusion; and connect  
 The landscape with the quiet of the sky.  
 The day is come when I again repose  
 Here, under this dark sycamore, and view 10  
 These plots of cottage-ground, these orchard-tufts,  
 Which, at this season, with their unripe fruits,  
 Among the woods and copses lose themselves,  
 Nor, with their green and simple hue, disturb  
 The wild green landscape. Once again I see  
 These hedge-rows, hardly hedge-rows, little lines  
 Of sportive wood run wild; these pastoral farms  
 Green to the very door; and wreathes of smoke  
 Sent up, in silence, from among the trees,  
 With some uncertain notice, as might seem, 20  
 Of vagrant dwellers in the houseless woods,  
 Or of some hermit's cave, where by his fire  
 The hermit sits alone.

Though absent long,  
 These forms of beauty have not been to me,  
 As is a landscape to a blind man's eye:  
 But oft, in lonely rooms, and mid the din  
 Of towns and cities, I have owed to them,  
 In hours of weariness, sensations sweet,  
 Felt in the blood, and felt along the heart,  
 And passing even into my purer mind 30  
 With tranquil restoration:—feelings too  
 Of unremembered pleasure; such, perhaps,  
 As may have had no trivial influence  
 On that best portion of a good man's life;  
 His little, nameless, unremembered acts  
 Of kindness and of love. Nor less, I trust,  
 To them I may have owed another gift,  
 Of aspect more sublime; that blessed mood,  
 In which the burthen of the mystery,  
 In which the heavy and the weary weight 40  
 Of all this unintelligible world

---

\* The river is not affected by the tides a few miles above Tintern.  
 [Wordsworth's note]

Is lighten'd:—that serene and blessed mood,  
 In which the affections gently lead us on,  
 Until, the breath of this corporeal frame,  
 And even the motion of our human blood  
 Almost suspended, we are laid asleep  
 In body, and become a living soul:<sup>1</sup>  
 While with an eye made quiet by the power  
 Of harmony, and the deep power of joy,  
 We see into the life of things.

If this

50

Be but a vain belief, yet, oh! how oft,  
 In darkness, and amid the many shapes  
 Of joyless day-light; when the fretful stir  
 Unprofitable, and the fever of the world,  
 Have hung upon the beatings of my heart,  
 How oft, in spirit, have I turned to thee  
 O sylvan Wye! Thou wanderer through the woods,  
 How often has my spirit turned to thee!

And now, with gleams of half-extinguish'd thought,  
 With many recognitions dim and faint,

60

And somewhat of a sad perplexity,  
 The picture of the mind revives again:  
 While here I stand, not only with the sense  
 Of present pleasure, but with pleasing thoughts  
 That in this moment there is life and food  
 For future years. And so I dare to hope  
 Though changed, no doubt, from what I was, when first  
 I came among these hills; when like a roe  
 I bounded o'er the mountains, by the sides  
 Of the deep rivers, and the lonely streams,  
 Wherever nature led; more like a man  
 Flying from something that he dreads, than one  
 Who sought the thing he loved. For nature then  
 (The coarser pleasures of my boyish days,  
 And their glad animal movements all gone by,  
 To me was all in all.—I cannot paint

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1 *breath ... soul*] Wordsworth invokes the relation between blood circulation and powerful feeling in his first published poem, "Sonnet on seeing Miss Helen Maria Williams Weep at a Tale of Distress." See Appendix G, p. 514.



What then I was. The sounding cataract  
 Haunted me like a passion: the tall rock,  
 The mountain, and the deep and gloomy wood,  
 Their colours and their forms, were then to me 80  
 An appetite: a feeling and a love,  
 That had no need of a remoter charm,  
 By thought supplied, or any interest  
 Unborrowed from the eye.—That time is past,  
 And all its aching joys are now no more,  
 And all its dizzy raptures. Not for this  
 Faint I, nor mourn nor murmur: other gifts  
 Have followed, for such loss, I would believe,  
 Abundant recompence. For I have learned  
 To look on nature, not as in the hour 90  
 Of thoughtless youth, but hearing oftentimes  
 The still, sad music of humanity,  
 Not harsh nor grating, though of ample power  
 To chasten and subdue. And I have felt  
 A presence that disturbs me with the joy  
 Of elevated thoughts; a sense sublime  
 Of something far more deeply interfused,  
 Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,  
 And the round ocean, and the living air,  
 And the blue sky, and in the mind of man, 100  
 A motion and a spirit, that impels  
 All thinking things, all objects of all thought,  
 And rolls through all things. Therefore am I still  
 A lover of the meadows and the woods,  
 And mountains; and of all that we behold  
 From this green earth; of all the mighty world  
 Of eye and ear, both what they half create,\*  
 And what perceive; well pleased to recognize  
 In nature and the language of the sense,  
 The anchor of my purest thoughts, the nurse, 110  
 The guide, the guardian of my heart, and soul  
 Of all my moral being.

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\* This line has a close resemblance to an admirable line of Young, the exact expression of which I cannot recollect. [Wordsworth's note. Wordsworth refers to Night VI, line 427 of Edward Young's *Night Thoughts* (1742–45): "And half create the wondrous world, they see."]

Nor, perchance,  
 If I were not thus taught, should I the more  
 Suffer my genial spirits to decay:  
 For thou art with me, here, upon the banks  
 Of this fair river; thou, my dearest Friend,  
 My dear, dear Friend, and in thy voice I catch  
 The language of my former heart, and read  
 My former pleasures in the shooting lights  
 Of thy wild eyes. Oh! yet a little while 120  
 May I behold in thee what I was once,  
 My dear, dear Sister! And this prayer I make,  
 Knowing that Nature never did betray  
 The heart that loved her; 'tis her privilege,  
 Through all the years of this our life, to lead  
 From joy to joy: for she can so inform  
 The mind that is within us, so impress  
 With quietness and beauty, and so feed  
 With lofty thoughts, that neither evil tongues,  
 Rash judgments, nor the sneers of selfish men, 130  
 Nor greetings where no kindness is, nor all  
 The dreary intercourse of daily life,  
 Shall e'er prevail against us, or disturb  
 Our cheerful faith that all which we behold  
 Is full of blessings. Therefore let the moon  
 Shine on thee in thy solitary walk;  
 And let the misty mountain winds be free  
 To blow against thee: and in after years,  
 When these wild ecstasies shall be matured  
 Into a sober pleasure, when thy mind 140  
 Shall be a mansion for all lovely forms,  
 Thy memory be as a dwelling-place  
 For all sweet sounds and harmonies; Oh! then,  
 If solitude, or fear, or pain, or grief,  
 Should be thy portion, with what healing thoughts  
 Of tender joy wilt thou remember me,  
 And these my exhortations! Nor, perchance,  
 If I should be, where I no more can hear  
 Thy voice, nor catch from thy wild eyes these gleams  
 Of past existence, wilt thou then forget 150  
 That on the banks of this delightful stream  
 We stood together; and that I, so long  
 A worshipper of Nature, hither came,  
 Unwearied in that service: rather say

With warmer love, oh! with far deeper zeal  
Of holier love. Nor wilt thou then forget,  
That after many wanderings, many years  
Of absence, these steep woods and lofty cliffs,  
And this green pastoral landscape, were to me  
More dear, both for themselves, and for thy sake. 160

*END.*

## Reviews of the 1798 Edition

1. [Robert Southey.]<sup>1</sup> *Critical Review*<sup>2</sup> 24 (October 1798): 197–204.

The majority of these poems, we are informed in the advertisement, 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 purposes of poetic pleasure.” P. i.

Of these experimental poems, the most important is the *Idiot Boy*, the story of which is simply this. Betty Foy’s neighbour Susan Gale is indisposed; and no one can conveniently be sent for the doctor but Betty’s idiot boy. She therefore puts him upon her poney, at eight o’clock in the evening, gives him proper directions, and returns to take care of her sick neighbour. Johnny is expected with the doctor by eleven; but the clock strikes eleven, and twelve, and one, without the appearance either of Johnny or the doctor. Betty’s restless fears become insupportable; and she now leaves her friend to look for her idiot son. She goes to the doctor’s house, but hears nothing of Johnny. About five o’clock, however, she finds him sitting quietly upon his feeding poney. As they go home they meet old Susan, whose apprehensions have cured her, and brought her out to seek them; and they all return merrily together.

Upon this subject the author has written nearly five hundred lines. With what spirit the story is told, our extract will evince.

[Southey quotes lines 322–40.]

No tale less deserves the labour that appears to have been bestowed upon this. It resembles a Flemish picture in the worthlessness of its design and the excellence of its execution. From Flemish artists we are satisfied with such pieces: who would not have lamented, if Corregio<sup>3</sup> or Rafaele<sup>4</sup> had wast-

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- 1 Robert Southey (1774–1843), English poet, Poet Laureate (1813–43), and close friend of Coleridge and Wordsworth; at the time of the publication of *Lyrical Ballads*, Southey was best known for his *Joan of Arc* (1796) and *Poems* (1797). Southey’s review appeared anonymously.
  - 2 The *Critical Review* (1756–1817) was a periodical founded by Tobias Smollett as a rival to the *Monthly Review*.
  - 3 *Corregio*] By name Antonio Allegri (ca. 1494–1534), Renaissance painter known for his frescos in Parma; his late work influenced the style of many Baroque and Rococo artists.
  - 4 *Rafaele*] Raffaello Sanzio (1483–1520), master painter and architect of the Italian High Renaissance. He is best known for his Madonnas and for his large figure compositions in the Vatican in Rome.

ed their talents in painting Dutch boors or the humours of a Flemish wake?

The other ballads of this kind are as bald in story, and are not so highly embellished in narration. With that which is entitled the Thorn, we were altogether displeas'd. The advertisement says, it is not told in the person of the author, but in that of some loquacious narrator. The author should have recollected that he who personates tiresome loquacity, becomes tiresome himself. The story of a man who suffers perpetual pain of cold, because an old woman prayed that he never might be warm, is perhaps a good story for a ballad, because it is a well-known tale: but is the author certain that it is "*well-authenticated?*" and does not such an assertion promote the popular superstition of witchcraft?

In a very different style of poetry, is the Rime of the Ancyent Marinere; a ballad (says the advertisement) "professedly written in imitation of the *style*, as well as of the spirit of the elder poets." We are tolerably conversant with the early English poets; and can discover no resemblance whatever, except in antiquated spelling and a few obsolete words. This piece appears to us perfectly original in style as well as in story. Many of the stanzas are laboriously beautiful; but in connection they are absurd or unintelligible. Our readers may exercise their ingenuity in attempting to unriddle what follows.

[Southey quotes lines 301–22.]

We do not sufficiently understand the story to analyse it. It is a Dutch attempt at German sublimity. Genius has here been employed in producing a poem of little merit.

With pleasure we turn to the serious pieces, the better part of the volume. The Foster-Mother's Tale is in the best style of dramatic narrative. The Dungeon, and the Lines upon the Yew-tree Seat, are beautiful. The Tale of the Female Vagrant is written in the stanza, not the style, of Spenser. We extract a part of this poem.

[Southey quotes lines 91–180.]

Admirable as this poem is, the author seems to discover still superior powers in the Lines written near Tintern Abbey. On reading this production, it is impossible not to lament that he should ever have condescended to write such pieces as the Last of the Flock, the Convict, and most of the ballads. In the whole range of English poetry, we scarcely recollect any thing superior to a part of the following passage.

[Southey quotes lines 66–112.]

The "experiment," we think, has failed, not because the lan-

guage of conversation is little adapted to “the purposes of poetic pleasure,” but because it has been tried upon uninteresting subjects. Yet every piece discovers genius; and, ill as the author has frequently employed his talents, they certainly rank him with the best of living poets.

2. *Monthly Mirror*<sup>1</sup> 6 (October 1798): 224–25.

The contents of this little volume were “written chiefly with a view to ascertain how far the language of conversation is adapted to the purposes of poetic pleasure.” The author has certainly accomplished this purpose, and instead of the pompous and high-sounding phraseology of the *Della Cruscan school*,<sup>2</sup> has produced sentiments of feeling and sensibility, expressed without affectation, and in the language of nature. If this style were more generally adopted, it would tend to correct that depraved taste, occasioned by an incessant *importation* from the press of *sonnets* and other poems, which has already made considerable inroads upon the judgment. We extract the following as a specimen of the author’s talents.

[The reviewer quotes “Lines Left upon a Seat in a Yew-Tree” in its entirety.]

3. *Analytical Review*<sup>3</sup> 28 (December 1798): 583–87.

[The reviewer quotes the Advertisement’s first two paragraphs.]

There is something sensible in these remarks, and they certainly serve as a very pertinent introduction to the studied simplicity, which pervades many of the poems. The “Rime of the ancient Marinere,” a ballad in seven parts, is written professedly in imitation of the style as well as the spirit of the ancient poets. We are not pleased with it; in our opinion it has more of the

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1 The *Monthly Mirror* (1795–1811), a periodical founded by a group of London wits that included Thomas Bellamy and Thomas Hill, foregrounded drama and poetry aimed at a sophisticated audience.

2 *Della Cruscan school*] Referring to a group of poets important in Florentine and London literary circles between 1785 and 1800 known for their highly ornate and sentimental verse.

3 The *Analytical Review* (1788–99) was founded by Joseph Johnson; the review carried a format similar to the *Monthly* and *Critical* reviews while embracing liberal views and new philosophies.

extravagance of a mad german poet,<sup>1</sup> than of the simplicity of our ancient ballad writers.

Some of our young rhymesters and blank-verse-men, highly delighted with the delicacy of our own moral feelings, affect to look down on every thing human with an eye of pity. To them the face of nature is eternally shaded with a funereal gloom, and they are never happy but when their affections, to use the words of Sterne, are fixed upon some melancholy cypress.<sup>2</sup> We are happy to conjecture, from some pages in these poems, that the author of them classes not with these sable songsters; in his ode to the nightingale he says,

[The reviewer quotes lines 7–23 of “The Nightingale.”]

Among these poems which particularly pleased us from their character either of simplicity or tenderness, or both, are, that from which we have made the preceding extract, “The Thorn,” “The Mad Mother,” “The Idiot Boy,” and that with which we shall present our readers, the tale of “Goody Blake and Harry Gill”: a tale founded on a well authenticated fact, which happened in Warwickshire. Dr. Darwin relates it among other curious instances of maniacal hallucination in the second volume of his *Zoonomia*.

[The reviewer quotes the entirety of “Goody Blake and Harry Gill.”]

4. “Domestic Literature.” *New Annual Register*<sup>3</sup> for 1798 (1799): 309–10.

[...] The “Lyrical Ballads, with a few other Poems,” are the production of an author of considerable talents, “written chiefly with

- 1 *mad german poet*] Most likely referring to Gottfried August Bürger (1747–94), whose work experienced a great vogue in Britain just after his death. Bürger’s supernatural ballad “Lenore” was translated and printed four separate times in 1796. See Appendix G, pp. 517–25.
- 2 *Sterne ... cypress*] Referring to chapter seventeen of Laurence Sterne’s *A Sentimental Journey* (1768): “I pity the man who can travel from *Dan to Beersheba*, and cry, ’Tis all barren—and so it is; and so is all the world to him, who will not cultivate the fruits it offers. I declare, said I, clapping my hands cheerily together, that was I in a desert, I would find out wherewith in it to call forth my affections.—If I could not do better, I would fasten them upon some sweet myrtle, or seek some melancholy cypress to connect myself to.”
- 3 The *New Annual Register* (1781–1826) was a periodical set up as a rival to the more conservative *Annual Register*.

a view to ascertain how far the language of conversation in the middle and lower classes of society, is adapted to the purposes of poetical pleasure.” Many of the ballads are distinguished by great simplicity and tenderness, and contain a very “natural delineation of human passions, human characters, and human incidents.” With others we have been less satisfied, considering them to be unfortunate experiments, on which genius and labour have been misemployed. Of the remaining pieces some are highly beautiful and pleasing, and present us with passages which entitle the author to a very respectable rank among modern poets. [...]

5. “Poetry,” *Monthly Magazine*<sup>1</sup> 6 (Supplement, January 1799): 514.

[...] The author of “*Lyrical Ballads*,” has attempted to imitate the style of our old English versifiers, with unusual success; “*The Auncient Mariners*,” however, on which he particularly prides himself, is in our opinion, a particular exception; some of his pieces are beautiful, but others are stiff and laboured. [...]

6. *New London Review*<sup>2</sup> 1 (January 1799): 33–35.

As this volume has some pretension to originality, it is peculiarly an object of critical examination; the writer professes that “the majority of the poems are to be considered as *experiments*.” It is our duty to state his views, and to estimate his execution.

He says “these poems 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 purposes of poetic pleasure.” That there should ever have been a doubt upon this subject in the mind of a man of taste, is not a little surprizing. The language of *conversation*, and that too of the *lower classes*, can never be considered as the language of *poetry*. What is to affect the imagination, must at least address itself to the imagination; and the imagination has its peculiar style. It is chiefly objected to French poetry, that in general, it is the language of conversation; this is not

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1 The *Monthly Magazine* (1796–1825) was published by the staunchly liberal Sir Richard Phillips and edited until 1806 by John Aikin.

2 The *New London Review* (1799–1800) was a short-lived monthly review about which little is known.



strictly true; but because it is frequently nothing more than elegant; because it is at times divested of poetical diction; of the colourings, the freshness, and the graces of poetry; men of taste in Europe, have universally depreciated its claim to the honours of genuine poetry.

Our author, conscious of his paradox, and of the feelings of his readers, adds that “they will often look round for poetry, and enquire by what species of courtesy these attempts can be permitted to assume that title.” We really sympathise with the forlorn reader; but our author, to moderate his despair, offers a singular consolation; he assures us, that we have no settled notion of what poetry is. These are his words, “It is desirable that they should not suffer the *solitary word*, poetry, *a word of very disputed meaning*, to stand in the way of their gratification.” Nothing can be more ludicrous than this ingenious request of our author, excepting its grave refutation. If the writer of these poems, will for a moment, dismiss his jocular paradox (and we almost suspect that some of these poems were intended merely as lusory<sup>1</sup> effusions) we trust to his cultivated taste, and his poetical acquirements, to tell us *what is poetry*. He will find no difficulty in resolving the question, by comparing Dryden with D’Urfey, Pope with Pomfret, and Waller with Walsh.<sup>2</sup>

Our author must have had very unsettled notions of what we are to understand by the term poetical SIMPLICITY. He is not singular in this unhappy indecision of taste; we have had a multitude of rhimers who have looked into the earliest efforts of the art, for their models; and seem to have thought, that rudeness was synonymous to simplicity. Bishop Percy’s publication of the *Reliques of Ancient Poetry*,<sup>3</sup> has been the fertile mother of a numerous and meagre race of *stanza-enditers*.

We may distinguish a *simple* style from a style of *simplicity*. By a simple style we may suppose a colloquial diction, debased by

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1 *lusory*] written in a playful style.

2 *Dryden with D’Urfey, Pope with Pomfret, and Waller with Walsh*] The reviewer prefers the verse satires of John Dryden (1631–1700) to those of Edmund D’Urfey (1653–1723), the couplets of Alexander Pope (1688–1744) to those of John Pomfret (1667–1702), and the love poems of Edmund Waller (1606–87) to those of William Walsh (1663–1708).

3 *Reliques of Ancient Poetry*] A collection of old English ballads gathered by antiquarian and Anglican bishop Thomas Percy (1729–1811) and published in 1765. Percy’s *Reliques* awakened widespread interest in English and Scottish traditional songs and supported the ballad revival in Britain.

inelegance, and gross by familiarity. Simplicity is a manner of expression, facile, pure, and always elegant. Simplicity, will not detract from the elevation of our thoughts, nor injure the beauty of the composition. The arch-critic of France, felt and marked the distinction, in these happy lines.

“Quoique vous ecrivez, evitez la Bassesse,  
Le style le moins noble, a pourtant sa noblesse.”<sup>1</sup>

ART. POET. C. I.

The simple style has all the squalid nakedness of a BEGGAR, and simplicity, the lovely nudity of a GRACE.

“Thoughtless of beauty she is BEAUTY’S SELF!”

THOMSON<sup>2</sup>

Our criticism is so just, that our poet seems to have felt its truth, while he was employed in its violation; and so far from these poems being entirely written in the eccentric principle he proposes, we shall find, that he has many exquisite thoughts exquisitely expressed. If ever he disgusts by the meagreness and poverty of his composition, it is precisely where, aiming at simplicity, he copies the rudest effusions of our vulgar ballads. So far indeed from obtaining that simplicity to which he pretends, we, at times, have wished that he were somewhat *more* simple. Among his irregular verses, we are often surprised with beautiful expression, and sometimes displeased with a turgid obscurity, which evidently shews, that our poet found it impossible to keep the imagination alive, in the creeping measures of *conversation verses*. In the first ballad, entitled “The Rime of the Ancynt Marinere,” the following stanza is a dark enigma. It is a moonlight scene, where the inimitable expression of Shakespeare,<sup>3</sup> was floating in the recollection of the writer.

- 1 “Quoique ... noblesse”] Quoted from Nicholas Boileau, *Art poétique* (1674), Chant I, lines 79–80: “Whatever you write, avoid baseness; Even the least lofty style has its greatness.”
- 2 “Thoughtless ... THOMSON] See line 207 of *Autumn* (1730) by Scottish poet James Thomson (1700–48).
- 3 *the inimitable expression of Shakespeare*] See Shakespeare’s *Merchant of Venice*, V.i: “How sweet the moonlight steeps upon this bank! Here we will sit, and let the sounds of music, Creep in our ears; soft stillness, and the night, Become the touches of sweet harmony.”

“The rock shone bright, the kirk no less  
That stands above the rock;  
The moon-light *steeped in silentness*  
The steady weather-cock.”<sup>1</sup>

Our poet more happily describes the morning sun, at sea, in the “Female Vagrant.”

[The reviewer quotes lines 138–44.]

This is a very elegant passage, and there are many such, but while the reader will admire these, he cannot but smile, as he perceived how easily the poet forgets the principle he lays down in his preface.

Our limits will not permit us to offer the reader many specimens of that simplicity, in which, in our opinion, the author has egregiously failed. If such passages as the following find admirers, the writer is fortunate; for they never cost him any labour in the composition.

Of an old woman, we are told,

[The reviewer quotes lines 29–48 of “Goody Blake and Harry Gill.”]

The greater part of this volume is not composed in this inartificial and anti-poetical manner. Some of the poems are so far removed from the rudeness they affect, that their entire texture is brilliant and rich, and there are many passages of perfect beauty. Our poet seems to want nothing, but more fortunate topics than those he has, at times, unhappily selected. We hope, that by this time, he is convinced of the failure of these “*Experiments*”; but we recommend them to the curious, as failures of a man of genius. We take our leave of the writer, in words of Boileau.

“Prenez mieux votre ton. Soyez SIMPLE AVEC ART,  
Sublime sans orgueil, agreeable sans fard.”<sup>2</sup>

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1 “*The rock ... weather-cock.*”] The reviewer quotes lines 503–06.

2 “*Prenez mieux ... sans fard*”] Quoted from Nicholas Boileau, *Art poétique* (1674), Chant I, lines 101–102: “Refine your tone. Be SIMPLE WITH ART;/Sublime without being proud, pleasant but not purple.”

7. [Charles Burney.]<sup>1</sup> *Monthly Review*<sup>2</sup> 29 (June 1799): 202–10. Selection.

[...] Though we have been extremely entertained with the fancy, the facility, and (in general) the sentiments of these pieces, we cannot regard them as *poetry*, of a class to be cultivated at the expence of a higher species of versification, unknown in our language at the time when our elder writers, whom this author condescends to imitate, wrote their ballads.—Would it not be degrading poetry, as well as the English language, to go back to the barbarous and uncouth numbers of Chaucer?<sup>3</sup> Suppose, instead of modernizing the old bard, that the sweet and polished measures, on lofty subjects, of Dryden,<sup>4</sup> Pope,<sup>5</sup> and Gray,<sup>6</sup> were to be transmuted into the dialect and versification of the xivth<sup>7</sup> century?<sup>8</sup> Should we be gainers by the retrogradation? *Rust* is a necessary quality to a counterfeit old medal: but, to give artificial rust to modern poetry, in order to render it similar to that of three or four hundred years ago, can have no better title to merit and admiration than may be claimed by any ingenious forgery. None but savages have submitted to eat acorns after corn was found.—We will allow that the author before us has the art of cooking his acorns well, and that he makes a very palatable dish of them for *jours maigres*:<sup>9</sup> but, for festivals and *gala* days,

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- 1 *Charles Burney* (1726–1814), English music historian, friend of Samuel Johnson, and father of novelist Frances Burney. Burney's review was published anonymously.
- 2 The *Monthly Review* (1749–1845) was founded by Ralph Griffiths, who edited the review until his death in 1803. The *Monthly* was the most prestigious and respectable of the literary reviews before the founding the *Edinburgh Review* in 1802.
- 3 *Chaucer*] Geoffrey Chaucer (1342/43–1400), generally considered the most important English poet before Shakespeare.
- 4 *Dryden*] John Dryden (1631–1700), English poet, dramatist, and critic, celebrated for the sharpness of satires and the elegance of his verse.
- 5 *Pope*] Alexander Pope (1688–1744), English satirist and poet; translator of Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey*; author of *The Rape of the Lock* (1712–14), *The Dunciad* (1728), and *An Essay on Man* (1733–34).
- 6 *Gray*] Thomas Gray (1716–71), English poet famous for the polish and melancholy sensibility of his lyric poems, particularly "Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard" (1751).
- 7 *xivth*] Fourteenth.
- 8 *degrading poetry ... century*] Wordsworth responds to this criticism in the Preface, pp. 174–75.
- 9 *jours maigres*] Meager days; i.e., days in which one abstains from eating meat.

“*Multos castra juvant, & lituo tube  
Permistus sonitus.*”<sup>1</sup>

We have had pleasure in reading the *reliques of antient poetry*, because it was antient; and because we were surprised to find so many beautiful thoughts in the rude numbers of barbarous times. These reasons will not apply to *imitations* of antique versification.—We will not, however, dispute any longer about names; the author shall style his rustic delineations of low-life, *poetry*, if he pleases, on the same principle on which Butler<sup>2</sup> is called a poet, and Teniers<sup>3</sup> a painter: but are the doggrel verses of the one equal to the sublime numbers of a Milton,<sup>4</sup> or are the Dutch boors of the other to be compared with the angels of Raphael or Guido?<sup>5</sup>—When we confess that our author has had the art of pleasing and interesting in no common way by his natural delineation of human passions, human characters, and human incidents, we must add that these effects were not produced by the *poetry*:—we have been as much affected by pictures of misery and unmerited distress, in *prose*. The elevation of soul, when it is lifted into the higher regions of imagination, affords us a delight of a different kind from the sensation which is produced by the detail of common incidents. For this fact, we have better authority than is to be found in the writings of most critics: we have it in a poet himself, whose award was never (till now) disputed:

“The poet’s eye, in a fine frenzy rolling,  
Doth glance from heaven to earth, from earth to heav’n;  
And, as imagination bodies forth

- 1 *Multos ... sonitus*] Quoted from Horace, *Odes* I.i.23–5: “The military camps please many people, as does the sound of the trumpet mixed in with the horn, and wars hateful to mothers.”
- 2 *Butler*] Samuel Butler (1612–80), English poet and satirist, famous as the author of *Hudibras* (1662–63), a burlesque poem attacking militant Puritanism.
- 3 *Teniers*] David Teniers the Younger (1610–90), Flemish painter known for his scenes of peasant life.
- 4 *Milton*] John Milton (1608–74), English poet, historian, scholar, political essayist, and civil servant for the Puritan Commonwealth; he is best known for his poems *Lycidas* (1645), *Paradise Lost* (1667), and *Samson Agonistes* (1671).
- 5 *Guido*] Guido Reni (1575–1642), Italian painter noted for the classical idealism of his renderings of mythological and religious subjects.

The forms of things unknown, the poet's pen  
Turns them to shape, and gives to airy nothing  
A local habitation and a name." SHAKSPEARE<sup>1</sup>

Having said thus much on the *genus*, we now come more particularly to the *species*.

The author's first piece the *Rime of the ancyeut marinere*, in imitation of the *style* as well as of the spirit of the elder poets, is the strangest story of a cock and a bull that we ever saw on paper: yet, though it seems a rhapsody of unintelligible wildness and incoherence, (of which we do not perceive the drift, unless the joke lies in depriving the wedding guest of his share of the feast,) there are in it poetical touches of an exquisite kind.

*The Dramatic Fragment*, if it intends anything, seems meant to throw disgrace on the savage liberty preached by some modern *philosophes*.

The *Yew-Tree* seems a seat for *Jean-Jacques*;<sup>2</sup> while the reflections on the subject appear to flow from a more pious pen.

*The Nightingale* sings a strain of true and beautiful poetry;—Miltonic, yet original; reflective, and interesting, in an uncommon degree.

[Burney quotes the poem in its entirety.]

*The Female Vagrant* is an agonizing tale of individual wretchedness; highly coloured, though, alas! but too probable. Yet, as it seems to stamp a general stigma on all military transactions, which were never more important in free countries than at the present period, it will perhaps be asked whether the hardships described never happen during revolution, or in a nation subdued? The sufferings of individuals during war are dreadful: but is it not better to try to prevent them from becoming general, or to render them transient by heroic and patriotic efforts, than to fly to them for ever?

- 1 "The poet's eye ... SHAKSPEARE] Quoted from V.i of Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.
- 2 *Jean-Jacques*] Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712–78), French novelist, philosopher, and political theorist whose treatises inspired the leaders of the American and French Revolutions. Certainly one of the "*philosophes*" to which Burney refers in the previous paragraph, Rousseau is best known for his *Discours sur l'origine de l'inegalité* (1755; *Discourse on the Origin of Inequality*), his novels of education, *Julie: ou, la nouvelle Héloïse* (1761, *Julie: or, The New Eloise*) and *Émile* (1762), his political treatise *Du Contrat social* (1762; *The Social Contract*), and his autobiographical *Confessions* (1781–88).

Distress from poverty and want is admirably described, in the “*true story of Goody Blake, and Harry Gill*”: but are we to imagine that Harry was bewitched by Goody Blake? The hardest heart must be softened into pity for the poor old woman;—and yet, if all the poor are to help themselves, and supply their wants from the possessions of their neighbours, what imaginary wants and real anarchy would it not create? Goody Blake should have been relieved out of the *two millions* annually allowed by the state to the poor of this country, not by the plunder of an individual.

*Lines on the first mild day of March* abound with beautiful sentiments from a polished mind.

*Simon Lee, the old Huntsman*, is the portrait, admirably painted, of every huntsman who, by toil, age, and infirmities, is rendered unable to guide and govern his canine family.

*Anecdote for Fathers*. Of this the dialogue is ingenious and natural: but the object of the child’s choice, and the inferences, are not quite obvious.

*We are seven*:—innocent and pretty infantine prattle.

On an *early Spring*. The first stanza of this little poem seems unworthy of the rest, which contains reflections truly pious and philosophical.

*The Thorn*. All our author’s pictures, in colouring, are dark as those of Rembrandt<sup>1</sup> or Spanioletto.<sup>2</sup>

*The last of the Flock* is more gloomy than the rest. We are not told how the wretched hero of this piece became so poor. He had, indeed, ten children: but so have many cottagers; and ere the tenth child is born, the eldest begin to work, and help, at least, to maintain themselves. No oppression is pointed out; nor are any means suggested for his relief. If the author be a wealthy man, he ought not to have suffered this poor peasant to part with *the last of the flock*. What but an Agrarian law can prevent poverty from visiting the door of the indolent, injudicious, extravagant, and, perhaps, vicious? and is it certain that rigid equality of property as well as of laws could remedy this evil?

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1 *Rembrandt*] Rembrandt Harmenszoon van Rijn (1606–69), Dutch painter, draftsman, and etcher known for his portraits and biblical scenes; his paintings are characterized by luxuriant brushwork and a mastery of chiaroscuro, the treatment of light and shade.

2 *Spanioletto*] José de Ribera (1591–1652), known as Lo Spaniolletto (“The Little Spaniard”), Spanish painter and printmaker noted for his naturalism and his gloomy depictions of religious and mythological subjects; like Rembrandt, Ribera was famous for his dramatic use of light and shadow.

*The Dungeon.* Here candour and tenderness for criminals seem pushed to excess. Have not gaols<sup>1</sup> been built on the humane Mr. Howard's<sup>2</sup> plan, which have almost ruined some counties, and which look more like palaces than habitations for the perpetrators of crimes? Yet, have fewer crimes been committed in consequence of the erection of those magnificent structures, at an expence which would have maintained many in innocence and comfort out of a jail, if they have been driven to theft by want?

*The Mad Mother:* admirable painting! In Michael Angelo's<sup>3</sup> bold and masterly manner.

*The Idiot Boy* leads the reader on from anxiety to distress, and from distress to terror, by incidents and alarms which, though of the most mean and ignoble kind, interest, frighten, and terrify, almost to torture, during the perusal of more than a hundred stanzas.

*Lines written near Richmond*—literally “most musical, most melancholy!”<sup>4</sup>

*Expostulation and Reply.* The author tells us that “these lines, and those which follow, arose out of conversation with a friend who was somewhat unreasonably attached to modern books of moral philosophy.” These two pieces will afford our readers an opportunity of judging of the author's poetical talents, in a more modern and less gloomy style than his Ballads:

[Burney quotes “Expostulation and Reply” and “The Tables Turned” fully.]

*The Old Man travelling, a Sketch,* finely drawn: but the termination seems pointed against the war; from which, however, we are now no more able to separate ourselves, than Hercules was to

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1 *gaols*] i.e., jails.

2 *Howard*] John Howard (1726–90), English philanthropist and supporter of penal and public health reform. After a series of tours of jails in England, Howard persuaded the House of Commons in 1774 to pass two acts that abolished prison discharge fees and that required justices to inspect and protect the health of prisoners; he published the findings of his prison tours in *The State of Prisons in England and Wales, with an Account of some Foreign Prisons* (1777).

3 *Michael Angelo*] Michelangelo di Lodovico Buonarroti Simoni (1475–1564), sculptor and painter of the Italian Renaissance; while also a poet and architect, Michelangelo is best known for his statues, the *Pietà* (1499) and *David* (1501–04), and for the frescoes on the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel (1508–12).

4 “most musical, most melancholy”] Quoted from John Milton, *Il Penseroso*, line 62; also the subject of lines 13–39 of Coleridge's “The Nightingale.”



free himself from the shirt of Nessus.<sup>1</sup> The old traveller's son might have died by disease.

Each ballad is a tale of woe. The style and versification are those of our ancient ditties: but much polished, and more constantly excellent. In old songs, we have only a fine line or stanza now and then; here we meet with few that are feeble:—but it is *poesie larmoyante*.<sup>2</sup> The author is more plaintive than Gray himself.

*The Complaint of a forsaken Indian Woman*: another tale of woe! of the most afflicting and harrowing kind. The want of humanity here falls not on wicked Europeans, but on the innocent Indian savages, who enjoy unlimited freedom and liberty, unbridled by kings, magistrates, or laws.

*The Convict*. What a description! and what misplaced commiseration, on one condemned by the laws of his country, which he had confessedly violated! We do not comprehend the drift of lavishing that tenderness and compassion on a criminal, which should be reserved for virtue in unmerited misery and distress, suffering untimely death from accident, injustice, or disease.

*Lines written near Tintern Abbey*.—The reflections of no common mind; poetical, beautiful, and philosophical: but somewhat tinctured with gloomy, narrow, and unsociable ideas of seclusion from the commerce of the world: as if men were born to live in woods and wilds, unconnected with each other! Is it not to education and the culture of the mind that we owe the raptures which the author so well describes, as arising from the view of beautiful scenery, and sublime objects of nature enjoyed in tranquillity, when contrasted with the artificial machinery and “busy hum of men” in a city? The savage sees none of the beauties which this author describes. The convenience of food and shelter, which vegetation affords him, is all his concern; he thinks not of its picturesque beauties, the course of rivers, the height of moun-

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1 *Hercules ... Nessus*] In Greco-Roman mythology, when the Centaur Nessus tried to violate Deianeira, Hercules shot him with one of his poisoned arrows. The Centaur, dying, told Deianeira to preserve the blood from his wound, for anyone wearing a garment rubbed with it would love her forever. Several years later Deianeira, fearing a rival, sent Hercules a garment smeared with the blood of Nessus, which, proving to be poisonous, killed him.

2 *poesie larmoyante*] Literally, “tearful poetry.” Burney likely is comparing the style of *Lyrical Ballads* to *comédie larmoyante*, an eighteenth-century genre of French sentimental drama, which formed a bridge between the decaying tradition of aristocratic Neoclassical tragedy and the rise of serious bourgeois drama.

tains, &c. He has no *dizzy raptures* in youth; nor does he listen in maturer age “to the still sad music of humanity.”

So much genius and originality are discovered in this publication, that we wish to see another from the same hand, written on more elevated subjects and in a more cheerful disposition.

8. [Francis Wrangham.]<sup>1</sup> *The British Critic*<sup>2</sup> 14 (October 1799): 364–69.

The attempt made in this little volume is one that meets our cordial approbation; and it is an attempt by no means unsuccessful. The endeavour of the author is to recall our poetry, from the fantastical excess of refinement, to simplicity and nature. The account of this design, and its probable effects upon modern readers, is so very sensibly given in the Introduction, that we shall insert the passage at large.

[The reviewer quotes the entirety of the Advertisement.]

We fully agree with the author, that the true notion of poetry must be sought among the poets, rather than the critics; and we will add that, unless a critic is a poet also, he will generally make but indifferent work in judging of the effusions of Genius. In the collection of poems subjoined to this introduction, we do not often find expressions that we esteem too familiar, or deficient in dignity; on the contrary, we think that in general the author has succeeded in attaining that judicious degree of simplicity, which accommodates itself with ease even to the sublime. It is not by pomp of words, but by energy of thought, that sublimity is most successfully achieved; and we infinitely prefer the simplicity, even of the most unadorned tale in the volume, to all the meretricious frippery of the *Darwinian* taste.<sup>3</sup>

The Poem of “the Ancyent Marinere,” with which the collection opens, has many excellencies, and many faults; the beginning and the end are striking and well-conducted; but the inter-

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1 *Francis Wrangham* (1769–1842), Anglican clergyman best known for his biblical epic poems and translations.

2 *The British Critic* (1793–1824) was founded to combat the reformist bias of the *Monthly*, *Critical*, and *Analytical* reviews; it espoused High Church, Tory principles.

3 *Darwinian taste*] Referring to the works of Erasmus Darwin, particularly *The Botanic Garden* (1789–91), which sought to teach the botanical theories of Carolus Linnaeus through ornate and figurative descriptive verse. See Appendices F and G, pp. 496–98 and 515–17.

mediate part is too long, and has, in some places, a kind of confusion of images, which loses all effect, from not being quite intelligible. The author, who is confidently said to be Mr. Coleridge, is not correctly versed in the old language, which he undertakes to employ. “Noises of a *swound*,” p. 9, and “broad as a *weft*,” p. 11, are both nonsensical; but the ancient style is so well imitated, while the antiquated words are so very few, that the latter might with advantage be entirely removed without any detriment to the effect of the Poem.<sup>1</sup> The opening of the Poem is admirably calculated to arrest the reader’s attention, by the well-imagined idea of the Wedding Guest, who is held to hear the tale, in spite of his efforts to escape. The beginning of the second canto, or fit,<sup>2</sup> has much merit, if we except the very unwarrantable comparison of the Sun to that which no man can conceive:—“like God’s own head,” a simile which makes a reader shudder; not with poetic feeling, but with religious disapprobation. The following passage is eminently good.

[The reviewer quotes lines 99–118.]

The conclusion, as we remarked before, is very good, particularly the idea that the Marinere has periodical fits of agony, which oblige him to relate his marvelous adventure; and this,

[Quotes lines 579–83.]

Whether the remaining poems of the volume are by Mr. Coleridge, we have not been informed; but they seem to proceed from the same mind; and in the Advertisement, the writer speaks of himself as of a single person accountable for the whole. It is therefore reasonable to conclude, that this is the fact. They all have merit, and many among them a very high rank of merit, which our feelings respecting some parts of the supposed author’s character do not authorize or incline us to deny. The Poem on the Nightingale, which is there styled a *conversational Poem*, is very good; but we do not perceive it to be more conversational than Cowper’s Task, which is the best poem in that style that our language possesses. “The Female Vagrant,” is a composition of exquisite beauty, nor is the combination of events, related in it, out of the compass of possibility; yet we perceive, with regret, the drift of the author in composing it; which is to show the worst side of civilized society, and thus to form a satire

1 *ancient style ... Poem*] Coleridge followed this advice and changed most of the anachronisms to contemporary usages when revising the poem for the 1800 edition of *Lyrical Ballads*.

2 *fit*] Also *fytte*, an archaic term for a part or section of a poem or song; a canto.

against it. But let fanciful men rail as they will at the evils which no care can always prevent, they can have no dream more wild than the supposition, that any human wisdom can possibly exclude all evils from a state which divine Providence has decreed, for reasons the most wise, to be a state of suffering and of trial. The sufferers may be changed, by infinite revolutions, but sufferers there will be, till Heaven shall interfere to change the nature of our tenure upon earth. From this beautiful Poem, partly on account of its apparent design, and partly because the loss of the connection would destroy much of its effect, we shall make no extract.

The story of "Goody Blake and Harry Gill," is founded, the Introduction tells us, "on a well-authenticated fact which happened in Warwickshire." Yet it is a miracle; and modern miracles can seldom be admitted, without some degree of credulity, or a very uncommon weight of evidence. One of the simplest stories in the book, is that entitled "We are Seven," yet he must be a very fastidious reader who will deny that it has great beauty and feeling.

The tale of "the Thorn" has many beauties; nor can we pass without notice "the Mad Mother," or the long and familiar tale of "the Idiot Boy," which, though it descends quite to common life, is animated by much interest, and told with singular felicity. One more Poem we shall particularly notice for its pathos, and shall indeed insert the whole. The imagery of it is in many instances new, and is introduced with admirable effect.

[The reviewer quotes "The Complaint of the Forsaken Indian Woman."]

The purchasers of this little volume will find that, after all we have said, there are poems, and passages of poems, which we have been obliged to pass over, that well deserve attention and commendation; nor does there appear any offensive mixture of enmity to present institutions, except in one or two instances, which are so unobtrusive as hardly to deserve notice.

9. *Naval Chronicle*<sup>1</sup> 2 (October and November 1799): 328–30, 418–20.

The author of these admirable Poems informs us in the advertisement, that the majority of them were written chiefly with a view to ascertain how far the language of conversation in the

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1 The *Naval Chronicle* was founded in 1799 and edited by Rev. James Stanier Clarke and John McArthur.

middle and lower classes of Society is adapted to the purposes of Poetry.

*The Rime of the Ancyent Marinere*, which consists of seven ballads, is written in the Style, as well as in the Spirit, of our early poets.—The argument is as follows:

[The reviewer quotes the argument of the poem.]

To an accurate observer, Superstition will generally be seen more or less prevalent in our character: it is the Weed of a religious Mind; and though it must ever wither before the clear light of reason, yet so great is our predilection for supernatural agency, that whatever has a tendency to the marvellous is readily received and liberally encouraged.

The *Lyrical Ballads* powerfully awaken this too prevailing passion, and possess a very uncommon, and singular degree of merit. We trust the author will ere long gratify the public with his name, since he promises to rank among the first of our poets; not only for the various harmony of Rhythm, but also for the bold efforts of a mind that has dared to think for itself—yet pours forth with diffidence its own original impressions in quaint but simple language.

[The reviewer then prints parts III and IV of *The Rime of the Ancyent Marinere*.]

10. *Antijacobin Review*<sup>1</sup> 5 (April 1800): 434.

This is a volume of a very different description from the above.<sup>2</sup> It has genius, taste, elegance, wit, and imagery of the most beautiful kind. “The ancyent Marinere” is an admirable “imitation of the style as well as of the spirit of the elder poets.” “The foster Mothers Tale” is pathetic, and pleasing in the extreme—“Simon Lee the old Huntsman”—“The idiot Boy,” and the Tale of “Goody Blake, and Harry Gill” are all beautiful in their kind; indeed the whole volume convinces us that the author possesses a mind at once classic and accomplished, and we, with pleasure, recommend it to the notice of our readers as a production of no ordinary merit.

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1 The *Antijacobin Review* (1798–1821) was the monthly successor to the famous conservative *Anti-Jacobin; or Weekly Examiner* (1797–98); its first editor was the satirist William Gifford.

2 *the above*] The previous review had been of *Lodon and Miranda* (1799) by Romaine Joseph Thorn.

11. [Daniel Stuart],<sup>1</sup> *Morning Post* (2 April 1800).

It has been the habit of our Paper to present our Readers with none but Original Poetry; but we have been so much captivated with the following beautiful Piece, which appears in a small volume entitled LYRICAL BALLADS, that we are tempted to transgress the rule we have laid down for ourselves. Indeed, the whole Collection, with the exception of the first Piece, which appears manifestly to have been written by a different hand, is a tribute to genuine nature.

[Stuart reprints “The Mad Mother.”]

12. [Daniel Stuart], *Courier* (7 April 1800).

The following beautiful piece of poetry is taken from a small collection called *Lyrical Ballads*. We do not hesitate to pronounce the author to be one of the first poets of the age, and we earnestly recommend them<sup>2</sup> to the earnest perusal of all our readers.

[Stuart then reprints “We Are Seven.”]

13. [Daniel Stuart], *Courier* (21 June 1800).

TO CORRESPONDENTS. It has been repeatedly asked why we have published no further extracts from the *Lyrical Ballads*, from which we some time ago took the beautiful Poem of The Mad Mother. We would continue those extracts, if it were not the rule of this Paper to give none but Original Poetry, and if the volume of *Lyrical Ballads* were not already in the hands of everyone who has a taste for Poetry. It is to be had [at] the corner of Lombard and Gracechurch-streets.

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1 *Daniel Stuart* (1766–1846), editor and proprietor of the *Morning Post* and the *Courier*, which published poems and essays by Coleridge, Wordsworth, Robert Southey, Charles Lamb, and Mary Robinson in the late 1790s.

2 *recommend them*] After reprinting “We are Seven” in this issue of the *Courier*, Stuart reprints “The Last of the Flock” on April 9 and extracts from “The Female Vagrant” on April 19.

14. *Portfolio*<sup>1</sup> 1:3 (17 January 1801): 24.

The Public may well remember reading in some of our news papers the interesting little ballads of “We are Seven” and “Goody Blake and Harry Gill.” They were extracted from LYRICAL BALLADS,<sup>2</sup> a collection remarkable for originality, simplicity, and nature, to which Mr. Wordsworth of St. John’s College, Oxford, is a principle contributor.

[The editor reprints “Simon Lee.”]

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- 1 The *Portfolio* was a Philadelphia periodical edited by Joseph Dennie (1768–1812).
  - 2 *extracted from LYRICAL BALLADS*] After reprinting “Simon Lee” in this issue of the *Portfolio*, Dennie went on to print “The Thorn” (21 March 1801); “Anecdote for Fathers” and “The Mad Mother” (18 July 1801); from vol. 2, “Ellen Irwin” and “Strange fits of passion” (5 December 1801); “The Waterfall and the Eglantine,” “Lucy Gray,” and “Andrew Jones” (19 December 1801); “The Fountain” (3 September 1803); “Song for the Wandering Jew” (10 September 1803); “A whirl-blast from behind the hill” (1 October 1803); and “The Oak and the Broom” (24 March 1804). By late in 1807 he appears to have altered his opinion of Wordsworth, perhaps influenced by negative reviews of Wordsworth’s *Poems, in Two Volumes* (1807).

Review Copy



Review Copy

LYRICAL BALLADS, 1800 EDITION

LYRICAL BALLADS,

WITH

*OTHER POEMS.*

IN TWO VOLUMES.

By W. WORDSWORTH.

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Quam nihil ad genium, Papiniane, tuum!<sup>1</sup>

VOL. I.

SECOND EDITION

*LONDON:*

PRINTED FOR T. N. LONGMAN AND O. REES,  
PATERNOSTER-RROW,  
BY BIGGS AND CO. BRISTOL.

1800.

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1 *Quam ... tuum!*] The source of this epigraph is the verse epistle to Peter Scriverius by the Dutch poet Jan Dousa the Elder (1545–1604). It was likely drawn from John Selden’s foreword to Michael Drayton’s *Poly-Olbion*, as it was reprinted in Robert Anderson’s *Works of the English Poets* (1792–95). It may be translated as “Something entirely unsuited to your taste, Papinianus.”

## PREFACE

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The First Volume of these Poems has already been submitted to general perusal. It was published, as an experiment which, I hoped, might be of some use to ascertain, how far, by fitting to metrical arrangement a selection of the real language of men in a state of vivid sensation, that sort of pleasure and that quantity of pleasure may be imparted, which a Poet may rationally endeavour to impart.

I had formed no very inaccurate estimate of the probable effect of those Poems: I flattered myself that they who should be pleased with them would read them with more than common pleasure: and on the other hand I was well aware that by those who should dislike them they would be read with more than common dislike. The result has differed from my expectation in this only, that I have pleased a greater number, than I ventured to hope I should please.

For the sake of variety and from a consciousness of my own weakness I was induced to request the assistance of a Friend,<sup>1</sup> who furnished me with the Poems of the ANCIENT MARINER, the FOSTER-MOTHER'S TALE, the NIGHTINGALE, the DUNGEON, and the Poem entitled LOVE.<sup>2</sup> I should not, however, have requested this assistance, had I not believed that the poems of my Friend would in a great measure have the same tendency as my own, and that, though there would be found a difference, there would be found no discordance in the colours of our style; as our opinions on the subject of poetry do almost entirely coincide.<sup>3</sup>

1 *Friend*] Samuel Coleridge.

2 *For ... LOVE*] Before Wordsworth decided not to include Coleridge's *Christabel*, this sentence read "For the sake of variety and from a consciousness of my own weakness I have again requested the assistance of a Friend who contributed largely to the first volume, and who has now furnished me with the long and beautiful Poem of *Christabel*, without which I should not yet have ventured to present a second volume to the public."

3 *our opinions ... entirely coincide*] Coleridge and Wordsworth's opinions diverged over time. See Wordsworth's Note to "The Ancient Mariner," added to the 1800 edition, pp. 288–89; the selections from Coleridge's *Literaria Biographia*, Appendix D, pp. 471–75; and the selections from Coleridge's correspondence, Appendix C, pp. 466–68.

Several of my Friends are anxious for the success of these Poems from a belief, that if the views, with which they were composed, were indeed realized, a class of Poetry would be produced, well adapted to interest mankind permanently, and not unimportant in the multiplicity and in the quality of its moral relations: and on this account they have advised me to prefix a systematic defence of the theory, upon which the poems were written. But I was unwilling to undertake the task, because I knew that on this occasion the Reader would look coldly upon my arguments, since I might be suspected of having been principally influenced by the selfish and foolish hope of *reasoning* him into an approbation of these particular Poems: and I was still more unwilling to undertake the task, because adequately to display my opinions and fully to enforce my arguments would require a space wholly disproportionate to the nature of a preface. For to treat the subject with the clearness and coherence, of which I believe it susceptible, it would be necessary to give a full account of the present state of the public taste in this country, and to determine how far this taste is healthy or depraved; which again could not be determined, without pointing out, in what manner language and the human mind act and react on each other, and without retracing the revolutions not of literature alone but likewise of society itself. I have therefore altogether declined to enter regularly upon this defence; yet I am sensible, that there would be some impropriety in abruptly obtruding upon the Public, without a few words of introduction, Poems so materially different from those, upon which general approbation is at present bestowed.

It is supposed, that by the act of writing in verse an Author makes a formal engagement that he will gratify certain known habits of association, that he not only thus apprizes the Reader that certain classes of ideas and expressions will be found in his book, but that others will be carefully excluded. This exponent or symbol held forth by metrical language must in different eras of literature have excited very different expectations: for example, in the age of Catullus,<sup>1</sup> Terence,<sup>2</sup> and Lucre-

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1 *Catullus*] Gaius Valerius Catullus (ca. 87–54 BCE), Roman poet whose expressions of love and hatred are generally considered the finest lyric poetry of ancient Rome.

2 *Terence*] Publius Terentius Afer (ca. 195–159 BCE), Roman comic dramatist, the author of six verse comedies that were long regarded as models of pure Latin. Terence's plays form the basis of the modern comedy of manners.

tius,<sup>1</sup> and that of Statius<sup>2</sup> or Claudian,<sup>3</sup> and in our own country, in the age of Shakespeare and Beaumont and Fletcher,<sup>4</sup> and that of Donne<sup>5</sup> and Cowley,<sup>6</sup> or Dryden,<sup>7</sup> or Pope.<sup>8</sup> I will not take upon me to determine the exact import of the promise which by the act of writing in verse an Author in the present day makes to his Reader; but I am certain it will appear to many persons that I have not fulfilled the terms of an engagement thus voluntarily contracted. I hope therefore the Reader will not censure me, if I attempt to state what I have proposed to myself to perform, and also, (as far as the limits of a preface will permit) to explain some of the chief reasons which have determined me in the choice of my purpose: that at least he may be spared any unpleasant feeling of disappointment, and that I myself may be protected from the most dishonorable accusation which can be brought against an Author, namely, that of an indolence which prevents him from endeavouring to ascertain what is his duty, or, when his duty is ascertained prevents him from performing it.

The principal object then which I proposed to myself in these

- 1 *Lucretius*] Titus Lucretius Carus (ca. 98–55 BCE), Roman poet and philosopher known for his single, long poem, *De rerum natura* [*On the Nature of Things*]. The poem is the fullest extant statement of the physical theory of the Greek philosopher Epicurus.
- 2 *Statius*] Publius Papinius Statius (ca. 45–96 AD), one of the principal Roman epic and lyric poets, best known for his occasional poems, collected under the title *Silvae* [Forests], which represent the way of life of the wealthy and fashionable classes during the reign of the emperor Domitian.
- 3 *Claudian*] Claudius Claudianus (ca. 370–404), Roman poet of panegyrics and invectives; often said to be the last poet of the classical tradition.
- 4 *Beaumont and Fletcher*] Francis Beaumont (1585–1616) and John Fletcher (1579–1625), English dramatists who, either collaboratively or separately, wrote over fifty plays.
- 5 *Donne*] John Donne (1572–1631), English poet, Anglican divine, and Dean of Saint Paul's Cathedral (1621–31).
- 6 *Cowley*] Abraham Cowley (1618–67), essayist, playwright, and metaphysical poet who adopted the Pindaric ode to English verse.
- 7 *Dryden*] John Dryden (1631–1700), English Restoration poet, dramatist, and critic; celebrated for the sharpness of his satires and the elegance of his verse.
- 8 *Pope*] Alexander Pope (1688–1744), satirist, poet, and translator of Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey*; author of *The Rape of the Lock* (1712–14), *The Dunciad* (1728), and *An Essay on Man* (1733–4).

Poems was to make the incidents of common life interesting by tracing in them, truly though not ostentatiously, the primary laws of our nature: chiefly as far as regards the manner in which we associate ideas in a state of excitement.<sup>1</sup> Low and rustic life was generally chosen because in that situation 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 situation our elementary feelings exist 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 situation the passions of men are incorporated with the beautiful and permanent forms of nature. The language too of these men is adopted (purified indeed from what appear 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;<sup>2</sup> 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 unelaborated expressions. Accordingly such a language 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 honour upon themselves and their art in proportion as they separate themselves from the sympathies of men, and indulge in arbitrary and capricious habits of

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- 1 *associate ... excitement*] Referring to the work of David Hartley (1705–57), English physician and philosopher who developed associationism in his *Observations on Man* (1749). Wordsworth may have also taken the concept from Erasmus Darwin's *Zoönomia* (1794–96), which he read in March 1798.
- 2 *The language ... derived*] In *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres* (1783), which Wordsworth read in February 1798, Scottish divine and rhetorician Hugh Blair (1718–1800) argued that language depended in its primitive state on a natural relation between words and objects. What Blair described as natural expression, therefore, derived from a closeness to nature in the primitive social state.

expression in order to furnish food for fickle tastes and fickle appetites of their own creation.\*

I cannot be insensible of the present outcry against the triviality and meanness both of thought and language, which some of my contemporaries have occasionally introduced into their metrical compositions; and I acknowledge that this defect where it exists, is more dishonorable to the Writer's own character than false refinement or arbitrary innovation, though I should contend at the same time that it is far less pernicious in the sum of its consequences. From such verses the Poems in these volumes will be found distinguished at least by one mark of difference, that each of them has a worthy *purpose*. Not that I mean to say, that I always began to write with a distinct purpose formally conceived; but I believe that my habits of meditation have so formed my feelings, as that my descriptions of such objects as strongly excite those feelings, will be found to carry along with them a *purpose*. If in this opinion I am mistaken I can have little right to the name of a Poet. For all good poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings; but though this be true, Poems to which any value can be attached, were never produced on any variety of subjects but by a man who being possessed of more than usual organic sensibility had also thought long and deeply. For our continued influxes of feeling are modified and directed by our thoughts, which are indeed the representatives of all our past feelings; and as by contemplating the relation of these general representatives to each other, we discover what is really important to men, so by the repetition and continuance of this act feelings connected with important subjects will be nourished, till at length, if we be originally possessed of much organic sensibility, such habits of mind will be produced that by obeying blindly and mechanically the impulses of those habits we shall describe objects and utter sentiments of such a nature and in such connection with each other, that the understanding of the being to whom we address ourselves, if he be in a healthful state of association, must necessarily be in some degree enlightened, his taste exalted, and his affections ameliorated.

I have said that each of these poems has a purpose. I have also informed my Reader what this purpose will be found principally to be: namely to illustrate the manner in which our feelings and

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\* It is worth while here to observe that the affecting parts of Chaucer are almost always expressed in language pure and universally intelligible even to this day. [Wordsworth's note.]

ideas are associated in a state of excitement. But speaking in less general language, it is to follow the fluxes and refluxes of the mind when agitated by the great and simple affections of our nature. This object I have endeavoured in these short essays to attain by various means; by tracing the maternal passion through many of its more subtle windings, as in the poems of the **IDIOT BOY** and the **MAD MOTHER**; by accompanying the last struggles of a human being at the approach of death, cleaving in solitude to life and society, as in the Poem of the **FORSAKEN INDIAN**; by shewing, as in the Stanzas entitled **WE ARE SEVEN**, the perplexity and obscurity which in childhood attend our notion of death, or rather our utter inability to admit that notion; or by displaying the strength of fraternal, or to speak more philosophically, of moral attachment when early associated with the great and beautiful objects of nature, as in **THE BROTHERS**; or, as in the Incident of **SIMON LEE**, by placing my Reader in the way of receiving from ordinary moral sensations another and more salutary impression than we are accustomed to receive from them. It has also been part of my general purpose to attempt to sketch characters under the influence of less impassioned feelings, as in the **OLD MAN TRAVELLING**, **THE TWO THIEVES**, &c. characters of which the elements are simple, belonging rather to nature than to manners, such as exist now and will probably always exist, and which from their constitution may be distinctly and profitably contemplated. I will not abuse the indulgence of my Reader by dwelling longer upon this subject; but it is proper that I should mention one other circumstance which distinguishes these Poems from the popular Poetry of the day; it is this, that the feeling therein developed gives importance to the action and situation and not the action and situation to the feeling. My meaning will be rendered perfectly intelligible by referring my Reader to the Poems entitled **POOR SUSAN** and the **CHILDLESS FATHER**, particularly to the last Stanza of the latter Poem.

I will not suffer a sense of false modesty to prevent me from asserting, that I point my Reader's attention to this mark of distinction far less for the sake of these particular Poems than from the general importance of the subject. The subject is indeed important! For the human mind is capable of excitement without the application of gross and violent stimulants; and he must have a very faint perception of its beauty and dignity who does not know this, and who does not further know that one being is elevated above another in proportion as he possesses this capability.



It has therefore appeared to me that to endeavour to produce or enlarge this capability is one of the best services in which, at any period, a Writer can be engaged; but this service, excellent at all times, is especially so at the present day. For a multitude of causes unknown to former times are now acting with a combined force to blunt the discriminating powers of the mind, and unfitting it for all voluntary exertion to reduce it to a state of almost savage torpor. The most effective of these causes are the great national events which are daily taking place, and the encreasing accumulation of men in cities, where the uniformity of their occupations produces a craving for extraordinary incident which the rapid communication of intelligence hourly gratifies. To this tendency of life and manners the literature and theatrical exhibitions of the country have conformed themselves. The invaluable works of our elder writers, I had almost said the works of Shakespeare and Milton, are driven into neglect by frantic novels, sickly and stupid German Tragedies, and deluges of idle and extravagant stories in verse. —When I think upon this degrading thirst after outrageous stimulation I am almost ashamed to have spoken of the feeble effort with which I have endeavoured to counteract it; and reflecting upon the magnitude of the general evil, I should be oppressed with no dishonorable melancholy, had I not a deep impression of certain inherent and indestructible qualities of the human mind, and likewise of certain powers in the great and permanent objects that act upon it which are equally inherent and indestructible; and did I not further add to this impression a belief that the time is approaching when the evil will be systematically opposed by men of greater powers and with far more distinguished success.

Having dwelt thus long on the subjects and aim of these Poems, I shall request the Reader's permission to apprise him of a few circumstances relating to their *style*, in order, among other reasons, that I may not be censured for not having performed what I never attempted. Except in a very few instances the Reader will find no personifications of abstract ideas in these volumes, not that I mean to censure such personifications: they may be well fitted for certain sorts of composition, but in these Poems I propose to myself to imitate, and, as far as possible, to adopt the very language of men, and I do not find that such personifications make any regular or natural part of that language. I wish to keep my Reader in the company of flesh and blood, persuaded that by so doing I shall interest him. Not but that I believe that others who pursue a different track may interest him like-

wise: I do not interfere with their claim, I only wish to prefer a different claim of my own. There will also be found in these volumes little of what is usually called poetic diction;<sup>1</sup> I have taken as much pains to avoid it as others ordinarily take to produce it; this I have done for the reason already alleged, to bring my language near to the language of men, and further, because the pleasure which I have proposed to myself to impart is of a kind very different from that which is supposed by many persons to be the proper object of poetry. I do not know how without being culpably particular I can give my Reader a more exact notion of the style in which I wished these poems to be written than by informing him that I have at all times endeavoured to look steadily at my subject, consequently I hope it will be found that there is in these Poems little falsehood of description, and that my ideas are expressed in language fitted to their respective importance. Something I must have gained by this practice, as it is friendly to one property of all good poetry, namely good sense; but it has necessarily cut me off from a large portion of phrases and figures of speech which from father to son have long been regarded as the common inheritance of Poets. I have also thought it expedient to restrict myself still further, having abstained from the use of many expressions, in themselves proper and beautiful, but which have been foolishly repeated by bad Poets till such feelings of disgust are connected with them as it is scarcely possible by any art of association to overpower.

If in a Poem there should be found a series of lines, or even a single line, in which the language, though naturally arranged and according to the strict laws of metre, does not differ from that of prose, there is a numerous class of critics who, when they stumble upon these prosaisms as they call them, imagine that they have made a notable discovery, and exult over the Poet as over a man ignorant of his own profession. Now these men would establish a canon of criticism which the Reader will conclude he must utterly reject if he wishes to be pleased with these volumes. And it would be a most easy task to prove to him 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

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1 *poetic diction*] See Wordsworth's 1802 note, "by what is usually called Poetic Diction," Appendix A, pp. 425–29.

of this assertion might be demonstrated by innumerable passages from almost all the poetical writings, even of Milton himself. I have not space for much quotation; but, to illustrate the subject in a general manner, I will here adduce a short composition of Gray,<sup>1</sup> who was at the head of those who by their reasonings have attempted to widen the space of separation betwixt Prose and Metrical composition, and was more than any other man curiously elaborate in the structure of his own poetic diction.

In vain to me the smiling mornings shine,  
 And reddening Phoebus<sup>2</sup> lifts his golden fire:  
 The birds in vain their amorous descant join,  
 Or chearful 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 tribute 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.*

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.

Is there then, it will be asked, no essential difference between the language of prose and metrical composition? I answer that there neither is nor can be any essential difference. We are fond of tracing the resemblance between Poetry and Painting, and, accordingly, we call them Sisters:<sup>3</sup> but where shall we find bonds

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1 *composition of Gray*] Thomas Gray (1716–71), English poet famous for the polish and melancholy sensibility of his lyric poems, particularly “Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard.” Wordsworth here quotes Gray’s “Sonnet on the Death of Mr. Richard West” (1768).

2 *Phoebus*] I.e., Apollo, Greek and Roman god of intellect, arts, prophecy, healing, and light.

3 *Poetry and Painting ... Sisters*] Two works informing Wordsworth’s thinking in this passage are James Beattie’s *Essays: On Poetry and Music* (1776) and Erasmus Darwin’s *The Loves of the Plants* (1789). See Appendix F, pp. 495–96 and 496–98.

of connection sufficiently strict to typify the affinity betwixt metrical and prose composition? They both speak by and to the same organs; the bodies in which both of them are clothed may be said to be of the same substance, their affections are kindred and almost identical, not necessarily differing even in degree; Poetry\* sheds no tears “such as Angels weep,”<sup>1</sup> but natural and human tears; she can boast of no celestial Ichor<sup>2</sup> that distinguishes her vital juices from those of prose; the same human blood circulates through the veins of them both.<sup>3</sup>

If it be affirmed that rhyme and metrical arrangement of themselves constitute a distinction which overturns what I have been saying on the strict affinity of metrical language with that of prose, and paves the way for other distinctions which the mind voluntarily admits, I answer that the distinction of rhyme and metre is regular and uniform, and not, like that which is produced by what is usually 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, whereas in the other the metre obeys certain laws, to which the Poet and Reader both willingly submit because they are certain, and because no interference is made by them with the passion but such as the concurring testimony of ages has shewn to heighten and improve the pleasure which co-exists with it.

It will now be proper to answer an obvious question, namely, why, professing these opinions have I written in verse? To this in the first place I reply, because, however I may have restricted myself, there is still left open to me what confessedly constitutes the most valuable object of all writing whether in prose or verse, the great and universal passions of men, the most general and interesting of their occupations, and the entire world of nature, from which I am at liberty to supply myself with endless combi-

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\* I here use the word “Poetry” (though against my own judgment) as opposed to the word Prose, and synonymous with metrical composition. But much confusion has been introduced into criticism by this contradistinction of Poetry and Prose, instead of the more philosophical one of Poetry and Science. The only strict antithesis to Prose is Metre.  
[Wordsworth’s note.]

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1 *tears ... weep*] From John Milton’s *Paradise Lost* (1667), Book I, line 620.

2 *Ichor*] In Greek mythology, the blood of the gods.

3 In 1802, Wordsworth added eight paragraphs here; see pp. 419–25.

nations of forms and imagery. Now, granting for a moment that whatever is interesting in these objects may be as vividly described in prose, why am I to be condemned if to such description I have endeavoured to superadd the charm which by the consent of all nations is acknowledged to exist in metrical language? To this it will be answered, that a very small part of the pleasure given by Poetry depends upon the metre, and that it is injudicious to write in metre unless it be accompanied with the other artificial distinctions of style with which metre is usually accompanied, and that by such deviation more will be lost from the shock which will be thereby given to the Reader's associations than will be counterbalanced by any pleasure which he can derive from the general power of numbers.<sup>1</sup> In answer to those who thus contend for the necessity of accompanying metre with certain appropriate colours of style in order to the accomplishment of its appropriate end, and who also, in my opinion, greatly under-rate the power of metre in itself, it might perhaps be almost sufficient to observe that poems are extant, written upon more humble subjects, and in a more naked and simple style than what I have aimed at, which poems have continued to give pleasure from generation to generation. Now, if nakedness and simplicity be a defect, the fact here mentioned affords a strong presumption that poems somewhat less naked and simple are capable of affording pleasure at the present day; and all that I am now attempting is to justify myself for having written under the impression of this belief.

But I might point out various causes why, when the style is manly, and the subject of some importance, words metrically arranged will long continue to impart such a pleasure to mankind as he who is sensible of the extent of that pleasure will be desirous to impart. The end of Poetry is to produce excitement in coexistence with an overbalance of pleasure. Now, by the supposition, excitement is an unusual and irregular state of the mind; ideas and feelings do not in that state succeed each other in accustomed order. But if the words by which this excitement is produced are in themselves powerful, or the images and feelings have an undue proportion of pain connected with them, there is some danger that the excitement may be carried beyond its proper bounds. Now the co-presence of something regular, something to which the mind has been accustomed when in an unexcited or a less excited state, cannot but have great efficacy in tempering and

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1 *numbers*] Metrical periods or feet in verse; the rhythm of any line of poetry.

restraining the passion by an intertexture of ordinary feeling. This may be illustrated by appealing to the Reader's own experience of the reluctance with which he comes to the re-perusal of the distressful parts of *Clarissa Harlowe*,<sup>1</sup> or the *Gamester*.<sup>2</sup> While Shakespeare's writings, in the most pathetic scenes, never act upon us as pathetic beyond the bounds of pleasure—an effect which is in a great degree to be ascribed to small, but continual and regular impulses of pleasurable surprise from the metrical arrangement.—On the other hand (what it must be allowed will much more frequently happen) if the Poet's words should be incommensurate with the passion, and inadequate to raise the Reader to a height of desirable excitement, then, (unless the Poet's choice of his metre has been grossly injudicious) in the feelings of pleasure which the Reader has been accustomed to connect with metre in general, and in the feeling, whether cheerful or melancholy, which he has been accustomed to connect with that particular movement of metre, there will be found something which will greatly contribute to impart passion to the words, and to effect the complex end which the Poet proposes to himself.

If I had undertaken a systematic defence of the theory upon which these poems are written, it would have been my duty to develop the various causes upon which the pleasure received from metrical language depends. Among the chief of these causes is to be reckoned a principle which must be well known to those who have made any of the Arts the object of accurate reflection; I mean the pleasure which the mind derives from the perception of similitude in dissimilitude. This principle is the great spring of the activity of our minds and their chief feeder. From this principle the direction of the sexual appetite, and all the passions connected with it take their origin: It is the life of our ordinary conversation; and upon the accuracy with which similitude in dissimilitude, and dissimilitude in similitude are perceived, depend our taste and our moral feelings. It would not have been a useless employment to have applied this principle to the consideration of metre, and to have shewn that metre is hence enabled to afford much pleasure, and to have pointed out in what manner that pleasure is produced. But my limits will not permit me to enter upon this subject, and I must content myself with a general summary.

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- 1 *Clarissa Harlowe*] Epistolary novel by Samuel Richardson (1689–1761), published in 1748.
  - 2 *The Gamester*] Prose tragedy by poet and dramatist Edward Moore (1712–57), first performed in 1753.

I have said that Poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings: it takes its origin from emotion recollected in tranquillity: the emotion is contemplated till by a species of reaction the tranquillity gradually disappears, and an emotion, similar to that which was before the subject of contemplation, is gradually produced, and does itself actually exist in the mind. In this mood successful composition generally begins, and in a mood similar to this it is carried on; but the emotion, of whatever kind and in whatever degree, from various causes is qualified by various pleasures, so that in describing any passions whatsoever, which are voluntarily described, the mind will upon the whole be in a state of enjoyment. Now if Nature be thus cautious in preserving in a state of enjoyment a being thus employed, the Poet ought to profit by the lesson thus held forth to him, and ought especially to take care, that whatever passions he communicates to his Reader, those passions, if his Reader's mind be sound and vigorous, should always be accompanied with an overbalance of pleasure. Now the music of harmonious metrical language, the sense of difficulty overcome, and the blind association of pleasure which has been previously received from works of rhyme or metre of the same or similar construction, all these imperceptibly make up a complex feeling of delight, which is of the most important use in tempering the painful feeling which will always be found intermingled with powerful descriptions of the deeper passions. This effect is always produced in pathetic and impassioned poetry; while in lighter compositions the ease and gracefulness with which the Poet manages his numbers are themselves confessedly a principal source of the gratification of the Reader. I might perhaps include all which it is *necessary* to say upon this subject by affirming what few persons will deny, that of two descriptions either of passions, manners, or characters, each of them equally well executed, the one in prose and the other in verse, the verse will be read a hundred times where the prose is read once. We see that Pope by the power of verse alone, has contrived to render the plainest common sense interesting, and even frequently to invest it with the appearance of passion. In consequence of these convictions I related in metre the Tale of GOODY BLAKE and HARRY GILL, which is one of the rudest of this collection. I wished to draw attention to the truth that the power of the human imagination is sufficient to produce such changes even in our physical nature as might almost appear miraculous. The truth is an important one; the fact (for it is a *fact*) is a valuable illustration of it. And I have the satisfaction of

knowing that it has been communicated to many hundreds of people who would never have heard of it, had it not been narrated as a Ballad, and in a more impressive metre than is usual in Ballads.

Having thus adverted to a few of the reasons why I have written in verse, and why I have chosen subjects from common life, and endeavoured to bring my language near to the real language of men, if I have been too minute in pleading my own cause, I have at the same time been treating a subject of general interest; and it is for this reason that I request the Reader's permission to add a few words with reference solely to these particular poems, and to some defects which will probably be found in them. I am sensible that my associations must have sometimes been particular instead of general, and that, consequently, giving to things a false importance, sometimes from diseased impulses I may have written upon unworthy subjects; but I am less apprehensive on this account, than that my language may frequently have suffered from those arbitrary connections of feelings and ideas with particular words, from which no man can altogether protect himself. Hence I have no doubt that in some instances feelings even of the ludicrous may be given to my Readers by expressions which appeared to me tender and pathetic. Such faulty expressions, were I convinced they were faulty at present, and that they must necessarily continue to be so, I would willingly take all reasonable pains to correct. But it is dangerous to make these alterations on the simple authority of a few individuals, or even of certain classes of men; for where the understanding of an Author is not convinced, or his feelings altered, this cannot be done without great injury to himself: for his own feelings are his stay and support, and if he sets them aside in one instance, he may be induced to repeat this act till his mind loses all confidence in itself and becomes utterly debilitated. To this it may be added, that the Reader ought never to forget that he is himself exposed to the same errors as the Poet, and perhaps in a much greater degree: for there can be no presumption in saying that it is not probable he will be so well acquainted with the various stages of meaning through which words have passed, or with the fickleness or stability of the relations of particular ideas to each other; and above all, since he is so much less interested in the subject, he may decide lightly and carelessly.

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<sup>1</sup> Stanza is a fair specimen.

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*."<sup>2</sup>

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. There are words in both, for example, "the Strand," and "the Town," connected with none but the most familiar ideas; 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<sup>3</sup> when it is self-evident that he is not a man.

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- 1 *Dr. Johnson*] Samuel Johnson (1709–84), English essayist, critic, poet, and author of *A Dictionary of the English Language* (1755) and the series of prefaces known as *Lives of the English Poets* (1779–81).
  - 2 "*Babes in the Wood*"] The ballad "Children in the Wood" (often called "Babes in the Wood") appeared in Thomas Percy's *Reliques of Ancient English Poetry* (1765); the lines by Samuel Johnson parody lines 113–16 as they appear in Percy's collection.
  - 3 *Newton*] Sir Isaac Newton (1642–1727), English physicist and mathematician; central proponent of "new science" and inductive reasoning in the seventeenth century.

I have one request to make of my Reader, which is, that in judging these Poems he would decide by his own feelings genuinely, and not by reflection upon what will probably be the judgment of others. How common is it to hear a person say, "I myself do not object to this style of composition or this or that expression, but to such and such classes of people it will appear mean or ludicrous." This mode of criticism so destructive of all sound unadulterated judgment is almost universal: I have therefore to request that the Reader would abide independently by his own feelings, and that if he finds himself affected he would not suffer such conjectures to interfere with his pleasure.

If an Author by any single composition has impressed us with respect for his talents, it is useful to consider this as affording a presumption, that, on other occasions where we have been displeased, he nevertheless may not have written ill or absurdly; and, further, to give him so much credit for this one composition as may induce us to review what has displeased us with more care than we should otherwise have bestowed upon it. This is not only an act of justice, but in our decisions upon poetry especially, may conduce in a high degree to the improvement of our own taste: for an *accurate* taste in Poetry and in all the other arts, as Sir Joshua Reynolds has observed, is an *acquired* talent, which can only be produced by thought and a long continued intercourse with the best models of composition. This is mentioned not with so ridiculous a purpose as to prevent the most inexperienced Reader from judging for himself, (I have already said that I wish him to judge for himself;) but merely to temper the rashness of decision, and to suggest that if Poetry be a subject on which much time has not been bestowed, the judgment may be erroneous, and that in many cases it necessarily will be so.

I know that nothing would have so effectually contributed to further the end which I have in view as to have shewn of what kind the pleasure is, and how the pleasure is produced which is confessedly produced by metrical composition essentially different from what I have here endeavoured to recommend; for the Reader will say that he has been pleased by such composition and what can I do more for him? The power of any art is limited and he will suspect that if I propose to furnish him with new friends it is only upon condition of his abandoning his old friends. Besides, as I have said, the Reader is himself conscious of the pleasure which he has received from such composition, composition to which he has peculiarly attached the endearing name of Poetry; and all men feel an habitual gratitude, and something of an honorable bigotry

for the objects which have long continued to please them: we not only wish to be pleased, but to be pleased in that particular way in which we have been accustomed to be pleased. There is a host of arguments in these feelings; and I should be the less able to combat them successfully, as I am willing to allow, that, in order entirely to enjoy the Poetry which I am recommending, it would be necessary to give up much of what is ordinarily enjoyed. But would my limits have permitted me to point out how this pleasure is produced, I might have removed many obstacles, and assisted my Reader in perceiving that the powers of language are not so limited as he may suppose; and that it is possible that poetry may give other enjoyments, of a purer, more lasting, and more exquisite nature. But this part of my subject I have been obliged altogether to omit: as it has been less my present aim to prove that the interest excited by some other kinds of poetry is less vivid, and less worthy of the nobler powers of the mind, than to offer reasons for presuming, that, if the object which I have proposed to myself were adequately attained, a species of poetry would be produced, which is genuine poetry; in its nature well adapted to interest mankind permanently, and likewise important in the multiplicity and quality of its moral relations.

From what has been said, and from a perusal of the Poems, the Reader will be able clearly to perceive the object which I have proposed to myself: he will determine how far I have attained this object; and, what is a much more important question, whether it be worth attaining; and upon the decision of these two questions will rest my claim to the approbation of the public.<sup>1</sup>

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1 In 1802, Wordsworth added a half-title page after the Preface, which includes an epigraph from Quintilian, *Instituto Oratoria*, X.vii.15: “Pectus enim id est quod disertos facit, & vis mentis; ideoque imperitus quoque” [“It is the heart and power of imagination that makes us eloquent. For this reason even the uneducated have no difficulty expressing their meaning, if only they are stirred by strong emotion”].

*EXPOSTULATION*

AND

*REPLY*<sup>1</sup>

=====

“Why, William, on that old grey stone,  
Thus for the length of half a day,  
Why, William, sit you thus alone,  
And dream your time away?

Where are your books? that light bequeath'd  
To beings else forlorn and blind!  
Up! Up! and drink the spirit breath'd  
From dead men to their kind.

You look round on your mother earth,  
As if she for no purpose bore you; 10  
As if you were her first-born birth,  
And none had lived before you!”

One morning thus, by Esthwaite lake,<sup>2</sup>  
When life was sweet, I knew not why,  
To me my good friend Matthew spake,  
And thus I made reply.

“The eye it cannot chuse but see,  
We cannot bid the ear be still;  
Our bodies feel, where'er they be,  
Against, or with our will. 20

Nor less I deem that there are powers  
Which of themselves our minds impress,  
That we can feed this mind of ours  
In a wise passiveness.

Think you, mid all this mighty sum  
Of things for ever speaking,  
That nothing of itself will come,  
But we must still be seeking?

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1 By Wordsworth.

2 *Esthwaite lake*] Located in the Lake District half a mile south of Hawks-head. See Appendix H, p. 544.

—Then ask not wherefore, here, alone,  
Conversing as I may, 30  
I sit upon this old grey stone,  
And dream my time away.”

*THE TABLES TURNED;*

*An Evening Scene, on the same Subject*<sup>1</sup>

=====

Up! up! my friend, and clear your looks,  
Why all this toil and trouble?  
Up! up! my friend, and quit your books,  
Or surely you'll grow double.

The sun, above the mountain's head,  
A freshening lustre mellow  
Through all the long green fields has spread,  
His first sweet evening yellow.

Books! 'tis a dull and endless strife,  
Come, hear the woodland linnet,<sup>2</sup> 10  
How sweet his music; on my life  
There's more of wisdom in it.

And hark! how blithe the throstle<sup>3</sup> sings!  
And he is no mean preacher;  
Come forth into the light of things,  
Let Nature be your teacher.

She has a world of ready wealth,  
Our minds and hearts to bless—  
Spontaneous wisdom breathed by health,  
Truth breathed by cheerfulness. 20

One impulse from a vernal wood  
May teach you more of man;  
Of moral evil and of good,  
Than all the sages can.

---

1 By Wordsworth.

2 *linnet*] A songbird common in Britain.

3 *throstle*] The thrush, a songbird common in Britain.

Sweet is the lore which nature brings;  
 Our meddling intellect  
 Mishapes the beauteous forms of things;  
 —We murder to dissect.

Enough of science and of art;  
 Close up these barren leaves; 30  
 Come forth, and bring with you a heart  
 That watches and receives.

*ANIMAL TRANQUILLITY & DECAY,*

*A SKETCH*<sup>1</sup>

=====

The little hedge-row birds  
 That peck along the road, regard him not.  
 He travels on, and in his face, his step,  
 His gait, is one expression; every limb,  
 His look and bending figure, all bespeak  
 A man who does not move with pain, but moves  
 With thought—He is insensibly subdued  
 To settled quiet: he is one by whom  
 All effort seems forgotten, one to whom  
 Long patience has such mild composure given, 10  
 That patience now doth seem a thing, of which  
 He hath no need. He is by nature led  
 To peace so perfect, that the young behold  
 With envy, what the old man hardly feels.  
 —I asked him whither he was bound, and what  
 The object of his journey; he replied  
 That he was going many miles to take  
 A last leave of his son, a mariner,  
 Who from a sea-fight had been brought to Falmouth,<sup>2</sup>  
 And there was lying in an hospital.<sup>3</sup> 20

---

1 By Wordsworth. 1798: The title is “Old Man Travelling; Animal Tranquillity & Decay. A Sketch.”  
 2 *Falmouth*] A port and shipbuilding center in the English county of Cornwall. See Appendix H, p. 542.  
 3 *I asked ... hospital*] In the 1798 edition, lines 17–20 are in quotation marks and spoken by the old man rather than paraphrased by the narrator. Wordsworth deleted lines 15–20 from the poem in 1815.

THE COMPLAINT  
OF A FORSAKEN  
INDIAN WOMAN<sup>1</sup>

=====

[When a Northern Indian, from sickness, is unable to continue his journey with his companions; he is left behind, covered over with Deer-skins, and is supplied with water, food, and fuel if the situation of the place will afford it. He is informed of the track which his companions intend to pursue, and if he is unable to follow, or overtake them, he perishes alone in the Desert; unless he should have the good fortune to fall in with some other Tribes of Indians. It is unnecessary to add that the females are equally, or still more, exposed to the same fate. See that very interesting work, Hearne's *Journey from Hudson's Bay to the Northern Ocean*.<sup>2</sup> In the high Northern Latitudes, as the same writer informs us, when the Northern Lights vary their position in the air, they make a rustling and a crackling noise. This circumstance is alluded to in the first stanza of the following poem.]

THE COMPLAINT, &c.

=====

Before I see another day,  
Oh let my body die away!  
In sleep I heard the northern gleams;  
The stars they were among my dreams;  
In sleep did I behold the skies,  
I saw the crackling flashes drive;  
And yet they are upon my eyes,  
And yet I am alive.  
Before I see another day,  
Oh let my body die away!

10

- 
- 1 By Wordsworth. In 1802 Wordsworth moved this poem to volume two.  
2 *Hearne ... Ocean*] Wordsworth refers to p. 203 of Samuel Hearne, *A Journey from Prince of Wales's Fort in Hudson's Bay to the Northern Ocean ... 1769-1772* (1795): "The poor woman ... came up with us several times, after having been left in the manner described. At length, poor creature! she dropped behind, and no one attempted to go back in search of her."

My fire is dead: it knew no pain;  
Yet is it dead, and I remain.  
All stiff with ice the ashes lie;  
And they are dead, and I will die.  
When I was well, I wished to live,  
For clothes, for warmth, for food, and fire;  
But they to me no joy can give,  
No pleasure now, and no desire.  
Then here contented will I lie;  
Alone I cannot fear to die. 20

Alas! you might have dragged me on  
Another day, a single one!  
Too soon despair o'er me prevailed;  
Too soon my heartless spirit failed;<sup>1</sup>  
When you were gone my limbs were stronger,  
And Oh how grievously I rue,  
That, afterwards, a little longer,  
My friends, I did not follow you!  
For strong and without pain I lay,  
My friends, when you were gone away. 30

My child! they gave thee to another,  
A woman who was not thy mother.  
When from my arms my babe they took,  
On me how strangely did he look!  
Through his whole body something ran,  
A most strange something did I see;  
—As if he strove to be a man,  
That he might pull the sledge for me.  
And then he stretched his arms, how wild!  
Oh mercy! like a little child. 40

My little joy! my little pride!  
In two days more I must have died.  
Then do not weep and grieve for me;  
I feel I must have died with thee.  
Oh wind that o'er my head art flying,

---

1 *Too soon despair ... failed*] In Robert Southey's presentation copy of the 1805 edition of *Lyrical Ballads* (British Library C.58.bb.23), lines 23–24 are altered (in what appears to be Southey's hand) to: "Too soon I yielded to despair/Why did ye listen to my prayer!"



The way my friends their course did bend,  
I should not feel the pain of dying,  
Could I with thee a message send.  
Too soon, my friends, you went away;  
For I had many things to say. 50

I'll follow you across the snow,  
You travel heavily and slow:  
In spite of all my weary pain,  
I'll look upon your tents again.  
My fire is dead, and snowy white  
The water which beside it stood;  
The wolf has come to me to-night,  
And he has stolen away my food.  
For ever left alone am I,  
Then wherefore should I fear to die? 60

My journey will be shortly run,  
I shall not see another sun,  
I cannot lift my limbs to know  
If they have any life or no.  
My poor forsaken child! if I  
For once could have thee close to me,  
With happy heart I then should die,  
And my last thoughts would happy be.  
I feel my body die away,  
I shall not see another day.<sup>1</sup> 70

THE  
*LAST OF THE FLOCK*<sup>2</sup>

=====

In distant countries I have been,  
And yet I have not often seen  
A healthy man, a man full grown,  
Weep in the public roads alone.  
But such a one, on English ground,

---

1 *My journey ... another day*] In Robert Southey's presentation copy of the 1805 edition of *Lyrical Ballads* (British Library C.58.bb.23), lines 61–70 are crossed out.

2 By Wordsworth.

And in the broad high-way, I met;  
Along the broad high-way he came,  
His cheeks with tears were wet.  
Sturdy he seemed, though he was sad;  
And in his arms a lamb he had. 10

He saw me, and he turned aside,  
As if he wished himself to hide:  
Then with his coat he made essay  
To wipe those briny tears away.  
I follow'd him, and said, "My friend  
What ails you? wherefore weep you so?"  
—"Shame on me, Sir! this lusty lamb,  
He makes my tears to flow.  
To-day I fetched him from the rock;  
He is the last of all my flock. 20

When I was young, a single man,  
And after youthful follies ran,  
Though little given to care and thought,  
Yet, so it was, a ewe I bought;  
And other sheep from her I raised,  
As healthy sheep as you might see,  
And then I married, and was rich  
As I could wish to be;  
Of sheep I numbered a full score,  
And every year increas'd my store. 30

Year after year my stock it grew,  
And from this one, this single ewe,  
Full fifty comely sheep I raised,  
As sweet a flock as ever grazed!  
Upon the mountain did they feed;  
They throve, and we at home did thrive.  
—This lusty lamb of all my store  
Is all that is alive;  
And now I care not if we die,  
And perish all of poverty. 40

Six children, Sir! had I to feed,  
Hard labour in a time of need!  
My pride was tamed, and in our grief,  
I of the parish ask'd relief.

They said I was a wealthy man;  
My sheep upon the mountain fed,  
And it was fit that thence I took  
Whereof to buy us bread:  
'Do this; how can we give to you,'  
They cried, 'what to the poor is due?' 50

I sold a sheep as they had said,  
And bought my little children bread,  
And they were healthy with their food;  
For me it never did me good.  
A woeful time it was for me,  
To see the end of all my gains,  
The pretty flock which I had reared  
With all my care and pains,  
To see it melt like snow away!  
For me it was woeful day. 60

Another still! and still another!  
A little lamb, and then its mother!  
It was a vein that never stopp'd,  
Like blood-drops from my heart they dropp'd.  
Till thirty were not left alive  
They dwindled, dwindled, one by one,  
And I may say that many a time  
I wished they all were gone:  
They dwindled one by one away;  
For me it was a woeful day. 70

To wicked deeds I was inclined,  
And wicked fancies cross'd my mind,  
And every man I chanc'd to see,  
I thought he knew some ill of me.  
No peace, no comfort could I find,  
No ease, within doors or without,  
And crazily, and wearily,  
I went my work about.  
Oft-times I thought to run away;  
For me it was a woeful day. 80

Sir! 'twas a precious flock to me,  
As dear as my own children be;  
For daily with my growing store

I loved my children more and more.  
Alas! it was an evil time;  
God cursed me in my sore distress,  
I prayed, yet every day I thought  
I loved my children less;  
And every week, and every day,  
My flock, it seemed to melt away. 90

They dwindled, Sir, sad sight to see!  
From ten to five, from five to three,  
A lamb, a weather,<sup>1</sup> and a ewe;  
And then at last, from three to two;  
And of my fifty, yesterday  
I had but only one,  
And here it lies upon my arm,  
Alas! and I have none;  
To-day I fetched it from the rock;  
It is the last of all my flock.” 100

LINES

*Left upon a seat in a YEW-TREE, which stands near the  
Lake of ESTHWAITE, on a desolate part of the shore,  
yet commanding a beautiful prospect<sup>2</sup>*

=====

—Nay, Traveller! rest. This lonely yew-tree stands  
Far from all human dwelling: what if here  
No sparkling rivulet spread the verdant herb;  
What if these barren boughs the bee not loves;  
Yet, if the wind breathe soft, the curling waves,  
That break against the shore, shall lull thy mind  
By one soft impulse saved from vacancy.

—————Who he was  
That piled these stones, and with the mossy sod  
First covered o'er and taught this aged tree 10  
With its dark arms to form a circling bower,

---

1 *weather*] Or “wether,” a castrated male sheep.

2 By Wordsworth.

I well remember.—He was one who owned  
 No common soul. In youth by science nursed  
 And led by nature into a wild scene  
 Of lofty hopes, he to the world went forth,  
 A favored being, knowing no desire  
 Which genius did not hallow,<sup>1</sup> 'gainst the taint  
 Of dissolute tongues, and jealousy, and hate  
 And scorn, against all enemies prepared,  
 All but neglect. The world, for so it thought, 20  
 Owed him no service: he was like a plant  
 Fair to the sun, the darling of the winds,  
 But hung with fruit which no one, that passed by,  
 Regarded,<sup>2</sup> and, his spirit damped at once,  
 With indignation did he turn away  
 And with the food of pride sustained his soul  
 In solitude.—Stranger! these gloomy boughs  
 Had charms for him; and here he loved to sit,  
 His only visitants a stragglng sheep,  
 The stone-chat, or the glancing sand-piper; 30  
 And on these barren rocks, with juniper,  
 And heath, and thistle, thinly sprinkled o'er,  
 Fixing his downcast eye, he many an hour  
 A morbid pleasure nourished, tracing here  
 An emblem of his own unfruitful life:  
 And lifting up his head, he then would gaze  
 On the more distant scene; how lovely 'tis  
 Thou seest, and he would gaze till it became  
 Far lovelier, and his heart could not sustain  
 The beauty still more beauteous. Nor, that time 40  
 When Nature had subdued him to herself<sup>3</sup>  
 Would he forget those beings, to whose minds,  
 Warm from the labours of benevolence,  
 The world, and man himself, appeared a scene  
 Of kindred loveliness: then he would sigh  
 With mournful joy, to think that others felt  
 What he must never feel: and so, lost man!  
 On visionary views would fancy feed,  
 Till his eye streamed with tears. In this deep vale  
 He died, this seat his only monument. 50

1 *In youth ... not hallow*] 1798: "In youth, by genius nurs'd,/And big with lofty views, he to the world/Went forth, pure in his heart,"

2 *The world ... Regarded*] 1798: not included.

3 *When Nature ... herself*] 1798: not included.

If thou be one whose heart the holy forms  
Of young imagination have kept pure,  
Stranger! henceforth be warned; and know, that pride,  
Howe'er disguised in its own majesty,  
Is littleness; that he, who feels contempt  
For any living thing, hath faculties  
Which he has never used; that thought with him  
Is in its infancy. The man, whose eye  
Is ever on himself, doth look on one,  
The least of nature's works, one who might move                   60  
The wise man to that scorn which wisdom holds  
Unlawful, ever. O, be wiser thou!  
Instructed that true knowledge leads to love,  
True dignity abides with him alone  
Who, in the silent hour of inward thought,  
Can still suspect, and still revere himself,  
In lowliness of heart.

THE

*FOSTER-MOTHER's TALE,*

*A Narration in Dramatic Blank Verse*<sup>1</sup>

=====

But that entrance, Mother!<sup>2</sup>

FOSTER-MOTHER

Can no one hear? It is a perilous tale!

MARIA

No one.

FOSTER-MOTHER

My husband's father told it me,  
Poor old Leoni!—Angels rest his soul!  
He was a woodman, and could fell and saw

---

1 By Coleridge; from the play *Osorio*, composed 1797 and revised as *Remorse*, which debuted at the Drury Lane Theatre in 1813.

2 *But that entrance, Mother!*] The 1798 version begins with sixteen additional lines; see p. 73.

With lusty arm. You know that huge round beam  
 Which props the hanging wall of the old chapel?  
 Beneath that tree, while yet it was a tree  
 He found a baby wrapt in mosses, lined  
 With thistle beards, and such small locks of wool 10  
 As hang on brambles. Well, he brought him home,  
 And reared him at the then Lord Velez' cost.  
 And so the babe grew up a pretty boy,  
 A pretty boy, but most unteachable—  
 And never learnt a prayer, nor told a bead,  
 But knew the names of birds, and mocked their notes,  
 And whistled, as he were a bird himself:<sup>1</sup>  
 And all the autumn 'twas his only play  
 To get the seeds of wild flowers, and to plant them  
 With earth and water, on the stumps of trees. 20  
 A Friar, who gathered simples<sup>2</sup> in the wood,  
 A grey-haired man—he loved this little boy,  
 The boy loved him—and, when the Friar taught him,  
 He soon could write with the pen: and from that time,  
 Lived chiefly at the Convent or the Castle.  
 So he became a very learned youth.  
 But Oh! poor wretch!—he read, and read, and read,  
 'Till his brain turned—and ere his twentieth year,  
 He had unlawful thoughts of many things:  
 And though he prayed, he never loved to pray 30  
 With holy men, nor in a holy place—  
 But yet his speech, it was so soft and sweet,  
 The late Lord Velez ne'er was wearied with him.  
 And once, as by the north side of the Chapel  
 They stood together, chained in deep discourse,  
 The earth heaved under them with such a groan,  
 That the wall tottered, and had well-nigh fallen  
 Right on their heads. My Lord was sorely frightened;  
 A fever seized him, and he made confession  
 Of all the heretical and lawless talk 40  
 Which brought this judgment: so the youth was seized  
 And cast into that cell. My husband's father

1 *But ... himself*] Wordsworth suggests a similar relationship between nature, bird-mimicry, and a young boy in “There was a boy.” See p. 299. See also the excerpt from Joanna Baillie’s *De Monfort* in Appendix G, pp. 526–27.

2 *simples*] Medicinal plants or herbs.

Sobbed like a child—it almost broke his heart:  
And once as he was working in the cellar,  
He heard a voice distinctly; 'twas the youth's  
Who sang a doleful song about green fields,  
How sweet it were on lake or wild savannah,  
To hunt for food, and be a naked man,  
And wander up and down at liberty.<sup>1</sup>

Leoni doted on the youth, and now 50  
His love grew desperate; and defying death,  
He made that cunning entrance I described:  
And the young man escaped.

### MARIA

'Tis a sweet tale.<sup>2</sup>  
And what became of him?

### FOSTER-MOTHER

He went on ship-board  
With those bold voyagers, who made discovery  
Of golden lands. Leoni's younger brother  
Went likewise, and when he returned to Spain,  
He told Leoni, that the poor mad youth,  
Soon after they arrived in that new world, 60  
In spite of his dissuasion, seized a boat,  
And all alone, set sail by silent moonlight  
Up a great river, great as any sea,  
And ne'er was heard of more: but 'tis supposed,  
He lived and died among the savage men.

---

1 *How ... liberty*] Most likely referring to the happy state of the “noble savage,” a concept popularized by Jean-Jacques Rousseau in the second part of his *Discourse on the Origin of Inequality* (1755).

2 *'Tis a sweet tale*] The 1798 edition adds two lines here: “Such as would lull a listening child to sleep,/His rosy face besoiled with unwiped tears.—”



GOODY BLAKE & HARRY GILL,

A TRUE STORY<sup>1</sup>

=====

Oh! what's the matter? what's the matter?  
What is't that ails young Harry Gill?  
That evermore his teeth they chatter,  
Chatter, chatter, chatter still.  
Of waistcoats Harry has no lack,  
Good duffle grey, and flannel fine;  
He has a blanket on his back,  
And coats enough to smother nine.

In March, December, and in July,  
'Tis all the same with Harry Gill; 10  
The neighbours tell, and tell you truly,  
His teeth they chatter, chatter still.  
At night, at morning, and at noon,  
'Tis all the same with Harry Gill;  
Beneath the sun, beneath the moon,  
His teeth they chatter, chatter still.

Young Harry was a lusty drover,<sup>2</sup>  
And who so stout of limb as he?  
His cheeks were red as ruddy clover,  
His voice was like the voice of three. 20  
Auld Goody Blake was old and poor,<sup>3</sup>  
Ill fed she was, and thinly clad;  
And any man who pass'd her door,  
Might see how poor a hut she had.

All day she spun in her poor dwelling,  
And then her three hours' work at night!  
Alas! 'twas hardly worth the telling,  
It would not pay for candle-light.

---

1 By Wordsworth. The story on which the poem is based first appeared in Erasmus Darwin's *Zoönomia*; or, *The Laws of Organic Life* (1794–96). See Appendix F, p. 500.

2 *drover*] One who drives cattle or sheep to distant markets.

3 *Auld*] "Auld" is an archaic form of "Old"; it functions in this line both as adjective and as rustic title, mirroring "Young Harry" in line 17.

—This woman dwelt in Dorsetshire,<sup>1</sup>  
 Her hut was on a cold hill-side, 30  
 And in that country<sup>2</sup> coals are dear,  
 For they come far by wind and tide.

By the same fire to boil their pottage,<sup>3</sup>  
 Two poor old dames as I have known,  
 Will often live in one small cottage,  
 But she, poor woman, dwelt alone.  
 'Twas well enough when summer came,  
 The long, warm, lightsome summer-day,  
 Then at her door the *canty*<sup>4</sup> dame  
 Would sit, as any linnet gay. 40

But when the ice our streams did fetter,  
 Oh! then how her old bones would shake!  
 You would have said, if you had met her,  
 'Twas a hard time for Goody Blake.  
 Her evenings then were dull and dead;  
 Sad case it was, as you may think,  
 For very cold to go to bed,  
 And then for cold not sleep a wink.

Oh joy for her! whene'er in winter  
 The winds at night had made a rout, 50  
 And scatter'd many a lusty splinter,  
 And many a rotten bough about.  
 Yet never had she, well or sick,  
 As every man who knew her says,  
 A pile before hand, wood or stick,  
 Enough to warm her for three days.

Now when the frost was past enduring,  
 And made her poor old bones to ache,  
 Could any thing be more alluring,  
 Than an old hedge<sup>5</sup> to Goody Blake? 60

1 *Dorsetshire*] Erasmus Darwin's *Zoönomia* places the incident in Warwickshire and makes no mention of the price of fuel.  
 2 *country*] "County" in this context.  
 3 *pottage*] Thick soup.  
 4 *canty*] Cheerful, talkative.  
 5 *hedge*] A row of bushes or low trees (usually hawthorn or privet) planted closely and pruned to form a natural fence between fields or between field and road.

And now and then, it must be said,  
When her old bones were cold and chill,  
She left her fire, or left her bed,  
To seek the hedge of Harry Gill.

Now Harry he had long suspected  
This trespass of old Goody Blake,  
And vow'd that she should be detected,  
And he on her would vengeance take.  
And oft from his warm fire he'd go,  
And to the fields his road would take, 70  
And there, at night, in frost and snow,  
He watch'd to seize old Goody Blake.

And once, behind a rick<sup>1</sup> of barley,  
Thus looking out did Harry stand;  
The moon was full and shining clearly,  
And crisp with frost the stubble land.  
—He hears a noise—he's all awake—  
Again?—on tip-toe down the hill  
He softly creeps—'Tis Goody Blake,  
She's at the hedge of Harry Gill. 80

Right glad was he when he beheld her;  
Stick after stick did Goody pull,  
He stood behind a bush of elder,  
Till she had filled her apron full.  
When with her load she turned about,  
The bye-road<sup>2</sup> back again to take,  
He started forward with a shout,  
And sprang upon poor Goody Blake.

And fiercely by the arm he took her,  
And by the arm he held her fast, 90  
And fiercely by the arm he shook her,  
And cried, "I've caught you then at last!"  
Then Goody, who had nothing said,  
Her bundle from her lap let fall;  
And kneeling on the sticks, she pray'd  
To God that is the judge of all.

---

1 *rick*] A regularly constructed stack.

2 *bye-road*] An unfrequented road.

She pray'd, her wither'd hand uprearing,  
While Harry held her by the arm—  
“God! who art never out of hearing,  
O may he never more be warm!” 100  
The cold, cold moon above her head,  
Thus on her knees did Goody pray,  
Young Harry heard what she had said,  
And icy-cold he turned away.

He went complaining all the morrow  
That he was cold and very chill:  
His face was gloom, his heart was sorrow,  
Alas! that day for Harry Gill!  
That day he wore a riding-coat,  
But not a whit the warmer he: 110  
Another was on Thursday brought,  
And ere the Sabbath he had three.

'Twas all in vain, a useless matter,  
And blankets were about him pinn'd;  
Yet still his jaws and teeth they clatter,  
Like a loose casement in the wind.  
And Harry's flesh it fell away;  
And all who see him say 'tis plain,  
That, live as long as live he may,  
He never will be warm again. 120

No word to any man he utters,  
A-bed or up, to young or old;  
But ever to himself he mutters,  
“Poor Harry Gill is very cold.”  
A-bed or up, by night or day;  
His teeth they chatter, chatter still.  
Now think, ye farmers all, I pray,  
Of Goody Blake and Harry Gill.

*THE THORN*<sup>1</sup>

=====

I

There is a thorn; it looks so old,  
In truth you'd find it hard to say,  
How it could ever have been young,  
It looks so old and grey.  
Not higher than a two years' child  
It stands erect this aged thorn;  
No leaves it has, no thorny points;  
It is a mass of knotted joints,  
A wretched thing forlorn.  
It stands erect, and like a stone 10  
With lichens it is overgrown.

II

Like rock or stone, it is o'ergrown  
With lichens to the very top,  
And hung with heavy tufts of moss,  
A melancholy crop:  
Up from the earth these mosses creep,  
And this poor thorn they clasp it round  
So close, you'd say that they were bent  
With plain and manifest intent,  
To drag it to the ground; 20  
And all had join'd in one endeavour  
To bury this poor thorn for ever.

III

High on a mountain's highest ridge,  
Where oft the stormy winter gale  
Cuts like a scythe, while through the clouds  
It sweeps from vale to vale;  
Not five yards from the mountain-path,  
This thorn you on your left espy;

---

1 By Wordsworth.

And to the left, three yards beyond,  
You see a little muddy pond 30  
Of water, never dry;  
I've measured it from side to side:  
'Tis three feet long, and two feet wide.

IV

And close beside this aged thorn,  
There is a fresh and lovely sight,  
A beauteous heap, a hill of moss,  
Just half a foot in height.  
All lovely colours there you see,  
All colours that were ever seen,  
And mossy network too is there, 40  
As if by hand of lady fair  
The work had woven been,  
And cups,<sup>1</sup> the darlings of the eye,  
So deep is their vermilion dye.

V

Ah me! what lovely tints are there!  
Of olive green and scarlet bright,  
In spikes, in branches, and in stars,  
Green, red, and pearly white.  
This heap of earth o'ergrown with moss,  
Which close beside the thorn you see, 50  
So fresh in all its beauteous dyes,  
Is like an infant's grave in size  
As like as like can be:  
But never, never any where,  
An infant's grave was half so fair.

VI

Now would you see this aged thorn,  
This pond and beauteous hill of moss,  
You must take care and chuse your time  
The mountain when to cross.

---

1 *cups*] Blossoms.

For oft there sits, between the heap 60  
That's like an infant's grave in size  
And that same pond of which I spoke,  
A woman in a scarlet cloak,  
And to herself she cries,  
"Oh misery! oh misery!  
Oh woe is me! oh misery!"

VII

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; 70  
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!"

VIII

"Now wherefore thus, by day and night,  
In rain, in tempest, and in snow  
Thus to the dreary mountain-top 80  
Does this poor woman go?  
And why sits she beside the thorn  
When the blue day-light's in the sky,  
Or when the whirlwind's on the hill,  
Or frosty air is keen and still,  
And wherefore does she cry?—  
Oh wherefore? wherefore? tell me why  
Does she repeat that doleful cry?"

IX

I cannot tell; I wish I could;  
For the true reason no one knows, 90  
But if you'd gladly view the spot,  
The spot to which she goes;  
The heap that's like an infant's grave,

The pond—and thorn, so old and grey,  
Pass by her door—'tis seldom shut—  
And if you see her in her hut,  
Then to the spot away!—  
I never heard of such as dare  
Approach the spot when she is there.

X

“But wherefore to the mountain-top, 100  
Can this unhappy woman go,  
Whatever star is in the skies,  
Whatever wind may blow?”  
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. 110

XI

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<sup>1</sup>)  
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 120  
Whene'er she thought of Stephen Hill.

---

1 *Martha Ray*] As with Liswyn Farm in “Anecdote for Fathers,” Martha Ray of “The Thorn” has a real-life counterpart in the mistress of the John Montagu, Forth Earl of Sandwich; Martha Ray was murdered 7 April 1779 by a rejected suitor, James Hackman. Wordsworth's friend Basil Montagu (1770–1851) was the illegitimate son of the Earl and Martha Ray; Wordsworth's ward Basil Montagu Jr. was their grandson.



## XII

And they had fix'd 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 woful day  
 A cruel, cruel fire, they say,  
 Into her bones was sent: 130  
 It dried her body like a cinder,  
 And almost turn'd her brain to tinder.

## XIII

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 140  
 From her exceeding pain.  
 Oh me! ten thousand times I'd rather  
 That he had died, that cruel father!

## XIV

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!  
 Last Christmas when we talked of this,  
 Old Farmer Simpson did maintain,  
 That in her womb the infant wrought 150  
 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.

## XV

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 160  
 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.

## XVI

And all that winter, when at night  
 The wind blew from the mountain-peak,  
 'Twas worth your while, though in the dark,  
 The church-yard path to seek:  
 For many a time and oft were heard 170  
 Cries coming from the mountain-head,  
 Some plainly living voices were,  
 And others, I've heard many swear,  
 Were voices of the dead:  
 I cannot think, whate'er they say,  
 They had to do with Martha Ray.

## XVII

But that she goes to this old thorn,  
 The thorn which I've described to you,  
 And there sits in a scarlet cloak,  
 I will be sworn is true. 180  
 For one day with my telescope,  
 To view the ocean wide and bright,  
 When to this country first I came,  
 Ere I had heard of Martha's name,  
 I climbed the mountain's height:  
 A storm came on, and I could see  
 No object higher than my knee.

## XVIII

'Twas mist and rain, and storm and rain,  
 No screen, no fence could I discover,  
 And then the wind! in faith, it was 190  
 A wind full ten times over.  
 I looked around, I thought I saw  
 A jutting crag, and off I ran,  
 Head-foremost, through the driving rain,  
 The shelter of the crag to gain,  
 And, as I am a man,  
 Instead of jutting crag, I found  
 A woman seated on the ground.

## XIX

I did not speak—I saw her face,  
 In truth it was enough for me; 200  
 I turned about and heard her cry,  
 “O misery! O misery!”  
 And there she sits, until the moon  
 Through half the clear blue sky will go,  
 And when the little breezes make  
 The waters of the pond to shake,  
 As all the country know,  
 She shudders, and you hear her cry,  
 “Oh misery! oh misery!”

## XX

“But what’s the thorn? and what’s the pond? 210  
 And what’s the hill of moss to her?  
 And what’s the creeping breeze that comes  
 The little pond to stir?”  
 I cannot tell; but some will say  
 She hanged her baby on the tree,  
 Some say she drowned it in the pond,  
 Which is a little step beyond,  
 But all and each agree,  
 The little babe was buried there,  
 Beneath that hill of moss so fair. 220

XXI

I've heard, the moss is spotted red  
With drops of that poor infant's blood;  
But kill a new-born infant thus!  
I do not think she could.  
Some say, if to the pond you go,  
And fix on it a steady view,  
The shadow of a babe you trace,  
A baby and a baby's face,  
And that it looks at you;  
Whene'er you look on it, 'tis plain 230  
The baby looks at you again.

XXII

And some had sworn an oath that she  
Should be to public justice brought;  
And for the little infant's bones  
With spades they would have sought.  
But then the beauteous hill of moss  
Before their eyes began to stir;  
And for full fifty yards around,  
The grass it shook upon the ground;  
But all do still aver 240  
The little babe is buried there,  
Beneath that hill of moss so fair.

XXIII

I cannot tell how this may be,  
But plain it is, the thorn is bound  
With heavy tufts of moss, that strive  
To drag it to the ground.  
And this I know, full many a time,  
When she was on the mountain high,  
By day, and in the silent night,  
When all the stars shone clear and bright, 250  
That I have heard her cry,  
"Oh misery! oh misery!  
O woe is me! oh misery!"

WE ARE SEVEN<sup>1</sup>

=====

A simple child, dear brother Jim,  
That lightly draws its breath,  
And feels its life in every limb,  
What should it know of death?

I met a little cottage girl,  
She was eight years old, she said;  
Her hair was thick with many a curl  
That cluster'd round her head.

She had a rustic, woodland air,  
And she was wildly clad; 10  
Her eyes were fair, and very fair,  
—Her beauty made me glad.

“Sisters and brothers, little maid,  
How many may you be?”  
“How many? seven in all,” she said,  
And wondering looked at me.

“And where are they, I pray you tell?”  
She answered, “Seven are we,  
And two of us at Conway<sup>2</sup> dwell,  
And two are gone to sea. 20

Two of us in the church-yard lie,  
My sister and my brother,  
And in the church-yard cottage, I  
Dwell near them with my mother.”

“You say that two at Conway dwell,  
And two are gone to sea,  
Yet you are seven; I pray you tell  
Sweet Maid, how this may be?”

---

1 By Wordsworth.

2 *Conway*] A town on the Conway River estuary on the Northern coast of Wales. See Appendix H, p. 542.

Then did the little Maid reply,  
“Seven boys and girls are we; 30  
Two of us in the church-yard lie,  
Beneath the church-yard tree.”

“You run about, my little maid,  
Your limbs they are alive;  
If two are in the church-yard laid,  
Then ye are only five.”

“Their graves are green, they may be seen,”  
The little Maid replied,  
“Twelve steps or more from my mother’s door,  
And they are side by side. 40

My stockings there I often knit,  
My ’kerchief there I hem;  
And there upon the ground I sit—  
I sit and sing to them.

And often after sunset, Sir,  
When it is light and fair,  
I take my little porringer,  
And eat my supper there.

The first that died was little Jane;  
In bed she moaning lay, 50  
Till God released her of her pain,  
And then she went away.

So in the church-yard she was laid,  
And all the summer dry,  
Together round her grave we played,  
My brother John and I.

And when the ground was white with snow,  
And I could run and slide,  
My brother John was forced to go,  
And he lies by her side.” 60

“How many are you then,” said I,  
“If they two are in Heaven?”  
The little Maiden did reply,  
“O Master! we are seven.”

“But they are dead; those two are dead!  
Their spirits are in heaven!”  
’Twas throwing words away; for still  
The little Maid would have her will,  
And said, “Nay, we are seven!”

*ANECDOTE for FATHERS,*  
*Shewing how the practice of Lying may be taught<sup>1</sup>*

=====

I have a boy of five years old,  
His face is fair and fresh to see;  
His limbs are cast in beauty’s mould,  
And dearly he loves me.

One morn we stroll’d on our dry walk,  
Our quiet house all full in view,  
And held such intermitted talk  
As we are wont to do.

My thoughts on former pleasures ran;  
I thought of Kolve’s delightful shore,<sup>2</sup> 10  
My pleasant home, when Spring began,  
A long, long year before.

A day it was when I could bear  
To think, and think, and think again;  
With so much happiness to spare,  
I could not feel a pain.

My boy was by my side, so slim  
And graceful in his rustic dress!  
And oftentimes I talked to him  
In very idleness. 20

The young lambs ran a pretty race;  
The morning sun shone bright and warm;

---

1 By Wordsworth.

2 *Kolve*] An English village on the Bristol Channel in the county of Somerset. See Appendix H, p. 542.

“Kilve,” said I, “was a pleasant place,  
And so is Liswyn farm.”<sup>1</sup>

“My little boy, which like you more,”  
I said and took him by the arm—  
“Our home by Kilve’s delightful shore,  
Or here at Liswyn farm?”

“And tell me, had you rather be,”  
I said and held him by the arm, 30  
“At Kilve’s smooth shore by the green sea,  
Or here at Liswyn farm?”

In careless mood he looked at me,  
While still I held him by the arm,  
And said, “At Kilve I’d rather be  
Than here at Liswyn farm.”

“Now, little Edward, say why so;  
My little Edward, tell me why;”  
“I cannot tell, I do not know.”  
“Why this is strange,” said I. 40

“For, here are woods and green hills warm:  
There surely must some reason be  
Why you would change sweet Liswyn farm  
For Kilve by the green sea.”

At this, my boy hung down his head,  
He blush’d with shame, nor made reply;  
And five times to the child I said,  
“Why, Edward, tell me, why?”

His head he raised—there was in sight,  
It caught his eye, he saw it plain— 50

---

1 *Liswyn farm*] Also “Llys Wen” farm. In a later note to this poem, Wordsworth explained that “The name of Liswyn farm was taken from a beautiful spot on the Wye [River].” In 1797, Coleridge, Wordsworth, and Dorothy Wordsworth visited the political radical and poet John Thelwall at Llys-Wen Farm in Wales. In 1811 the farm became the home of Percy Shelley, who chose it largely because of its ties to Thelwall. See Appendix H, p. 542.



Upon the house-top, glittering bright,  
A broad and gilded vane.

Then did the boy his tongue unlock,  
And thus to me he made reply;  
“At Kilve there was no weather-cock,  
And that’s the reason why.”

Oh dearest, dearest boy! my heart  
For better lore would seldom yearn  
Could I but teach the hundredth part  
Of what from thee I learn.

60

LINES

*Written at a small distance from my House, and sent by  
my little boy to the person to whom they are addressed<sup>1</sup>*

=====

It is the first mild day of March:  
Each minute sweeter than before,  
The red-breast sings from the tall larch<sup>2</sup>  
That stands beside our door.

There is a blessing in the air,  
Which seems a sense of joy to yield  
To the bare trees, and mountains bare,  
And grass in the green field.

My Sister! (’tis a wish of mine)  
Now that our morning meal is done,  
Make haste, your morning task resign;  
Come forth and feel the sun.

10

Edward will come with you, and pray,  
Put on with speed your woodland dress,  
And bring no book, for this one day  
We’ll give to idleness.

---

1 By Wordsworth.

2 *larch*] Coniferous tree native of the Alps but cultivated in Britain. Unlike other firs and pines, its needles turn golden in the late fall and drop off.

No joyless forms shall regulate  
Our living Calendar:  
We from to-day, my friend, will date  
The opening of the year. 20

Love, now an universal birth,  
From heart to heart is stealing,  
From earth to man, from man to earth,  
—It is the hour of feeling.

One moment now may give us more  
Than fifty years of reason;  
Our minds shall drink at every pore  
The spirit of the season.

Some silent laws our hearts may make,  
Which they shall long obey; 30  
We for the year to come may take  
Our temper from to-day.

And from the blessed power that rolls  
About, below, above;  
We'll frame the measure of our souls,  
They shall be tuned to love.

Then come, my sister! come, I pray,  
With speed put on your woodland dress,  
And bring no book; for this one day  
We'll give to idleness. 40

*THE FEMALE VAGRANT*<sup>1</sup>

=====

By Derwent's side<sup>2</sup> my Father's cottage stood,  
(The Woman thus her artless story told)  
One field, a flock, and what the neighbouring flood

---

- 1 By Wordsworth; from *Salisbury Plain*, a long poem begun in 1793 and revised several times, until finally published as *Guilt and Sorrow* (1842).
- 2 *By Derwent's side*] Derwent Water lies immediately south of Keswick in the Lake District.

Supplied, to him were more than mines of gold.  
 Light was my sleep; my days in transport roll'd:  
 With thoughtless joy I stretch'd along the shore  
 My father's nets, or from the mountain fold  
 Saw on the distant lake his twinkling oar  
 Or watch'd his lazy boat still less'ning more and more.<sup>1</sup>

My father was a good and pious man, 10  
 An honest man by honest parents bred,  
 And I believe that, soon as I began  
 To lisp, he made me kneel beside my bed,  
 And in his hearing there my prayers I said:  
 And afterwards, by my good father taught,  
 I read, and loved the books in which I read;  
 For books in every neighbouring house I sought,  
 And nothing to my mind a sweeter pleasure brought.

Can I forget what charms did once adorn  
 My garden, stored with pease, and mint, and thyme, 20  
 And rose and lily for the sabbath morn?<sup>2</sup>  
 The sabbath bells, and their delightful chime;  
 The gambols and wild freaks<sup>3</sup> at shearing time;  
 My hen's rich nest through long grass scarce espied;  
 The cowslip-gathering<sup>4</sup> at May's dewy prime;  
 The swans, that, when I sought the water-side,  
 From far to meet me came, spreading their snowy pride.

The staff I yet remember which upbore  
 The bending body of my active sire;  
 His seat beneath the honeyed sycamore 30  
 When the bees hummed, and chair by winter fire;

1 *Saw ... more*] 1798: "High o'er the cliffs I led my fleecy store,/A dizzy depth below! his boat and twinkling oar."  
 2 *And rose and lily for the sabbath morn*] The rose cross originated as a Christian symbol in the first century and symbolized the redemptive power of Christ. In medieval iconography, the lily, in the form of a *fleur-de-lis*, often represented the trinity.  
 3 *gambols and wild freaks*] Dancing or capering; also games or capricious tricks.  
 4 *cowslip-gathering*] "Cowslip" is the common name of *Primula veris*, or marsh marigold. It is gathered in the spring, and its yellow blossoms are used to make wine.

When market-morning came, the neat attire  
 With which, though bent on haste, myself I deck'd;  
 My watchful dog, whose starts of furious ire,  
 When stranger passed, so often I have check'd;  
 The red-breast known for years, which at my casement peck'd.

The suns of twenty summers danced along,—  
 Ah! little marked, how fast they rolled away:  
 Then rose a stately hall our woods among,  
 And cottage after cottage owned its sway. 40  
 No joy to see a neighbouring house, or stray  
 Through pastures not his own, the master took;  
 My Father dared his greedy wish gainsay;  
 He loved his old hereditary nook,<sup>1</sup>  
 And ill could I the thought of such sad parting brook.

But when he had refused the proffered gold,  
 To cruel injuries he became a prey,  
 Sore traversed<sup>2</sup> in whate'er he bought and sold:  
 His troubles grew upon him day by day,  
 Till all his substance fell into decay. 50  
 His little range of water was denied,\*  
 All but the bed where his old body lay,  
 All, all was seized, and weeping, side by side,  
 We sought a home where we uninjured might abide.<sup>3</sup>

Can I forget that miserable hour,  
 When from the last hill-top, my sire surveyed,  
 Peering above the trees, the steeple tower  
 That on his marriage-day sweet music made?  
 Till then he hoped his bones might there be laid,  
 Close by my mother in their native bowers: 60

---

\* Several of the Lakes in the north of England are let out to different  
 Fishermen, in parcels marked out by imaginary lines drawn from rock  
 to rock. [Wordsworth's note.]

---

1 *old hereditary nook*] See Wordsworth's 14 January 1801 letter to Charles  
 James Fox, Appendix C, pp. 459–61.

2 *traversed*] Thwarted or opposed.

3 *Then rose ... abide*] Likely drawing on chapter nine of William Godwin's  
*Caleb Williams* (1794), which Wordsworth read while rewriting *Salisbury  
 Plain*.

Bidding me trust in God, he stood and prayed,—  
 I could not pray:—through tears that fell in showers,  
 Glimmer'd our dear-loved home, alas! no longer ours!

There was a youth whom I had loved so long,  
 That when I loved him not I cannot say.  
 'Mid the green mountains many and many a song  
 We two had sung, like gladsome<sup>1</sup> birds in May.  
 When we began to tire of childish play  
 We seemed still more and more to prize each other;  
 We talked of marriage and our marriage day; 70  
 And I in truth did love him like a brother,  
 For never could I hope to meet with such another.

His father said, that to a distant town  
 He must repair, to ply the artist's<sup>2</sup> trade.  
 What tears of bitter grief till then unknown?  
 What tender vows our last sad kiss delayed!  
 To him we turned:—we had no other aid.  
 Like one revived, upon his neck I wept,  
 And her whom he had loved in joy, he said  
 He well could love in grief: his faith he kept; 80  
 And in a quiet home once more my father slept.

Four years each day with daily bread was blest,  
 By constant toil and constant prayer supplied.  
 Three lovely infants lay upon my breast;  
 And often, viewing their sweet smiles, I sighed,  
 And knew not why. My happy father died  
 When sad distress reduced the children's meal:  
 Thrice happy! that from him the grave did hide  
 The empty loom, cold hearth, and silent wheel,  
 And tears that flowed for ills which patience could not heal. 90

'Twas a hard change, an evil time was come;<sup>3</sup>  
 We had no hope, and no relief could gain.  
 But soon, with proud parade, the noisy drum  
 Beat round, to sweep the streets of want and pain.

---

1 *gladsome*] 1798: "little"

2 *Artist's*] Craftsman's or artisan's.

3 *an evil time was come*] Food shortages and low wages plagued Britain in the late eighteenth century, particularly in the 1770s and in 1794–95.

My husband's arms now only served to strain  
 Me and his children hungering in his view:  
 In such dismay my prayers and tears were vain:  
 To join those miserable men he flew;  
 And now to the sea-coast, with numbers more, we drew.

There foul neglect for months and months we bore, 100  
 Nor yet the crowded fleet its anchor stirred.  
 Green fields before us and our native shore,  
 By fever, from polluted air incurred,  
 Ravage was made, for which no knell was heard.  
 Fondly we wished, and wished away, nor knew,  
 'Mid that long sickness, and those hopes deferr'd,  
 That happier days we never more must view:  
 The parting signal<sup>1</sup> streamed, at last the land withdrew.

But from delay the summer calms were past.  
 On as we drove, the equinoctial deep 110  
 Ran mountains-high before the howling blast.<sup>2</sup>  
 We gazed with terror on the gloomy sleep  
 Of them that perished in the whirlwind's sweep,  
 Untaught that soon such anguish must ensue,  
 Our hopes such harvest of affliction reap,  
 That we the mercy of the waves should rue.  
 We reached the western world, a poor, devoted crew.

Oh! dreadful price of being to resign  
 All that is dear *in* being! better far  
 In Want's most lonely cave till death to pine, 120  
 Unseen, unheard, unwatched by any star;  
 Or in the streets and walks where proud men are,  
 Better our dying bodies to obtrude,  
 Than dog-like, wading at the heels of war,  
 Protract a curst existence, with the brood  
 That lap (their very nourishment!) their brother's blood.

The pains and plagues that on our heads came down,  
 Disease and famine, agony and fear,  
 In wood or wilderness, in camp or town,

---

1 *parting signal*] A flag flying off the ship to indicate departure.

2 *equinoctial deep ... howling blast*] The autumnal equinox, when the day and night are of equal length all over the earth and tropical storms are common in the Atlantic.

It would thy brain unsettle even to hear. 130  
 All perished—all, in one remorseless year,  
 Husband and children! one by one, by sword  
 And ravenous plague, all perished: every tear  
 Dried up, despairing, desolate, on board  
 A British ship I waked, as from a trance restored.

Peaceful as some immeasurable plain  
 By the first beams of dawning light impress'd,  
 In the calm sunshine slept the glittering main.  
 The very ocean has its hour of rest,  
 That comes not to the human mourner's breast. 140  
 Remote from man, and storms of mortal care,  
 A heavenly silence did the waves invest:  
 I looked and looked along the silent air,  
 Until it seemed to bring a joy to my despair.

Ah! how unlike those late terrific sleeps!  
 And groans, that rage of racking famine spoke:  
 The unburied dead that lay in festering heaps!  
 The breathing pestilence<sup>1</sup> that rose like smoke!  
 The shriek that from the distant battle broke!  
 The mine's dire earthquake,<sup>2</sup> and the pallid host 150  
 Driven by the bomb's incessant thunder-stroke  
 To loathsome vaults, where heart-sick anguish toss'd,  
 Hope died, and fear itself in agony was lost!

Yet does that burst of woe congeal my frame,  
 When the dark streets appeared to heave and gape,  
 While like a sea the storming army came,  
 And Fire from hell reared his gigantic shape,  
 And Murder, by the ghastly gleam, and Rape  
 Seized their joint prey, the mother and the child!  
 But from these crazing thoughts my brain, escape! 160  
 —For weeks the balmy air breathed soft and mild,  
 And on the gliding vessel Heaven and Ocean smiled.

---

1 *breathing pestilence*] Eighteenth-century theories of contagion posited that breathing bad air could cause infection.

2 *mine's dire earthquake*] Precursors to modern land mines were used as early as the Battle of Agincourt in 1415.

Some mighty gulph of separation past,  
I seemed transported to another world:—  
A thought resigned with pain, when from the mast  
The impatient mariner the sail unfurl'd,  
And whistling, called the wind that hardly curled  
The silent sea. From the sweet thoughts of home,  
And from all hope I was forever hurled.  
For me—farthest from earthly port to roam 170  
Was best, could I but shun the spot where man might come.

And oft, robb'd of my perfect mind, I thought  
At last my feet a resting-place had found:  
Here will I weep in peace, (so fancy wrought,)  
Roaming the illimitable waters round;  
Here watch, of every human friend disowned,  
All day, my ready tomb the ocean-flood—  
To break my dream the vessel reached its bound:  
And homeless near a thousand homes I stood,  
And near a thousand tables pined, and wanted food. 180

By grief enfeebled was I turned adrift,  
Helpless as sailor cast on desert rock;  
Nor morsel to my mouth that day did lift,  
Nor dared my hand at any door to knock.  
I lay, where with his drowsy mates, the cock  
From the cross timber of an out-house hung;  
How dismal tolled, that night, the city clock!  
At morn my sick heart hunger scarcely stung,  
Nor to the beggar's language could I frame my tongue.

So passed another day, and so the third: 190  
Then did I try, in vain, the crowd's resort,  
In deep despair by frightful wishes stirr'd,  
Near the sea-side I reached a ruined fort:  
There, pains which nature could no more support,  
With blindness linked, did on my vitals fall;  
Dizzy my brain, with interruption short  
Of hideous sense; I sunk, nor step could crawl,  
And thence was borne away to neighbouring hospital.

Recovery came with food: but still, my brain 200  
Was weak, nor of the past had memory.  
I heard my neighbours, in their beds, complain



Of many things which never troubled me;  
Of feet still bustling round with busy glee,  
Of looks where common kindness had no part,  
Of service done with careless cruelty,  
Fretting the fever round the languid heart,  
And groans, which, as they said, would make a dead man start.

These things just served to stir the torpid sense,  
Nor pain nor pity in my bosom raised.  
Memory, though slow, returned with strength; and thence 210  
Dismissed, again on open day I gazed,  
At houses, men, and common light, amazed.  
The lanes I sought, and as the sun retired,  
Came, where beneath the trees a faggot blazed;  
The wild brood saw me weep, my fate enquired,  
And gave me food, and rest, more welcome, more desired.

My heart is touched to think that men like these,  
The rude earth's tenants, were my first relief:  
How kindly did they paint their vagrant ease!  
And their long holiday that feared not grief, 220  
For all belonged to all, and each was chief.  
No plough their sinews strained; on grating road  
No wain<sup>1</sup> they drove, and yet, the yellow sheaf<sup>2</sup>  
In every vale for their delight was stowed:  
For them, in nature's meads,<sup>3</sup> the milky udder flowed.

Semblance, with straw and panniered ass,<sup>4</sup> they made  
Of potters wandering on from door to door:  
But life of happier sort to me portrayed,  
And other joys my fancy to allure;  
The bag-pipe dinning on the midnight moor 230  
In barn uplighted, and companions boon  
Well met from far with revelry secure,  
In depth of forest glade, when jocund June  
Rolled fast along the sky his warm and genial moon.

---

1 *wain*] An open vehicle drawn by horses or oxen for transporting agricultural produce.

2 *sheaf*] A bundle of wheat tied together after reaping.

3 *meads*] Meadows.

4 *panniered ass*] A donkey with a pair of baskets slung across its back.

But ill it suited me, in journey dark  
 O'er moor and mountain, midnight theft to hatch;  
 To charm the surly house-dog's faithful bark,  
 Or hang on tiptoe at the lifted latch;  
 The gloomy lantern, and the dim blue match,  
 The black disguise,<sup>1</sup> the warning whistle shrill,                     240  
 And ear still busy on its nightly watch,  
 Were not for me, brought up in nothing ill;  
 Besides, on griefs so fresh my thoughts were brooding still.

What could I do, unaided and unblest?  
 Poor Father! gone was every friend of thine:  
 And kindred of dead husband are at best  
 Small help, and, after marriage such as mine,  
 With little kindness would to me incline.  
 Ill was I then for toil or service fit:  
 With tears whose course no effort could confine,                     250  
 By high-way side forgetful would I sit  
 Whole hours, my idle arms in moping sorrow knit.

I lived upon the mercy of the fields,  
 And oft of cruelty the sky accused;  
 On hazard, or what general bounty yields,  
 Now coldly given, now utterly refused.  
 The fields I for my bed have often used:  
 But, what afflicts my peace with keenest ruth<sup>2</sup>  
 Is, that I have my inner self abused,  
 Foregone the home delight of constant truth,                     260  
 And clear and open soul, so prized in fearless youth.

Three years a wanderer, often have I view'd,  
 In tears, the sun towards that country tend  
 Where my poor heart lost all its fortitude:  
 And now across this moor my steps I bend—  
 Oh! tell me whither—for no earthly friend  
 Have I.—She ceased, and weeping turned away,  
 As if because her tale was at an end  
 She wept;—because she had no more to say  
 Of that perpetual weight which on her spirit lay.                     270

---

1 *The black disguise*] The English statute 9 *George I* (1723), known commonly as “the Black Act,” made it a capital felony to hunt or steal deer or appear in a public park with the face blackened. It was repealed in 1827.

2 *ruth*] Sorrow.

THE DUNGEON<sup>1</sup>

=====

And this place our forefathers made for man!  
 This is the process of our love and wisdom  
 To each poor brother who offends against us—  
 Most innocent, perhaps—and what if guilty?  
 Is this the only cure? Merciful God!  
 Each pore and natural outlet shrivell'd up  
 By ignorance and parching poverty,  
 His energies roll back upon his heart,  
 And stagnate and corrupt; till changed to poison,  
 They break out on him, like a loathsome plague spot.      10  
 Then we call in our pamper'd mountebanks<sup>2</sup>—  
 And this is their best cure! uncomforted  
 And friendless solitude, groaning and tears,  
 And savage faces, at the clanking hour,  
 Seen through the steams and vapour of his dungeon,  
 By the lamp's dismal twilight! So he lies  
 Circed with evil, till his very soul  
 Unmoulds its essence, hopelessly deformed  
 By sights of ever more deformity!

With other ministrations thou, O nature!      20  
 Healest thy wandering and distempered child:  
 Thou pourest on him thy soft influences,  
 Thy sunny hues, fair forms, and breathing sweets,  
 Thy melodies of woods, and winds, and waters,  
 Till he relent, and can no more endure  
 To be a jarring and a dissonant thing,  
 Amid this general dance and minstrelsy;<sup>3</sup>  
 But, bursting into tears, wins back his way,  
 His angry spirit healed and harmonized  
 By the benignant touch of love and beauty.      30

---

1 By Coleridge. Extracted from the unpublished play *Osorio*, composed in 1797.

2 *mountebanks*] Quack doctors.

3 *minstrelsy*] Harmony.

*SIMON LEE,*  
*THE OLD HUNTSMAN,*  
*With an incident in which he was concerned*<sup>1</sup>

=====

In the sweet shire of Cardigan,<sup>2</sup>  
Not far from pleasant Ivor-hall,  
An old man dwells, a little man,  
I've heard he once was tall.  
Of years he has upon his back,  
No doubt, a burthen weighty;  
He says he is three score and ten,  
But others say he's eighty.

A long blue livery-coat has he,  
That's fair behind, and fair before; 10  
Yet, meet him where you will, you see  
At once that he is poor.  
Full five and twenty years he lived  
A running huntsman merry;  
And, though he has but one eye left,  
His cheek is like a cherry.

No man like him the horn could sound,  
And no man was so full of glee;  
To say the least, four counties round  
Had heard of Simon Lee; 20  
His master's dead, and no one now  
Dwells in the hall of Ivor;  
Men, dogs, and horses, all are dead;  
He is the sole survivor.

His hunting feats have him bereft  
Of his right eye, as you may see:  
And then, what limbs those feats have left  
To poor old Simon Lee!  
He has no son, he has no child,  
His wife, an aged woman, 30  
Lives with him, near the waterfall,  
Upon the village common.

---

1 By Wordsworth.

2 *Cardigan*] A county in western Wales. See Appendix H, p. 542.

And he is lean and he is sick,  
 His dwindled<sup>1</sup> body's half awry,  
 His ancles they are swoln and thick;  
 His legs are thin and dry.  
 When he was young he little knew  
 Of husbandry or tillage;  
 And now he's forced to work, though weak,  
 —The weakest in the village. 40

He all the country could outrun,  
 Could leave both man and horse behind;  
 And often, ere the race was done,  
 He reeled and was stone-blind.  
 And still there's something in the world  
 At which his heart rejoices;  
 For when the chiming hounds are out,  
 He dearly loves their voices!

Old Ruth works out of doors with him,  
 And does what Simon cannot do; 50  
 For she, not over stout of limb,  
 Is stouter of the two.  
 And though you with your utmost skill  
 From labour could not wean them,  
 Alas! 'tis very little, all  
 Which they can do between them.

Beside their moss-grown hut of clay,  
 Not twenty paces from the door,  
 A scrap of land they have, but they  
 Are poorest of the poor. 60  
 This scrap of land he from the heath  
 Enclosed when he was stronger;  
 But what avails the land to them,  
 Which they can till no longer?

Few months of life has he in store,  
 As he to you will tell,  
 For still, the more he works, the more  
 His poor old ancles swell.<sup>2</sup>

---

1 *dwindled*] 1798: "little"

2 *ancles swell*] A symptom of edema, commonly called "dropsy" in the eighteenth century.

My gentle reader, I perceive  
How patiently you've waited, 70  
And I'm afraid that you expect  
Some tale will be related.

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.  
What more I have to say is short,  
I hope you'll kindly take it;  
It is no tale; but should you think,  
Perhaps a tale you'll make it. 80

One summer-day I chanced to see  
This old man doing all he could  
About the root of an old tree,  
A stump of rotten wood.  
The mattock<sup>1</sup> totter'd in his hand;  
So vain was his endeavour  
That at the root of the old tree  
He might have worked for ever.

"You're overtasked, good Simon Lee,  
Give me your tool" to him I said; 90  
And at the word right gladly he  
Received my proffer'd aid.  
I struck, and with a single blow  
The tangled root I sever'd,  
At which the poor old man so long  
And vainly had endeavoured.

The tears into his eyes were brought,  
And thanks and praises seemed to run  
So fast out of his heart, I thought  
They never would have done. 100  
—I've heard of hearts unkind, kind deeds  
With coldness still returning.  
Alas! the gratitude of men  
Has oftner left me mourning.

---

1 *mattock*] A tool similar to a pick with a chisel edge on one head used for breaking ground or removing tree stumps.

LINES

*Written in early Spring*<sup>1</sup>

I heard a thousand blended notes,  
While in a grove I sate reclined,  
In that sweet mood when pleasant thoughts  
Bring sad thoughts to the mind.

To her fair works did nature link  
The human soul that through me ran;  
And much it griev'd my heart to think  
What man has made of man.

Through primrose tufts, in that sweet bower,  
The periwinkle trail'd its wreathes; 10  
And 'tis my faith that every flower  
Enjoys the air it breathes.

The birds around me hopp'd and play'd:  
Their thoughts I cannot measure,  
But the least motion which they made,  
It seem'd a thrill of pleasure.

The budding twigs spread out their fan,  
To catch the breezy air;  
And I must think, do all I can,  
That there was pleasure there. 20

If I these thoughts may not prevent,  
If such be of my creed the plan,  
Have I not reason to lament  
What man has made of man?

THE NIGHTINGALE,

*Written in April, 1798*<sup>2</sup>

=====

No cloud, no relique of the sunken day  
Distinguishes the West, no long thin slip  
Of sullen Light, no obscure trembling hues.

---

1 By Wordsworth.

2 By Coleridge. In the 1798 edition the poem is entitled "The Nightingale; A Conversational Poem, Written in April, 1798."

Come, we will rest on this old mossy Bridge!  
 You see the glimmer of the stream beneath,  
 But hear no murmuring: it flows silently  
 O'er its soft bed of verdure. All is still,  
 A balmy night! and tho' the stars be dim,  
 Yet let us think upon the vernal showers  
 That gladden the green earth, and we shall find 10  
 A pleasure in the dimness of the stars.  
 And hark! the Nightingale begins its song,  
 "Most musical, most melancholy"\* Bird!  
 A melancholy Bird? O idle thought!  
 In nature there is nothing melancholy.  
 —But some night-wandering Man, whose heart was pierc'd  
 With the remembrance of a grievous wrong,  
 Or slow distemper or neglected love,  
 (And so, poor Wretch! fill'd all things with himself  
 And made all gentle sounds tell back the tale 20  
 Of his own sorrows) he and such as he  
 First named these notes a melancholy strain:  
 And many a poet echoes the conceit;  
 Poet, who hath been building up the rhyme  
 When he had better far have stretch'd his limbs  
 Beside a brook in mossy forest-dell  
 By sun or moonlight, to the influxes  
 Of shapes and sounds and shifting elements  
 Surrendering his whole spirit, of his song  
 And of his fame forgetful! so his fame 30  
 Should share in nature's immortality,  
 A venerable thing! and so his song  
 Should make all nature lovelier, and itself  
 Be lov'd, like nature! —But 'twill not be so;  
 And youths and maidens most poetical  
 Who lose the deep'ning twilights of the spring

---

\* "Most musical, most melancholy." This passage in Milton possesses an excellence far superior to that of mere description: it is spoken in the character of the melancholy Man, and has therefore a *dramatic* propriety. The Author makes this remark, to rescue himself from the charge of having alluded with levity to a line in Milton: a charge than which none could be more painful to him, except perhaps that of having ridiculed his Bible. [Coleridge's note. Coleridge refers to lines 61–64 of John Milton's *Il Penseroso* (1645): "Sweet bird, that shunn'st the noise of folly,/Most musical, most melancholy!/Thee, chauntress, oft the woods among/I woo, to hear they even-song;"]



In ball-rooms and hot theatres, they still  
 Full of meek sympathy must heave their sighs  
 O'er Philomela's<sup>1</sup> pity-pleading strains.  
 My Friend, and my Friend's Sister! we have learnt 40  
 A different lore: we may not thus profane  
 Nature's sweet voices always full of love  
 And joyance! 'Tis the merry Nightingale  
 That crowds, and hurries, and precipitates  
 With fast thick warble his delicious notes,  
 As he were fearful, that an April night  
 Would be too short for him to utter forth  
 His love-chant, and disburthen his full soul  
 Of all its music! And I know a grove  
 Of large extent, hard by a castle huge 50  
 Which the great lord inhabits not: and so  
 This grove is wild with tangling underwood,  
 And the trim<sup>2</sup> walks are broken up, and grass,  
 Thin grass and king-cups<sup>3</sup> grow within the paths.  
 But never elsewhere in one place I knew  
 So many Nightingales: and far and near  
 In wood and thicket over the wide grove  
 They answer and provoke each other's songs—  
 With skirmish and capricious passagings,  
 And murmurs musical and swift jug jug 60  
 And one low piping sound more sweet than all—  
 Stirring the air with such an harmony,  
 That should you close your eyes, you might almost  
 Forget it was not day!<sup>4</sup>

---

1 *Philomela's*] Referring to a popular story in Greek mythology and in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. Philomela and Procne were the daughters of King Pandion of Athens. Procne married King Tereus of Thrace, who raped Philomela and cut her out tongue. Though she could not speak, Philomela wove a tapestry to convey her betrayal to Procne. To revenge herself on Tereus, Procne killed and cooked their son Itys, but Tereus discovered the trick and pursued the sisters. Before he could catch them, all three were turned into birds: Tereus became a hoopoe, Procne a swallow, and Philomela a nightingale.

2 *trim*] Neatly arrayed or dressed.

3 *king-cups*] In England, the name given to the common buttercup.

4 *day!*] Here the 1798 edition adds: "On moonlight bushes,/Whose dewy leafits are but half disclos'd,/You may perchance behold them on the twigs,/Their bright, bright eyes, their eyes both bright and full,/Glistening, while many a glow-worm in the shade/Lights up her love-torch."

A most gentle maid

Who dwelleth in her hospitable home  
 Hard by the Castle, and at latest eve,  
 (Even like a Lady vow'd and dedicate  
 To something more than nature in the grove)<sup>1</sup>  
 Glides thro' the pathways; she knows all their notes,  
 That gentle Maid! and oft, a moment's space, 70  
 What time the moon was lost behind a cloud,  
 Hath heard a pause of silence: till the Moon  
 Emerging, hath awaken'd earth and sky  
 With one sensation, and those wakeful Birds  
 Have all burst forth in choral minstrelsy,<sup>2</sup>  
 As if one quick and sudden Gale had swept  
 An hundred airy harps! And she hath watch'd  
 Many a Nightingale perch giddily  
 On blosmy twig still swinging from the breeze,  
 And to that motion tune his wanton song, 80  
 Like tipsy Joy that reels with tossing head.

Farewell, O Warbler! till to-morrow eve,  
 And you, my friends! farewell, a short farewell!  
 We have been loitering long and pleasantly,  
 And now for our dear homes.—That strain again!  
 Full fain would it delay me! —My dear Babe,  
 Who, capable of no articulate sound,  
 Mars all things with his imitative lisp,  
 How he would place his hand beside his ear,  
 His little hand, the small forefinger up, 90  
 And bid us listen! And I deem it wise  
 To make him Nature's playmate. He knows well  
 The evening star: and once when he awoke  
 In most distressful mood (some inward pain  
 Had made up that strange thing, an infant's dream)  
 I hurried with him to our orchard plot,  
 And he beholds the moon, and hush'd at once  
 Suspends his sobs, and laughs most silently,  
 While his fair eyes that swam with undropt tears  
 Did glitter in the yellow moon-beam! Well— 100

---

1 *Even ... grove*] These lines recall lines 23–32 of Coleridge's "Christabel."  
 See Appendix B, p. 436.

2 *minstrelsy*] Harmony.

It is a father's tale. But if that Heaven  
Should give me life, his childhood shall grow up  
Familiar with these songs, that with the night  
He may associate Joy! Once more farewell,  
Sweet Nightingale! once more, my friends! farewell.

*LINES*

*Written when sailing in a Boat*

*At EVENING*<sup>1</sup>

How rich the wave, in front, imprest  
With evening twilight's summer hues,<sup>2</sup>  
While, facing thus the crimson west,  
The boat her silent path pursues!  
And see how dark the backward stream!  
A little moment past, so smiling!  
And still, perhaps, with faithless gleam,  
Some other loiterer beguiling.

Such views the youthful bard allure,  
But, heedless of the following gloom, 10  
He deems their colours shall endure  
'Till peace go with him to the tomb.  
—And let him nurse his fond deceit,  
And what if he must die in sorrow!  
Who would not cherish dreams so sweet,  
Though grief and pain may come to-morrow?

---

1 By Wordsworth. The 1798 edition combines this poem and the one following it, "Lines Written near Richmond upon the Thames," into one poem. In 1802, both this poem and its companion piece (retitled "Remembrance of Collins") were moved to volume two, presumably to make room for the expanded Preface.

2 *How ... hues*] In Robert Southey's presentation copy of the 1805 edition of *Lyrical Ballads* (British Library C.58.bb.23), lines 1–2 are altered (in what appears Southey's hand) to: "How richly glows the water's breast/  
Before us tinged with evening hues,"

LINES

Written near Richmond<sup>1</sup> upon the Thames<sup>2</sup>

=====

Glide gently, thus for ever glide,  
O Thames! that other bards may see,  
As lovely visions by thy side  
As now, fair river! come to me.  
Oh glide, fair stream! for ever so;<sup>3</sup>  
Thy quiet soul on all bestowing,  
'Till all our minds for ever flow,  
As thy deep waters now are flowing.

Vain thought! yet be as now thou art,  
That in thy waters may be seen  
The image of a poet's heart,  
How bright, how solemn, how serene!  
Such as did once the poet bless,  
Who, pouring here a<sup>\*</sup> *later* ditty,  
Could find no refuge from distress,  
But in the milder grief of pity.

10

Remembrance! as we float along,  
For him suspend the dashing oar,  
And pray that never child of Song

---

\* Collins's Ode on the death of Thomson, the last written, I believe, of the poems which were published during his lifetime. This Ode is also alluded to in the next stanza. [Wordsworth's note: Collins's "Ode" was published in 1749.]

---

- 1 *Richmond*] A suburb just southwest of central London; see Appendix H, p. 542.
- 2 By Wordsworth. The 1798 edition combines this poem and the one preceding it, "Lines Written when Sailing in a Boat at Evening," into one poem. In 1802, both poems were moved to volume two, presumably to make room for the expanded Preface.
- 3 *Oh glide ... ever so*] Recalling the refrain that concludes each stanza of Edmund Spenser's *Prothalamion* (1596): "Sweete *Themmes* runne softly, till I end my Song."

May know his freezing sorrows more.<sup>1</sup>  
How calm! how still! the only sound,  
The dripping of the oar suspended!  
—The evening darkness gathers round  
By virtue's holiest powers attended.

20

---

1 *Remembrance! ... more*] Lines 17-20 echo lines 13-16 of Collins's "Ode":  
"Remembrance oft shall haunt the Shore/When Thames in Summer-  
wreaths is drest,/And oft suspend the dashing Oar/To bid his gentle  
Spirit rest!"

THE  
IDIOT BOY.<sup>1</sup>

---

1 By Wordsworth.

## THE IDIOT BOY

=====

'Tis eight o'clock,—a clear March night,  
 The moon is up—the sky is blue,  
 The owlet in the moonlight air,  
 He shouts from nobody knows where;  
 He lengthens out his lonely shout,  
 Halloo! halloo! a long halloo!<sup>1</sup>

—Why bustle thus about your door,  
 What means this bustle, Betty Foy?  
 Why are you in this mighty fret?  
 And why on horseback have you set  
 Him whom you love, your idiot boy? 10

Beneath the moon that shines so bright,  
 Till she is tired, let Betty Foy  
 With girt<sup>2</sup> and stirrup fiddle-faddle;<sup>3</sup>  
 But wherefore set upon a saddle  
 Him whom she loves, her idiot boy?

There's scarce a soul that's out of bed;  
 Good Betty put him down again;  
 His lips with joy they burr at you,  
 But, Betty! what has he to do  
 With stirrup, saddle, or with rein? 20

The world will say 'tis very idle,  
 Bethink you of the time of night;  
 There's not a mother, no not one,  
 But when she hears what you have done,  
 Oh! Betty she'll be in a fright.

But Betty's bent on her intent,  
 For her good neighbour, Susan Gale,

- 1 'Tis ... halloo!] Recalling lines 1–5 of Coleridge's "Christabel." See Appendix B, p. 435.
- 2 girt] A saddle-girth, the leather strap that secures the saddle on the horse's back.
- 3 fiddle-faddle] To fuss over petty trifles.

Old Susan, she who dwells alone,  
Is sick, and makes a piteous moan,  
As if her very life would fail. 30

There's not a house within a mile,  
No hand to help them in distress:  
Old Susan lies a bed in pain,  
And sorely puzzled are the twain,  
For what she ails they cannot guess.

And Betty's husband's at the wood,  
Where by the week he doth abide,  
A woodman in the distant vale;  
There's none to help poor Susan Gale,  
What must be done? what will betide? 40

And Betty from the lane has fetched  
Her pony, that is mild and good,  
Whether he be in joy or pain,  
Feeding at will along the lane,  
Or bringing faggots from the wood.

And he is all in travelling trim,  
And by the moonlight, Betty Foy  
Has up upon the saddle set,  
The like was never heard of yet,  
Him whom she loves, her idiot boy. 50

And he must post without delay  
Across the bridge that's in the dale,  
And by the church, and o'er the down,  
To bring a doctor from the town,  
Or she will die, old Susan Gale.

There is no need of boot or spur,  
There is no need of whip or wand,  
For Johnny has his holly-bough,  
And with a hurly-burly<sup>1</sup> now  
He shakes the green bough in his hand. 60

And Betty o'er and o'er has told  
The boy who is her best delight,  
Both what to follow, what to shun,

---

1 *hurly-burly*] Commotion or tumult.



What do, and what to leave undone,  
How turn to left, and how to right.

And Betty's most especial charge,  
Was, "Johnny! Johnny! mind that you  
Come home again, nor stop at all,  
Come home again, whate'er befall, 70  
My Johnny do, I pray you do."

To this did Johnny answer make,  
Both with his head, and with his hand,  
And proudly shook the bridle too,  
And then! his words were not a few,  
Which Betty well could understand.

And now that Johnny is just going,  
Though Betty's in a mighty flurry,  
She gently pats the pony's side,  
On which her idiot boy must ride, 80  
And seems no longer in a hurry.

But when the pony moved his legs,  
Oh! then for the poor idiot boy!  
For joy he cannot hold the bridle,  
For joy his head and heels are idle,  
He's idle all for very joy.

And while the pony moves his legs,  
In Johnny's left hand you may see,  
The green bough's motionless and dead:  
The moon that shines above his head 90  
Is not more still and mute than he.

His heart it was so full of glee,  
That till full fifty yards were gone,  
He quite forgot his holly whip,  
And all his skill in horsemanship,  
Oh! happy, happy, happy John.

And Betty's standing at the door,  
And Betty's face with joy o'erflows,  
Proud of herself, and proud of him,  
She sees him in his travelling trim; 100  
How quietly her Johnny goes.

The silence of her idiot boy,  
What hopes it sends to Betty's heart!  
He's at the guide-post—he turns right,  
She watches till he's out of sight,  
And Betty will not then depart.

Burr, burr—now Johnny's lips they burr,<sup>1</sup>  
As loud as any mill, or near it,  
Meek as a lamb the pony moves,  
And Johnny makes the noise he loves, 110  
And Betty listens, glad to hear it.

Away she hies to Susan Gale:  
And Johnny's in a merry tune,  
The owlets hoot, the owlets curr,<sup>2</sup>  
And Johnny's lips they burr, burr, burr,  
And on he goes beneath the moon.

His steed and he right well agree,  
For of this pony there's a rumour,  
That should he lose his eyes and ears,  
And should he live a thousand years, 120  
He never will be out of humour.

But then he is a horse that thinks!  
And when he thinks his pace is slack;  
Now, though he knows poor Johnny well,  
Yet for his life he cannot tell  
What he has got upon his back.

So through the moonlight lanes they go,  
And far into the moonlight dale,  
And by the church, and o'er the down,  
To bring a doctor from the town, 130  
To comfort poor old Susan Gale.

And Betty, now at Susan's side,  
Is in the middle of her story,

---

1 *burr*] To pronounce a strong uvular *r* (instead of a trilled *r*), done in England's northernmost counties; more generally, to speak indistinctly.  
2 *curr*] To make a low murmuring sound, as with the cooing of a dove or the purring of a cat.

What comfort Johnny soon will bring,  
With many a most diverting thing,  
Of Johnny's wit and Johnny's glory.

And Betty's still at Susan's side:  
By this time she's not quite so flurried;  
Demure with porringer and plate  
She sits, as if in Susan's fate 140  
Her life and soul were buried.

But Betty, poor good woman! she,  
You plainly in her face may read it,  
Could lend out of that moment's store  
Five years of happiness or more,  
To any that might need it.

But yet I guess that now and then  
With Betty all was not so well,  
And to the road she turns her ears,  
And thence full many a sound she hears, 150  
Which she to Susan will not tell.

Poor Susan moans, poor Susan groans,  
"As sure as there's a moon in heaven,"  
Cries Betty, "he'll be back again;  
They'll both be here, 'tis almost ten,  
They'll both be here before eleven."

Poor Susan moans, poor Susan groans,  
The clock gives warning for eleven;  
'Tis on the stroke—"If Johnny's near,"  
Quoth Betty, "he will soon be here, 160  
As sure as there's a moon in heaven."

The clock is on the stroke of twelve,  
And Johnny is not yet in sight,  
The moon's in heaven, as Betty sees,  
But Betty is not quite at ease;  
And Susan has a dreadful night.

And Betty, half an hour ago,  
On Johnny vile reflections cast:  
"A little idle sauntering thing!"

With other names, an endless string,  
But now that time is gone and past. 170

And Betty's drooping at the heart,  
That happy time all past and gone,  
"How can it be he is so late?  
The Doctor he has made him wait,  
Susan! they'll both be here anon."

And Susan's growing worse and worse,  
And Betty's in a sad quandary;  
And then there's nobody to say  
If she must go or she must stay: 180  
—She's in a sad quandary.

The clock is on the stroke of one;  
But neither Doctor nor his guide  
Appear along the moonlight road,  
There's neither horse nor man abroad,  
And Betty's still at Susan's side.

And Susan she begins to fear  
Of sad mischances not a few,  
That Johnny may perhaps be drown'd,  
Or lost perhaps, and never found; 190  
Which they must both for ever rue.

She prefaced half a hint of this  
With, "God forbid it should be true!"  
At the first word that Susan said  
Cried Betty, rising from the bed,  
"Susan, I'd gladly stay with you.

I must be gone, I must away,  
Consider, Johnny's but half-wise;  
Susan, we must take care of him,  
If he is hurt in life or limb"— 200  
"Oh God forbid!" poor Susan cries.

"What can I do?" says Betty, going,  
"What can I do to ease your pain?  
Good Susan tell me, and I'll stay;  
I fear you're in a dreadful way,  
But I shall soon be back again."

“Nay, Betty, go! good Betty, go!  
There’s nothing that can ease my pain.”  
Then off she hies, but with a prayer  
That God poor Susan’s life would spare, 210  
Till she comes back again.

So, through the moonlight lane she goes,  
And far into the moonlight dale;  
And how she ran, and how she walked,  
And all that to herself she talked,  
Would surely be a tedious tale.

In high and low, above, below,  
In great and small, in round and square,  
In tree and tower was Johnny seen,  
In bush and brake,<sup>1</sup> in black and green, 220  
’Twas Johnny, Johnny, every where.

She’s past the bridge that’s in the dale,  
And now the thought torments her sore,  
Johnny perhaps his horse forsook,  
To hunt the moon that’s in the brook,  
And never will be heard of more.

And now she’s high upon the down,  
Alone amid a prospect wide;  
There’s neither Johnny nor his horse,  
Among the fern or in the gorse;<sup>2</sup> 230  
There’s neither doctor nor his guide.

“Oh saints! what is become of him?  
Perhaps he’s climbed into an oak,  
Where he will stay till he is dead;  
Or sadly he has been misled,  
And joined the wandering gypsey-folk.

Or him that wicked pony’s carried  
To the dark cave, the goblins’ hall,  
Or in the castle he’s pursuing,

---

1 *brake*] Clump of bushes; a thicket.

2 *gorse*] Furze, a spiny evergreen shrub that grows in wastelands.

Among the ghosts, his own undoing;  
Or playing with the waterfall.” 240

At poor old Susan then she railed,  
While to the town she posts away;  
“If Susan had not been so ill,  
Alas! I should have had him still,  
My Johnny, till my dying day.”

Poor Betty! in this sad distemper,  
The doctor’s self would hardly spare,  
Unworthy things she talked and wild,  
Even he, of cattle the most mild, 250  
The pony had his share.

And now she’s got into the town,  
And to the doctor’s door she hies;  
’Tis silence all on every side;  
The town so long, the town so wide,  
Is silent as the skies.

And now she’s at the doctor’s door,  
She lifts the knocker, rap, rap, rap,  
The doctor at the casement shews,  
His glimmering eyes that peep and doze; 260  
And one hand rubs his old night-cap.

“Oh Doctor! Doctor! where’s my Johnny?”  
“I’m here, what is’t you want with me?”  
“Oh Sir! you know I’m Betty Foy,  
And I have lost my poor dear boy,  
You know him—him you often see;

He’s not so wise as some folks be,”  
“The devil take his wisdom!” said  
The Doctor, looking somewhat grim,  
“What, woman! should I know of him?” 270  
And, grumbling, he went back to bed.

“O woe is me! O woe is me!  
Here will I die; here will I die;  
I thought to find my Johnny here,  
But he is neither far nor near,  
Oh! what a wretched mother I!”

She stops, she stands, she looks about,  
 Which way to turn she cannot tell.  
 Poor Betty! it would ease her pain  
 If she had heart to knock again; 280  
 —The clock strikes three—a dismal knell!<sup>1</sup>

Then up along the town she hies,  
 No wonder if her senses fail,  
 This piteous news so much it shock'd her,  
 She quite forgot to send the Doctor,  
 To comfort poor old Susan Gale.

And now she's high upon the down,  
 And she can see a mile of road,  
 "Oh cruel! I'm almost three-score;  
 Such night as this was ne'er before, 290  
 There's not a single soul abroad."

She listens, but she cannot hear  
 The foot of horse, the voice of man;  
 The streams with softest sound are flowing,  
 The grass you almost hear it growing,  
 You hear it now if e'er you can.

The owlets through the long blue night  
 Are shouting to each other still:  
 Fond lovers, yet not quite hob nob,<sup>2</sup>  
 They lengthen out the tremulous sob, 300  
 That echoes far from hill to hill.

Poor Betty now has lost all hope,  
 Her thoughts are bent on deadly sin;  
 A green-grown pond<sup>3</sup> she just has pass'd,  
 And from the brink she hurries fast,  
 Lest she should drown herself therein.

And now she sits her down and weeps;  
 Such tears she never shed before;

---

1 *knell*] The sound of a bell rung slowly and solemnly, as immediately after a death or at a funeral.

2 *hob nob*] On familiar terms.

3 *green-grown pond*] Standing water covered with algae.

“Oh dear, dear pony! my sweet joy!  
Oh carry back my idiot boy! 310  
And we will ne'er o'erload thee more.”

A thought it come into her head;  
“The pony he is mild and good,  
And we have always used him well;  
Perhaps he's gone along the dell,  
And carried Johnny to the wood.”

Then up she springs as if on wings;  
She thinks no more of deadly sin;  
If Betty fifty ponds should see,  
The last of all her thoughts would be, 320  
To drown herself therein.

Oh reader! now that I might tell  
What Johnny and his horse are doing!  
What they've been doing all this time,  
Oh could I put it into rhyme,  
A most delightful tale pursuing!

Perhaps, and no unlikely thought!  
He with his pony now doth roam  
The cliffs and peaks so high that are,  
To lay his hands upon a star, 330  
And in his pocket bring it home.

Perhaps he's turned himself about,  
His face unto his horse's tail,  
And still and mute, in wonder lost,  
All like a silent horseman-ghost,  
He travels on along the vale.

And now, perhaps, he's hunting sheep,  
A fierce and dreadful hunter he!  
Yon valley, that's so trim and green,  
In five months' time, should he be seen, 340  
A desert wilderness will be.

Perhaps, with head and heels on fire,  
And like the very soul of evil,  
He's galloping away, away,



And so he'll gallop on for aye,  
The bane of all that dread the devil.<sup>1</sup>

I to the muses have been bound  
These fourteen years, by strong indentures:  
Oh gentle muses! let me tell  
But half of what to him befel, 350  
For sure he met with strange adventures.

Oh gentle muses! is this kind  
Why will ye thus my suit repel?  
Why of your further aid bereave me?  
And can ye thus unfriended leave me?  
Ye muses! whom I love so well.

Who's yon, that, near the waterfall,  
Which thunders down with headlong force,  
Beneath the moon, yet shining fair,  
As careless as if nothing were, 360  
Sits upright on a feeding horse?

Unto his horse, that's feeding free,  
He seems, I think, the rein to give;  
Of moon or stars he takes no heed;  
Of such we in romances read,  
—"Tis Johnny! Johnny! as I live.

And that's the very pony too.  
Where is she, where is Betty Foy?  
She hardly can sustain her fears;  
The roaring water-fall she hears, 370  
And cannot find her idiot boy.

Your pony's worth his weight in gold,  
Then calm your terrors, Betty Foy!  
She's coming from among the trees,  
And now all full in view she sees  
Him whom she loves, her idiot boy.

---

1 *Perhaps ... devil*] Recalling lines 185–96 of Bürger's "Lenora." See Appendix G, p. 523.

And Betty sees the pony too:  
Why stand you thus Good Betty Foy?  
It is no goblin, 'tis no ghost,  
'Tis he whom you so long have lost, 380  
He whom you love, your idiot boy.

She looks again—her arms are up—  
She screams—she cannot move for joy;  
She darts as with a torrent's force,  
She almost has o'erturned the horse,  
And fast she holds her idiot boy.

And Johnny burrs, and laughs aloud,  
Whether in cunning or in joy,  
I cannot tell; but while he laughs,  
Betty a drunken pleasure quaffs, 390  
To hear again her idiot boy.

And now she's at the pony's tail,  
And now she's at the pony's head,  
On that side now, and now on this,  
And almost stifled with her bliss,  
A few sad tears does Betty shed.

She kisses o'er and o'er again,  
Him whom she loves, her idiot boy,  
She's happy here, she's happy there,  
She is uneasy every where; 400  
Her limbs are all alive with joy.

She pats the pony, where or when  
She knows not, happy Betty Foy!  
The little pony glad may be,  
But he is milder far than she,  
You hardly can perceive his joy.

“Oh! Johnny, never mind the Doctor;  
You've done your best, and that is all.”  
She took the reins, when this was said,  
And gently turned the pony's head 410  
From the loud water-fall.

By this the stars were almost gone,  
The moon was setting on the hill,

So pale you scarcely looked at her:  
The little birds began to stir,  
Though yet their tongues were still.

The pony, Betty, and her boy,  
Wind slowly through the woody dale;  
And who is she, be-times abroad,  
That hobbles up the steep rough road? 420  
Who is it, but old Susan Gale?

Long Susan lay deep lost in thought,  
And many dreadful fears beset her,  
Both for her messenger and nurse;  
And as her mind grew worse and worse,  
Her body it grew better.

She turned, she toss'd herself in bed,  
On all sides doubts and terrors met her;  
Point after point did she discuss;  
And while her mind was fighting thus, 430  
Her body still grew better.

“Alas! what is become of them?  
These fears can never be endured,  
I'll to the wood.”—The word scarce said,  
Did Susan rise up from her bed,  
As if by magic cured.

Away she posts up hill and down,  
And to the wood at length is come,  
She spies her friends, she shouts a greeting;  
Oh me! it is a merry meeting, 440  
As ever was in Christendom.

The owls have hardly sung their last,  
While our four travellers homeward wend;  
The owls have hooted all night long,  
And with the owls began my song,  
And with the owls must end.

For while they all were travelling home,  
Cried Betty, “Tell us Johnny, do,  
Where all this long night you have been,

What you have heard, what you have seen,  
And Johnny, mind you tell us true.” 450

Now Johnny all night long had heard  
The owls in tuneful concert strive;  
No doubt too he the moon had seen;  
For in the moonlight he had been  
From eight o’clock till five.

And thus to Betty’s question, he,  
Made answer, like a traveller bold,  
(His very words I give to you,  
“The cocks did crow to-who, to-who,  
And the sun did shine so cold.” 460  
—Thus answered Johnny in his glory,  
And that was all his travel’s story.

LOVE<sup>1</sup>

=====

All Thoughts, all Passions, all Delights,  
Whatever stirs this mortal Frame,  
All are but Ministers of Love,  
And feed his sacred flame.

Oft in my waking dreams do I  
Live o'er again that happy hour,  
When midway on the Mount I lay  
Beside the Ruin'd Tower.

The Moonshine stealing o'er the scene  
Had blended with the Lights of Eve; 10  
And she was there, my Hope, my Joy,  
My own dear Genevieve!

She lean'd against the Armed Man,  
The Statue of the Armed Knight:  
She stood and listen'd to my Harp  
Amid the ling'ring Light.

Few Sorrows hath she of her own,  
My Hope, my Joy, my Genevieve!  
She loves me best, whene'er I sing  
The Songs, that make her grieve. 20

I play'd a soft and doleful Air,  
I sang an old and moving Story—  
An old rude Song that fitted well  
The Ruin wild and hoary.

She listen'd with a flitting Blush,  
With downcast Eyes and modest Grace;  
For well she knew, I could not choose  
But gaze upon her Face.

---

1 By Coleridge. An earlier version of this poem was published 21 December 1799 in the *Morning Post* under the title of "Introduction to the Tale of the Dark Ladie." For the discarded introductory and concluding stanzas, see Appendix B, pp. 433–34.

I told her of the Knight, that wore  
Upon his Shield a burning Brand; 30  
And that for ten long Years he woo'd  
The Lady of the Land.

I told her, how he pin'd: and, ah!  
The low, the deep, the pleading tone,  
With which I sang another's Love,  
Interpreted my own.

She listen'd with a flitting Blush,  
With downcast Eyes and modest Grace;  
And she forgave me, that I gaz'd  
Too fondly on her Face! 40

But when I told the cruel scorn  
Which craz'd this bold and lovely Knight,  
And that he cross'd the mountain woods  
Nor rested day nor night;

That sometimes from the savage Den,  
And sometimes from the darksome Shade,  
And sometimes starting up at once  
In green and sunny Glade,

There came, and look'd him in the face,  
An Angel beautiful and bright; 50  
And that he knew, it was a Fiend,  
This miserable Knight!

And that, unknowing what he did,  
He leapt amid a murd'rous Band,  
And sav'd from Outrage worse than Death  
The Lady of the Land;

And how she wept and clasp'd his knees  
And how she tended him in vain—  
And ever strove to expiate  
The Scorn, that craz'd his Brain: 60

And that she nurs'd him in a Cave;  
And how his Madness went away

When on the yellow forest leaves  
A dying Man he lay;

His dying words—but when I reach'd  
That tenderest strain of all the Ditty,  
My falt'ring Voice and pausing Harp  
Disturb'd her Soul with Pity!

All Impulses of Soul and Sense  
Had thrill'd my guileless Genevieve, 70  
The Music, and the doleful Tale,  
The rich and balmy Eve;

And Hopes, and Fears that kindle Hope,  
An undistinguishable Throng!  
And gentle Wishes long subdued,  
Subdued and cherish'd long!

She wept with pity and delight,  
She blush'd with love and maiden shame;  
And, like the murmur of a dream,  
I heard her breathe my name. 80

Her Bosom heav'd—she stepp'd aside;  
As conscious of my Look, she stepp'd—  
Then suddenly with timorous eye  
She fled to me and wept.

She half inclosed me with her arms,  
She press'd me with a meek embrace;  
And bending back her head look'd up,  
And gaz'd upon my face.

'Twas partly Love, and partly Fear,  
And partly 'twas a bashful Art 90  
That I might rather feel than see  
The Swelling of her Heart.

I calm'd her fears; and she was calm,  
And told her love with virgin Pride.  
And so I won my Genevieve,  
My bright and beauteous Bride!

*The MAD MOTHER*<sup>1</sup>

=====

Her eyes are wild, her head is bare,  
 The sun has burnt her coal-black hair,  
 Her eye-brows have a rusty stain,  
 And she came far from over the main.<sup>2</sup>  
 She has a baby on her arm,  
 Or else she were alone;  
 And underneath the hay-stack warm,  
 And on the green-wood stone,  
 She talked and sung the woods among;  
 And it was in the English tongue. 10

“Sweet babe! they say that I am mad,  
 But nay, my heart is far too glad;  
 And I am happy when I sing  
 Full many a sad and doleful thing:  
 Then, lovely baby, do not fear!  
 I pray thee have no fear of me,  
 But, safe as in a cradle, here  
 My lovely baby! thou shalt be,  
 To thee I know too much I owe;  
 I cannot work thee any woe. 20

A fire was once within my brain;  
 And in my head a dull, dull pain;  
 And fiendish faces one, two, three,  
 Hung at my breasts, and pulled at me.  
 But then there came a sight of joy;  
 It came at once to do me good;  
 I waked, and saw my little boy,  
 My little boy of flesh and blood;  
 Oh joy for me that sight to see!  
 For he was here, and only he. 30

Suck, little babe, oh suck again!  
 It cools my blood; it cools my brain;<sup>3</sup>

---

1 By Wordsworth.

2 *main*] Short for “main sea,” meaning “open sea.”

3 *It cools my blood; it cools my brain*] Ancient Greek physicians posited the brain as a cooling plant for the blood; the notion persisted through the seventeenth century but lost credit with eighteenth-century physicians.



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 press'd.  
 The breeze I see is in the tree;  
 It comes to cool my babe and me. 40

Oh! love me, love me, little boy!  
 Thou art thy mother's only joy;  
 And do not dread the waves below,  
 When o'er the sea-rock's edge we go;  
 The high crag cannot work me harm,  
 Nor leaping torrents when they howl;  
 The babe I carry on my arm,  
 He saves for me my precious soul;  
 Then happy lie, for blest am I;  
 Without me my sweet babe would die. 50

Then do not fear, my boy! for thee  
 Bold as a lion I will be;  
 And I will always be thy guide,  
 Through hollow snows and rivers wide.  
 I'll build an Indian bower; I know  
 The leaves that make the softest bed:  
 And if from me thou wilt not go,  
 But still be true 'till I am dead,  
 My pretty thing! then thou shalt sing,  
 As merry as the birds in spring. 60

Thy father cares not for my breast,  
 'Tis thine, sweet baby, there to rest:  
 'Tis all thine own! and if its hue  
 Be changed, that was so fair to view,<sup>1</sup>  
 '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 canst not see  
 How pale and wan it else would be. 70

---

1 *and ... view*] Recalling lines 244–47 of Coleridge's "Christabel." See Appendix B, p. 441.

Dread not their taunts, my little life!  
I am thy father's wedded wife;  
And underneath the spreading tree  
We two will live in honesty.  
If his sweet boy he could forsake,  
With me he never would have stay'd:  
From him no harm my babe can take,  
But he, poor man! is wretched made,  
And every day we two will pray  
For him that's gone and far away. 80

I'll teach my boy the sweetest things;  
I'll teach him how the owlet sings.  
My little babe! thy lips are still,  
And thou hast almost suck'd thy fill.  
—Where art thou gone my own dear child?  
What wicked looks are those I see?  
Alas! alas! that look so wild,  
It never, never came from me:  
If thou art mad, my pretty lad,  
Then I must be for ever sad. 90

Oh! smile on me, my little lamb!  
For I thy own dear mother am.  
My love for thee has well been tried:  
I've sought thy father far and wide.  
I know the poisons of the shade,  
I know the earth-nuts<sup>1</sup> fit for food;  
Then, pretty dear, be not afraid;  
We'll find thy father in the wood.  
Now laugh and be gay, to the woods away!  
And there, my babe; we'll live for aye." 100

---

1 *earth-nuts*] The round tubers of umbelliferous plants, also called "earth-chestnuts" or "pig-nuts"; possibly recalling Caliban's speech in II.ii of Shakespeare's *The Tempest*: "I prithee, let me bring thee where crabs grow;/And I with my long nails will dig thee pignuts;/Show thee a jay's nest and instruct thee how/ To snare the nimble marmoset;"

THE  
ANCIENT MARINER,  
A POET'S REVERIE.<sup>1</sup>

---

1 By Coleridge. 1798: originally entitled "The Rime of the Ancyent Marinere, in Seven Parts."

**ARGUMENT**<sup>1</sup>

How a Ship, having first sailed to the Equator, was driven by Storms, to the cold Country towards the South Pole; how the Ancient Mariner cruelly, and in contempt of the laws of hospitality, killed a Sea-bird; and how he was followed by many and strange Judgements; and in what manner he came back to his own Country.

---

1 *ARGUMENT*] 1798: "How a Ship having passed the Line was driven by Storms to the cold Country towards the South Pole; and how from thence she made her course to the tropical Latitude of the Great Pacific Ocean; and of the strange things that befell; and in what manner the Ancyent Marinere came back to his own Country."

*The ANCIENT MARINER,*  
*A POET'S REVERIE*

I

=====

It is an ancient Mariner,  
And he stoppeth one of three:  
"By thy long grey beard and thy glittering eye  
Now wherefore stoppest me?"

The Bridegroom's doors are open'd wide  
And I am next of kin;  
The Guests are met, the Feast is set,—  
May'st hear the merry din."

But still he holds the wedding guest—  
There was a Ship, quoth he— 10  
"Nay, if thou'st got a laughsome tale,  
Mariner! come with me."

He holds him with his skinny hand,  
Quoth he, there was a Ship—  
"Now get thee hence, thou grey-beard Loon!  
Or my Staff shall make thee skip."

He holds him with his glittering eye—  
The wedding guest stood still  
And listens like a three year's child;  
The Mariner hath his will. 20

The wedding-guest sate on a stone,  
He cannot chuse but hear:  
And thus spake on that ancient man,  
The bright-eyed Mariner.

The Ship was cheer'd, the Harbour clear'd—  
Merrily did we drop  
Below the Kirk,<sup>1</sup> below the Hill,  
Below the Light-house top.

---

1 *Kirk*] Name for a church in northern England and Scotland.

The Sun came up upon the left,  
Out of the Sea came he: 30  
And he shone bright, and on the right  
Went down into the Sea.

Higher and higher every day,  
Till over the mast at noon—<sup>1</sup>  
The wedding-guest here beat his breast,  
For he heard the loud bassoon.

The Bride hath pac'd into the Hall,  
Red as a rose is she;  
Nodding their heads before her goes  
The merry Minstralsy.<sup>2</sup> 40

The wedding-guest he beat his breast,  
Yet he cannot chuse but hear:  
And thus spake on that ancient Man,  
The bright-eyed Mariner.

But now the Northwind came more fierce,  
There came a Tempest strong!  
And Southward still for days and weeks<sup>3</sup>  
Like Chaff we drove along.

And now there came both Mist and Snow,<sup>4</sup>  
And it grew wond'rous cold; 50  
And Ice mast-high came floating by  
As green as Emerald.

And thro' the drifts the snowy clifts  
Did send a dismal sheen;<sup>5</sup>  
Nor shapes of men nor beasts we ken<sup>6</sup>—  
The Ice was all between.

---

1 *Higher ... noon*] As the ship travels further south, the sun appears higher in the sky each day.

2 *Minstralsy*] “Minstrelsy,” a group of minstrels or musicians.

3 *But ... weeks*] 1798: “Listen, Stranger! Storm and Wind,/A Wind and Tempest strong!/For days and weeks it play'd us freaks”

4 *And ... Snow*] 1798: “Listen, Stranger! Mist and Snow”

5 *sheen*] A gleam, as of something reflecting light.

6 *ken*] Recognize, discover.

The Ice was here, the Ice was there,  
The Ice was all around:  
It crack'd and growl'd, and roar'd and howl'd—  
A wild and ceaseless sound.<sup>1</sup> 60

At length did cross an Albatross,  
Thorough the Fog it came;  
As if it had been a Christian Soul,  
We hail'd it in God's name.

The Mariners gave it biscuit-worms,  
And round and round it flew:  
The Ice did split with a Thunder-fit;  
The Helmsman steer'd us thro'.

And a good south wind sprung up behind.  
The Albatross did follow; 70  
And every day for food or play  
Came to the Mariner's hollo!

In mist or cloud on mast or shroud  
It perch'd for vespers nine,  
Whiles all the night thro' fog-smoke white  
Glimmer'd the white moon-shine.

“God save thee, ancient Mariner!  
From the fiends that plague thee thus—  
Why look'st thou so?”—with my cross bow  
I shot the Albatross. 80

II

=====

The Sun now rose upon the right,  
Out of the Sea came he;  
Still hid in mist; and on the left<sup>2</sup>  
Went down into the Sea.

---

1 *A wild ... sound*] 1798: “Like noises of a swound.”

2 *Still ... left*] 1798: “And broad as a weft upon the left”

And the good south wind still blew behind,  
But no sweet Bird did follow  
Nor any day for food or play  
Came to the Mariner's hollo!

And I had done an hellish thing  
And it would work 'em woe: 90  
For all averr'd, I had kill'd the Bird  
That made the Breeze to blow.

Nor dim nor red, like an Angel's head,<sup>1</sup>  
The glorious Sun uprist:<sup>2</sup>  
Then all averr'd, I had kill'd the Bird  
That brought the fog and mist.  
'Twas right, said they, such birds to slay  
That bring the fog and mist.

The breezes blew, the white foam flew,  
The furrow<sup>3</sup> follow'd free: 100  
We were the first that ever burst  
Into that silent Sea.

Down dropt the breeze, the Sails dropt down,  
'Twas sad as sad could be  
And we did speak only to break  
The silence of the Sea.

All in a hot and copper sky  
The bloody sun at noon,  
Right up above the mast did stand,  
No bigger than the moon. 110

Day after day, day after day,  
We stuck, nor breath nor motion,  
As idle as a painted Ship  
Upon a painted Ocean.

---

1 *Nor ... head*] 1798: "Ne dim ne red, like God's own head,"

2 *uprist*] Arose; in medieval English, the word also meant "to rise from the dead."

3 *furrow*] A trench in the earth made by a plow; figuratively, the track of a vessel on the sea.



Water, water, every where  
And all the boards did shrink;  
Water, water, every where,  
Nor any drop to drink.

The very deeps did rot: O Christ!  
That ever this should be! 120  
Yea, slimy things did crawl with legs  
Upon the slimy Sea.

About, about, in reel and rout  
The Death-fires danc'd at night;  
The water, like a witch's oils,  
Burnt green and blue and white.<sup>1</sup>

And some in dreams assured were  
Of the Spirit<sup>2</sup> that plagued us so:  
Nine fathom deep he had follow'd us  
From the Land of Mist and Snow. 130

And every tongue thro' utter drouth<sup>3</sup>  
Was wither'd at the root;  
We could not speak no more than if  
We had been choked with soot.

Ah wel-a-day! what evil looks  
Had I from old and young;  
Instead of the Cross the Albatross  
About my neck was hung.

### III

=====

So past a weary time; each throat  
Was parch'd, and glaz'd each eye, 140

---

- 1 *About ... white*] Referring to the luminous appearance of the sea caused by dinoflagellates, greenish-white microscopic organisms.
- 2 *Spirit*] The sailors are likely thinking of the *Each Uisge* or the Kelpie, a malignant water spirit of Scottish mythology. See also line 149 of this poem.
- 3 *drouth*] Thirst.

When, looking westward, I beheld  
A something in the sky.<sup>1</sup>

At first it seem'd a little speck  
And then it seem'd a mist:  
It mov'd and mov'd, and took at last  
A certain shape, I wist.<sup>2</sup>

A speck, a mist, a shape, I wist!  
And still it ner'd and ner'd;  
And, as if it dodg'd a water-sprite,  
It plung'd and tack'd and veer'd. 150

With throat unslack'd, with black lips bak'd  
We could nor laugh nor wail;  
Thro' utter drouth all dumb we stood  
Till I bit my arm and suck'd the blood,  
And cry'd, A sail! a sail!

With throat unslack'd, with black lips bak'd  
Agape they heard me call:  
Gramercy!<sup>3</sup> they for joy did grin  
And all at once their breath drew in  
As they were drinking all. 160

See! See! (I cry'd) she tacks no more!<sup>4</sup>  
Hither to work us weal<sup>5</sup>  
Without a breeze, without a tide<sup>6</sup>  
She steddies with upright keel!

The western wave was all a flame,  
The day was well nigh done!  
Almost upon the western wave  
Rested the broad bright Sun;  
When that strange shape drove suddenly  
Betwixt us and the Sun. 170

1 *So past ... sky]* 1798: "I saw a something in the Sky/No bigger than my fist;"  
2 *wist]* Thought. 1798: Lines 143–46 then follow as part of the same stanza.  
3 *Gramercy!]* A shortened form of "God grant mercy on us!"  
4 *See! ... more!]* 1798: "She doth not tack from side to side—"  
5 *weal]* Good.  
6 *Without ... tide]* 1798: "Withouten wind, withouten tide"

And strait the Sun was fleck'd with bars  
 (Heaven's mother send us grace)  
 As if thro' a dungeon grate he peer'd  
 With broad and burning face.

Alas! (thought I, and my heart beat loud)  
 How fast she neres and neres!  
 Are those *her* Sails that glance in the Sun  
 Like restless gossameres?<sup>1</sup>

Are those *her* Ribs, thro' which the Sun  
 Did peer, as thro' a grate? 180  
 And are those two all, all her crew,  
 That Woman, and her Mate?<sup>2</sup>

*His* bones were black with many a crack,  
 All black and bare, I ween;<sup>3</sup>  
 Jet-black and bare, save where with rust  
 Of mouldy damps and charnel crust  
 They were patch'd with purple and green.

*Her* lips were red, *her* looks were free,  
*Her* locks were yellow as gold:  
 Her skin was white as leprosy, 190  
 And she was far liker Death than he;  
 Her flesh made the still air cold.

The naked Hulk alongside came  
 And the Twain were playing dice;  
 "The Game is done! I've won, I've won!"  
 Quoth she, and whistled thrice.

A gust of wind sterte up behind  
 And whistled thro' his bones;  
 Thro' the holes of his eyes and the hole of his mouth  
 Half-whistles and half-groans. 200

---

1 *gossameres*] Coleridge apparently uses the word here in both its senses:  
 "gossamer" can refer to any sheer cloth; "gossamers" also can refer to  
 the filmy cobwebs often seen floating in the air in calm weather.

2 *Are ... Mate*] 1798: "Are those *her* naked ribs, which fleck'd/The sun that  
 did behind them peer?/And are those two all, all the crew/That woman  
 and her fleshless Pheere?"

3 *ween*] Believe.

With never a whisper in the Sea  
Off darts the Spectre-ship;  
While clombe above the Eastern bar  
The horned Moon, with one bright Star  
Almost between the tips.<sup>1</sup>

One after one by the horned Moon  
(Listen, O Stranger! to me)  
Each turn'd his face with a ghastly<sup>2</sup> pang  
And curs'd me with his ee.<sup>3</sup>

Four times fifty living men, 210  
With never a sigh or groan,  
With heavy thump, a lifeless lump  
They dropp'd down one by one.

Their souls did from their bodies fly,—  
They fled to bliss or woe;  
And every soul it pass'd me by,  
Like the whiz of my Cross-bow.

IV

=====

“I fear thee, ancient Mariner!  
I fear thy skinny hand;  
And thou art long and lank and brown 220  
As is the ribb'd Sea-sand.

I fear thee and thy glittering eye  
And thy skinny hand so brown—”  
Fear not, fear not, thou wedding guest!  
This body dropt not down.

---

1 *The horned ... tips*] Presumably a crescent moon rising in the Eastern sky with a bright star, probably Mars or Venus.

2 *ghastly*] 1798: “eldritch.”

3 *ee*] Eye.

Alone, alone, all all alone  
Alone on the wide wide Sea;  
And Christ would take no pity on  
My soul in agony.

The many men so beautiful, 230  
And they all dead did lie!  
And a million million slimy things  
Liv'd on—and so did I.

I look'd upon the rotting Sea,  
And drew my eyes away;  
I look'd upon the ghastly deck,  
And there the dead men lay.

I look'd to Heaven, and try'd to pray;  
But or ever a prayer had gusht,  
A wicked whisper came and made 240  
My heart as dry as dust.

I clos'd my lids and kept them close,  
Till the balls like pulses beat;  
For the sky and the sea, and the sea and the sky  
Lay like a load on my weary eye,  
And the dead were at my feet.

The cold sweat melted from their limbs,  
Nor rot, nor reek did they;  
The look with which they look'd on me,  
Had never pass'd away. 250

An orphan's curse would drag to Hell  
A spirit from on high:  
But O! more horrible than that  
Is the curse in a dead man's eye!  
Seven days, seven nights I saw that curse,  
And yet I could not die.

The moving Moon went up the sky  
And no where did abide:  
Softly she was going up  
And a star or two beside— 260

Her beams bemock'd the sultry main  
Like April hoar-frost spread;<sup>1</sup>  
But where the ship's huge shadow lay,  
The charmed water burnt away  
A still and awful red.

Beyond the shadow of the ship  
I watch'd the water-snakes:  
They mov'd in tracks of shining white;  
And when they rear'd, the elfish light  
Fell off in hoary flakes. 270

Within the shadow of the ship  
I watch'd their rich attire:  
Blue, glossy green, and velvet black  
They coil'd and swam; and every track  
Was a flash of golden fire.

O happy living things! no tongue  
Their beauty might declare:  
A spring of love gusht from my heart,  
And I bless'd them unaware!  
Sure my kind saint took pity on me,  
And I bless'd them unaware. 280

The self-same moment I could pray;  
And from my neck so free  
The Albatross fell off, and sank  
Like lead into the sea.

V

=====

O sleep, it is a gentle thing  
Belov'd from pole to pole!  
To Mary-queen the praise be given  
She sent the gentle sleep from heaven  
That slid into my soul. 290

---

1 *Like ... spread*] 1798: "Like morning frosts yspread;"

The silly<sup>1</sup> buckets on the deck  
 That had so long remain'd,  
 I dreamt that they were fill'd with dew  
 And when I awoke it rain'd.

My lips were wet, my throat was cold,  
 My garments all were dank;  
 Sure I had drunken in my dreams  
 And still my body drank.

I mov'd and could not feel my limbs;  
 I was so light, almost 300  
 I thought that I had died in sleep,  
 And was a blessed Ghost.

And soon I heard a roaring wind,<sup>2</sup>  
 It did not come anear;  
 But with its sound it shook the sails  
 That were so thin and sere.

The upper air<sup>3</sup> burst into life  
 And a hundred fire-flags<sup>4</sup> sheen  
 To and fro they were hurried about;  
 And to and fro, and in and out 310  
 The wan stars danc'd between.

And the coming wind did roar more loud;  
 And the sails did sigh like sedge:<sup>5</sup>  
 And the rain pour'd down from one black cloud  
 The moon was at its edge.<sup>6</sup>

The thick black cloud was cleft, and still  
 The Moon was at its side:  
 Like waters shot from some high crag,  
 The lightning fell with never a jag  
 A river steep and wide. 320

---

1 *silly*] Plain or rustic.

2 *And soon ... wind*] 1798: "The roaring wind! it roar'd far off,"

3 *upper air*] Upper atmosphere.

4 *fire-flags*] Meteoric flames.

5 *sedge*] Coarse, rush-like plants found in swamps.

6 *The upper ... edge*] In the 1798 edition, these lines are written in the present tense.

The loud wind never reach'd the Ship,  
Yet now the Ship mov'd on!<sup>1</sup>  
Beneath the lightning and the moon  
The dead men gave a groan.

They groan'd, they stirr'd, they all uprose,  
Nor spake, nor mov'd their eyes:  
It had been strange, even in a dream  
To have seen those dead men rise.

The helmsman steer'd, the ship mov'd on;  
Yet never a breeze up-blew; 330  
The Mariners all 'gan work the ropes,  
Where they were wont to do:  
They rais'd their limbs like lifeless tools—  
We were a ghastly crew.

The body of my brother's son  
Stood by me knee to knee:  
The body and I pull'd at one rope,  
But he said nought to me.<sup>2</sup>

"I fear thee, ancient Mariner!"  
Be calm, thou wedding guest! 340  
'Twas not those souls, that fled in pain,  
Which to their corpses came again,  
But a troop of Spirits blest:<sup>3</sup>

For when it<sup>4</sup> dawn'd—they dropp'd their arms,  
And cluster'd round the mast:  
Sweet sounds rose slowly thro' their mouths  
And from their bodies pass'd.

Around, around, flew each sweet sound,  
Then darted to the sun:  
Slowly the sounds came back again 350  
Now mix'd, now one by one.

---

1 *The loud ... on!*] 1798: "The strong wind reach'd the ship: it roar'd/And dropp'd down, like a stone!"

2 *me*] The 1798 edition adds two additional lines: "And I quak'd to think of my own voice/How frightful it would be!"

3 "*I fear ... blest*] 1798: lines 339-43 not included.

4 *For when it*] 1798: "The day-light"



Sometimes a dropping from the sky  
I heard the Sky-lark sing;  
Sometimes all little birds that are  
How they seem'd to fill the sea and air  
With their sweet jargoning.

And now 'twas like all instruments,  
Now like a lonely flute;  
And now it is an angel's song  
That makes the heavens be mute. 360

It ceas'd: yet still the sails made on  
A pleasant noise till noon,  
A noise like of a hidden brook  
In the leafy month of June,  
That to the sleeping woods all night  
Singeth a quiet tune.<sup>1</sup>

Till noon we silently sail'd on  
Yet never a breeze did breathe:  
Slowly and smoothly went the Ship  
Mov'd onward from beneath. 370

Under the keel nine fathom deep  
From the land of mist and snow  
The spirit slid: and it was He  
That made the Ship to go.  
The sails at noon left off their tune  
And the Ship stood still also.

The sun right up above the mast  
Had fix'd her to the ocean:  
But in a minute she 'gan stir  
With a short uneasy motion— 380  
Backwards and forwards half her length  
With a short uneasy motion.

Then, like a pawing horse let go,  
She made a sudden bound:  
It flung the blood into my head,  
And I fell into a swoond.

---

1 *tune]* In the 1798 edition, four additional stanzas follow. See pp. 63–64.

How long in that same fit I lay,  
I have not to declare;  
But ere my living life return'd,  
I heard and in my soul discern'd 390  
Two voices in the air.

“Is it he?” quoth one, “Is this the man?  
By him who died on cross,  
With his cruel bow he lay'd full low  
The harmless Albatross.

The spirit who 'bideth by himself  
In the land of mist and snow,  
He lov'd the bird that lov'd the man  
Who shot him with his bow.”

The other was a softer voice, 400  
As soft as honey-dew:  
Quoth he, “The man hath penance done,  
And penance more will do.”

VI

=====

FIRST VOICE

“But tell me, tell me! speak again,  
Thy soft response renewing—  
What makes that ship drive on so fast?  
What is the Ocean doing?”

SECOND VOICE

“Still as a Slave before his Lord,  
The Ocean hath no blast:  
His great bright eye most silently 410  
Up to the moon is cast—

If he may know which way to go,  
For she guides him smooth or grim.  
See, brother, see! how graciously  
She looketh down on him.”

FIRST VOICE

“But why drives on that ship so fast  
Without or wave or wind?”

SECOND VOICE

“The air is cut away before,  
And closes from behind.

Fly, brother, fly! more high, more high, 420  
Or we shall be belated:  
For slow and slow that ship will go,  
When the Mariner’s trance is abated.”

I woke, and we were sailing on  
As in a gentle weather:  
’Twas night, calm night, the moon was high;  
The dead men stood together.

All stood together on the deck,  
For a charnel-dungeon fitter:  
All fix’d on me their stony eyes 430  
That in the moon did glitter.

The pang, the curse, with which they died,  
Had never pass’d away;  
I could not draw my eyes from theirs  
Nor turn them up to pray.

And now this spell was snapt: once more  
I view’d the ocean green,<sup>1</sup>  
And look’d far forth, yet little saw  
Of what had else been seen.

Like one, that on a lonesome road 440  
Doth walk in fear and dread,  
And having once turn’d round, walks on  
And turns no more his head:  
Because he knows, a frightful fiend  
Doth close behind him tread.

---

1 *And now ... green*] 1798: “And in its time the spell was snapt,/And I could move my een:”

But soon<sup>1</sup> there breath'd a wind on me,  
Nor sound nor motion made:  
Its path was not upon the sea  
In ripple or in shade.

It rais'd my hair, it fann'd my cheek, 450  
Like a meadow-gale of spring—  
It mingled strangely with my fears,  
Yet it felt like a welcoming.

Swiftly, swiftly flew the ship  
Yet she sail'd softly too:  
Sweetly, sweetly blew the breeze—  
On me alone it blew.

O dream of joy! is this indeed  
The light-house top I see?  
Is this the Hill? Is this the Kirk? 460  
Is this mine own countrée?

We drifted o'er the Harbour-bar,  
And I with sobs did pray—  
“O let me be awake, my God!  
Or let me sleep away!”

The harbour-bay was clear as glass,  
So smoothly it was strewn!  
And on the bay the moonlight lay,  
And the shadow of the moon.<sup>2</sup>

The rock shone bright, the kirk no less 470  
That stands above the rock:  
The moonlight steep'd in silentness  
The steady weathercock.

And the bay was white with silent light,  
Till rising from the same  
Full many shapes, that shadows were,  
In crimson colours came.

---

1 *But soon*] 1798: “Eftsones”

2 *moon*] In the 1798 edition, five additional stanzas follow. See pp. 67–68.

A little distance from the prow  
Those crimson shadows were:  
I turn'd my eyes upon the deck—  
O Christ! what saw I there? 480

Each corse lay flat, lifeless and flat;  
And by the Holy rood<sup>1</sup>  
A man all light, a seraph-man,  
On every corse there stood.

This seraph-band, each wav'd his hand:  
It was a heavenly sight:  
They stood as signals to the land,  
Each one a lovely light:

This seraph-band, each wav'd his hand,  
No voice did they impart—  
No voice; but O! the silence sank,  
Like music on my heart. 490

But soon I heard the dash of oars,  
I heard the pilot's cheer:  
My head was turn'd perforce away  
And I saw a boat appear.

The pilot, and the pilot's boy  
I heard them coming fast:  
Dear Lord in Heaven! it was a joy,  
The dead men could not blast. 500

I saw a third—I heard his voice:  
It is the Hermit good!  
He singeth loud his godly hymns  
That he makes in the wood.  
He'll shrieve my soul, he'll wash away  
The Albatross's blood.

---

1 *Holy rood*] The cross of the Crucifixion.

## VII

=====

This Hermit good lives in that wood  
 Which slopes down to the Sea.  
 How loudly his sweet voice he rears! 510  
 He loves to talk with Mariners  
 That come from a far countreé.

He kneels at morn and noon and eve—  
 He hath a cushion plump:  
 It is the moss, that wholly hides  
 The rotted old Oak-stump.

The Skiff-boat ner'd: I heard them talk,  
 “Why, this is strange, I trow!  
 Where are those lights so many and fair  
 That signal made but now?” 520

“Strange, by my faith!” the Hermit said—  
 “And they answer'd not our cheer.  
 The planks look warp'd, and see those sails  
 How thin they are and sere!  
 I never saw aught like to them  
 Unless perchance it were

The skeletons of leaves that lag  
 My forest brook along:  
 When the Ivy-tod<sup>1</sup> is heavy with snow,  
 And the Owlet whoops to the wolf below 530  
 That eats the she-wolf's young.”

“Dear Lord! it has a fiendish look—”  
 (The Pilot made reply)  
 “I am a-fear'd.”—“Push on, push on!”  
 Said the Hermit cheerily.

The Boat came closer to the Ship,  
 But I nor spake nor stirr'd!

1 *Ivy-tod*] An ivy bush; also, a place of concealment.

The Boat came close beneath the Ship,  
And strait a sound was heard!

Under the water it rumbled on, 540  
Still louder and more dread:  
It reach'd the Ship, it split the bay;  
The Ship went down like lead.

Stunn'd by that loud and dreadful sound,  
Which sky and ocean smote:  
Like one that hath been seven days drown'd  
My body lay afloat:  
But, swift as dreams, myself I found  
Within the Pilot's boat.

Upon the whirl, where sank the Ship, 550  
The boat spun round and round:  
And all was still, save that the hill  
Was telling of the sound.

I mov'd my lips: the Pilot shriek'd  
And fell down in a fit.  
The Holy Hermit rais'd his eyes  
And pray'd where he did sit.

I took the oars: the Pilot's boy,  
Who now doth crazy go,  
Laugh'd loud and long, and all the while 560  
His eyes went to and fro,  
"Ha! ha!" quoth he—"full plain I see,  
The devil knows how to row."

And now all in mine own Countrée  
I stood on the firm land!  
The Hermit stepp'd forth from the boat,  
And scarcely he could stand.

"O shrieve me, shrieve me, holy Man!"  
The Hermit cross'd his brow—  
"Say quick," quoth he, "I bid thee say 570  
What manner man art thou?"

Forthwith this frame of mind was wrench'd  
With a woeful agony,  
Which forc'd me to begin my tale  
And then it left me free.

Since then at an uncertain hour,  
That agony returns;  
And till my ghastly tale is told  
This heart within me burns.<sup>1</sup>

I pass, like night, from land to land; 580  
I have strange power of speech;  
The moment that his face I see  
I know the man that must hear me;  
To him my tale I teach.

What loud uproar bursts from that door!  
The Wedding-guests are there;  
But in the Garden-bower the Bride  
And Bride-maids singing are:  
And hark the little Vesper-bell  
Which biddeth me to prayer. 590

O Wedding-guest! this soul hath been  
Alone on a wide wide sea:  
So lonely 'twas, that God himself  
Scarce seemed there to be.

O sweeter than the Marriage-feast,  
'Tis sweeter far to me  
To walk together to the Kirk  
With a goodly company.

To walk together to the Kirk  
And all together pray, 600  
While each to his great father bends,  
Old men, and babes, and loving friends,  
And Youths, and Maidens gay.

---

1 *That ... burns*] 1798: "Now oftimes and now fewer,/That anguish comes  
and makes me tell/My ghastly aventure."



Farewell, farewell! but this I tell  
To thee, thou wedding-guest!  
He prayeth well who loveth well  
Both man and bird and beast.

He prayeth best who loveth best  
All things both great and small:  
For the dear God, who loveth us,  
He made and loveth all.

610

The Mariner, whose eye is bright,  
Whose beard with age is hoar,  
Is gone; and now the wedding-guest  
Turn'd from the bridegroom's door.

He went, like one that hath been stunn'd  
And is of sense forlorn:  
A sadder and a wiser man  
He rose the morrow morn.

LINES

*Written a few miles above TINTERN ABBEY, on revisiting  
the banks of the WYE during a Tour,  
July 13, 1798<sup>1</sup>*

=====

Five years have passed; five summers, with the length  
Of five long winters! and again I hear  
These waters, rolling from their mountain-springs  
With a sweet inland murmur.\*—Once again  
Do I behold these steep and lofty cliffs,  
Which on a wild secluded scene impress  
Thoughts of more deep seclusion; and connect  
The landscape with the quiet of the sky.  
The day is come when I again repose  
Here, under this dark sycamore, and view 10  
These plots of cottage-ground, these orchard-tufts,  
Which, at this season, with their unripe fruits,  
Among the woods and copses lose themselves,  
Nor, with their green and simple hue, disturb  
The wild green landscape. Once again I see  
These hedge-rows, hardly hedge-rows, little lines  
Of sportive wood run wild; these pastoral farms  
Green to the very door; and wreathes of smoke  
Sent up, in silence, from among the trees,  
With some uncertain notice, as might seem, 20  
Of vagrant dwellers in the houseless woods,  
Or of some hermit's cave, where by his fire  
The hermit sits alone.

Though absent long,  
These forms of beauty have not been to me,  
As is a landscape to a blind man's eye:  
But oft, in lonely rooms, and mid the din

---

\* The river is not affected by the tides a few miles above Tintern. [Wordworth's note.]

---

1 By Wordsworth. The ruin of Tintern Abbey is located in Monmouthshire, Wales, on the west bank of the River Wye. Founded by Cistercian monks in 1131, enlarged between 1220 and 1287, and completed in the fourteenth century, it was dissolved in 1537 and given to the Lord of Chepstow. See Appendix H, p. 542.

Of towns and cities, I have owed to them,  
 In hours of weariness, sensations sweet,  
 Felt in the blood, and felt along the heart,  
 And passing even into my purer mind, 30  
 With tranquil restoration:—feelings too  
 Of unremembered pleasure: such, perhaps,  
 As may have had no trivial influence  
 On that best portion of a good man's life;  
 His little, nameless, unremembered acts  
 Of kindness and of love. Nor less, I trust,  
 To them I may have owed another gift,  
 Of aspect more sublime; that blessed mood,  
 In which the burthen of the mystery,  
 In which the heavy and the weary weight 40  
 Of all this unintelligible world  
 Is lighten'd:—that serene and blessed mood,  
 In which the affections gently lead us on,  
 Until, the breath of this corporeal frame,  
 And even the motion of our human blood  
 Almost suspended, we are laid asleep  
 In body, and become a living soul:<sup>1</sup>  
 While with an eye made quiet by the power  
 Of harmony, and the deep power of joy,  
 We see into the life of things.

If this 50

Be but a vain belief, yet, oh! how oft,  
 In darkness, and amid the many shapes  
 Of joyless day-light; when the fretful stir  
 Unprofitable, and the fever of the world,  
 Have hung upon the beatings of my heart,  
 How oft, in spirit, have I turned to thee  
 O sylvan Wye! Thou wanderer through the woods,  
 How often has my spirit turned to thee!

And now, with gleams of half-extinguish'd thought,  
 With many recognitions dim and faint, 60  
 And somewhat of a sad perplexity,

---

1 *breath ... soul*] Wordsworth invokes the relation between blood circulation and powerful feeling in his first published poem, "Sonnet on seeing Miss Helen Maria Williams Weep at a Tale of Distress." See Appendix G, p. 514.

The picture of the mind revives again:  
 While here I stand, not only with the sense  
 Of present pleasure, but with pleasing thoughts  
 That in this moment there is life and food  
 For future years. And so I dare to hope  
 Though changed, no doubt, from what I was, when first  
 I came among these hills; when like a roe  
 I bounded o'er the mountains, by the sides  
 Of the deep rivers, and the lonely streams, 70  
 Wherever nature led: more like a man  
 Flying from something that he dreads, than one  
 Who sought the thing he loved. For nature then  
 (The coarser pleasures of my boyish days,  
 And their glad animal movements all gone by,  
 To me was all in all.—I cannot paint  
 What then I was. The sounding cataract  
 Haunted me like a passion: the tall rock,  
 The mountain, and the deep and gloomy wood,  
 Their colours and their forms, were then to me 80  
 An appetite: a feeling and a love,  
 That had no need of a remoter charm,  
 By thought supplied, or any interest  
 Unborrowed from the eye.—That time is past,  
 And all its aching joys are now no more,  
 And all its dizzy raptures. Not for this  
 Faint I, nor mourn nor murmur: other gifts  
 Have followed, for such loss, I would believe,  
 Abundant recompence. For I have learned  
 To look on nature, not as in the hour 90  
 Of thoughtless youth, but hearing oftentimes  
 The still, sad music of humanity,  
 Nor harsh nor grating, though of ample power  
 To chasten and subdue. And I have felt  
 A presence that disturbs me with the joy  
 Of elevated thoughts; a sense sublime  
 Of something far more deeply interfused,  
 Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,  
 And the round ocean, and the living air,  
 And the blue sky, and in the mind of man, 100  
 A motion and a spirit, that impels  
 All thinking things, all objects of all thought,  
 And rolls through all things. Therefore am I still  
 A lover of the meadows and the woods,

And mountains; and of all that we behold  
 From this green earth; of all the mighty world  
 Of eye and ear, both what they half create,\*  
 And what perceive; well pleased to recognize  
 In nature and the language of the sense,  
 The anchor of my purest thoughts, the nurse, 110  
 The guide, the guardian of my heart, and soul  
 Of all my moral being.

Nor, perchance,  
 If I were not thus taught, should I the more  
 Suffer my genial spirits to decay:  
 For thou art with me, here, upon the banks  
 Of this fair river; thou, my dearest Friend,  
 My dear, dear Friend, and in thy voice I catch  
 The language of my former heart, and read  
 My former pleasures in the shooting lights  
 Of thy wild eyes. Oh! yet a little while 120  
 May I behold in thee what I was once,  
 My dear, dear Sister! And this prayer I make,  
 Knowing that Nature never did betray  
 The heart that loved her; 'tis her privilege,  
 Through all the years of this our life, to lead  
 From joy to joy: for she can so inform  
 The mind that is within us, so impress  
 With quietness and beauty, and so feed  
 With lofty thoughts, that neither evil tongues,  
 Rash judgments, nor the sneers of selfish men, 130  
 Nor greetings where no kindness is, nor all  
 The dreary intercourse of daily life,  
 Shall e'er prevail against us, or disturb  
 Our cheerful faith that all which we behold  
 Is full of blessings. Therefore let the moon  
 Shine on thee in thy solitary walk;  
 And let the misty mountain winds be free  
 To blow against thee: and in after years,  
 When these wild ecstasies shall be matured  
 Into a sober pleasure, when thy mind 140

---

\* This line has a close resemblance to an admirable line of Young, the exact expression of which I cannot recollect. [Wordsworth's note. Wordsworth refers to Edward Young's *Night Thoughts* (1742–45), Night VI, line 427: "And half create the wondrous world, they see."]

Shall be a mansion for all lovely forms,  
Thy memory be as a dwelling-place  
For all sweet sounds and harmonies; Oh! then,  
If solitude, or fear, or pain, or grief,  
Should be thy portion, with what healing thoughts  
Of tender joy wilt thou remember me,  
And these my exhortations! Nor perchance,  
If I should be, where I no more can hear  
Thy voice, nor catch from thy wild eyes these gleams  
Of past existence, wilt thou then forget 150  
That on the banks of this delightful stream  
We stood together; and that I, so long  
A worshipper of Nature, hither came,  
Unwearied in that service: rather say  
With warmer love, oh! with far deeper zeal  
Of holier love. Nor wilt thou then forget,  
That after many wanderings, many years  
Of absence, these steep woods and lofty cliffs,  
And this green pastoral landscape, were to me  
More dear, both for themselves, and for thy sake. 160

## NOTES

=====

NOTE to THE THORN, p. 205.—This Poem ought to have been preceded by an introductory Poem, which I have been prevented from writing by never having felt myself in a mood when it was probable that I should write it well.—The character which I have here introduced speaking is sufficiently common. The Reader will perhaps have a general notion of it, if he has ever known a man, 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 little to do become credulous and talkative from indolence; and from the same cause, and other predisposing causes by which it is probable that such men may have been affected, they are prone to superstition. On which account it appeared to me proper to select a character like this to exhibit some of the general laws by which superstition acts upon the mind. Superstitious men are almost always men of slow faculties and deep feelings; their minds are not loose but adhesive; they have a reasonable share of imagination, by which word I mean the faculty which produces impressive effects out of simple elements; but they are utterly destitute of fancy, the power by which pleasure and surprize are excited by sudden varieties of situation and by accumulated imagery.

It was my wish in this poem to shew the manner in which such men cleave to the same ideas; and to follow the turns of passion, always different, yet not palpably different, by which their conversation is swayed. I had two objects to attain; first, to represent a picture which should not be unimpressive yet consistent with the character that should describe it, secondly, while I adhered to the style in which such persons describe, to take care that words, which in their minds are impregnated with passion, should likewise convey passion to Readers who are not accustomed to sympathize with men feeling in that manner or using such language. It seemed to me that this might be done by calling in the assistance of Lyrical and rapid Metre. It was necessary that the Poem, to be natural, should in reality move slowly; yet I hoped, that, by the aid of the metre, to those who should at all enter into the spirit of the Poem, it would appear to move quickly. The Reader will have the kindness to excuse this

note as I am sensible that an introductory Poem is necessary to give this Poem its full effect.

Upon this occasion I will request permission to add a few words closely connected with THE THORN and many other Poems in these Volumes. There is a numerous class of readers who imagine that the same words cannot be repeated without tautology: this is a great error: virtual tautology is much oftener produced by using different words when the meaning is exactly the same. Words, a Poet's words more particularly, ought to be weighed in the balance of feeling and not measured by the space which they occupy upon paper. For the Reader cannot be too often reminded that Poetry is passion: it is the history or science of feelings: now every man must know that an attempt is rarely made to communicate impassioned feelings without something of an accompanying consciousness of the inadequateness of our own powers, or the deficiencies of language. During such efforts there will be a craving in the mind, and as long as it is unsatisfied the Speaker will cling to the same words, or words of the same character. There are also various other reasons why repetition and apparent tautology are frequently beauties of the highest kind. Among the chief of these reasons is the interest which the mind attaches to words, not only as symbols of the passion, but as *things*, active and efficient, which are of themselves part of the passion. And further, from a spirit of fondness, exultation, and gratitude, the mind luxuriates in the repetition of words which appear successfully to communicate its feelings. The truth of these remarks might be shewn by innumerable passages from the Bible and from the impassioned poetry of every nation.

“Awake, awake Deborah: awake, awake, utter a song:  
Arise Barak, and lead thy captivity captive, thou Son of  
Abinoam.

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.

Why is his Chariot so long in coming? Why tarry the  
Wheels of his Chariot?”—Judges, Chap. 5th. Verses  
12th, 27th, and part of 28th.—

See also the whole of that tumultuous and wonderful Poem.

NOTE to the ANCIENT MARINER, p. 259.—I cannot refuse myself the gratification of informing such Readers as may



have been pleased with this Poem, or with any part of it, that they owe their pleasure in some sort to me; as the Author was himself very desirous that it should be suppressed. This wish had arisen from a consciousness of the defects of the Poem, and from a knowledge that many persons had been much displeas'd with it. The Poem of my Friend has indeed great defects; first, that the principal person has no distinct character, either in his profession of Mariner, or as a human being who having been long under the controul of supernatural impressions might be supposed himself to partake of something supernatural: secondly, that he does not act, but is continually acted upon: thirdly, that the events having no necessary connection do not produce each other; and lastly, that the imagery is somewhat too laboriously accumulated. Yet the Poem contains many delicate touches of passion, and indeed the passion is every where true to nature; a great number of the stanzas present beautiful images, and are expressed with unusual felicity of language; and the versification, though the metre is itself unfit for long poems, is harmonious and artfully varied, exhibiting the utmost powers of that metre, and every variety of which it is capable. It therefore appeared to me that these several merits (the first of which, namely that of the passion, is of the highest kind,) gave to the Poem a value which is not often possessed by better Poems. On this account I requested of my Friend to permit me to republish it.

NOTE to the Poem ON REVISITING THE WYE, p. 282.— I have not ventured to call this Poem an Ode; but it was written with a hope that in the transitions, and the impassioned music of the versification would be found the principal requisites of that species of composition.

END OF VOL. I.

Review Copy

LYRICAL BALLADS,

WITH

*OTHER POEMS.*

IN TWO VOLUMES.

By W. WORDSWORTH.

=====

Quam nihil ad genium, Papiniane, tuum!

VOL. II.

*LONDON:*

PRINTED FOR T.N. LONGMAN AND O. REES,  
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1800.

Review Copy

HART-LEAP WELL<sup>1</sup>

=====

Hart-Leap Well is a small spring of water, about five miles from Richmond in Yorkshire, and near the side of the road which leads from Richmond to Askrigg.<sup>2</sup> Its name is derived from a remarkable chace, the memory of which is preserved by the monuments spoken of in the second Part of the following Poem, which monuments do now exist as I have there described them.

=====

The Knight had ridden down from Wensley<sup>3</sup> moor<sup>4</sup>  
 With the slow motion of a summer's cloud;  
 He turn'd aside towards a Vassal's<sup>5</sup> door,  
 And, "Bring another Horse!" he cried aloud.

"Another Horse!"—That shout the Vassal heard,  
 And saddled his best steed, a comely Grey;  
 Sir Walter mounted him; he was the third  
 Which he had mounted on that glorious day.

Joy sparkled in the prancing Courser's eyes;  
 The horse and horseman are a happy pair;  
 But, though Sir Walter like a falcon flies,  
 There is a doleful silence in the air.

10

A rout this morning left Sir Walter's Hall,  
 That as they gallop'd made the echoes roar;  
 But horse and man are vanish'd, one and all;  
 Such race, I think, was never seen before.

1 By Wordsworth.

2 *Askrigg*] A small town approximately fifteen miles west and five miles south of Richmond in northwest Yorkshire. See Appendix H, p. 542.

3 *Wensley*] A village on the River Ure in northwest Yorkshire between Richmond and Askrigg, approximately seven miles south of the former and twelve miles east of the latter.

4 *moor*] Uncultivated ground covered with heather, bracken, and fern.

5 *Vassal*] In the feudal system, one who holds a superior's lands on the condition of homage and allegiance and pays part of his harvest to the landowner.

Sir Walter, restless as a veering wind,  
Calls to the few tired dogs that yet remain:  
Brach, Swift and Music, noblest of their kind,  
Follow, and weary up the mountain strain. 20

The Knight halloo'd, he chid and cheer'd them on  
With suppliant gestures and upbraidings stern;  
But breath and eye-sight fail, and, one by one,  
The dogs are stretch'd among the mountain fern.

Where is the throng, the tumult of the chace?  
The bugles that so joyfully were blown?  
—This race it looks not like an earthly race;  
Sir Walter and the Hart are left alone.

The poor Hart toils along the mountain side;  
I will not stop to tell how far he fled, 30  
Nor will I mention by what death he died;  
But now the Knight beholds him lying dead.

Dismounting then, he lean'd against a thorn;  
He had no follower, dog, nor man, nor boy:  
He neither smack'd his whip, nor blew his horn,  
But gaz'd upon the spoil with silent joy.

Close to the thorn on which Sir Walter lean'd,  
Stood his dumb partner in this glorious act;  
Weak as a lamb the hour that it is yeon'd,<sup>1</sup>  
And foaming like a mountain cataract. 40

Upon his side the Hart was lying stretch'd:  
His nose half-touch'd a spring beneath a hill,  
And with the last deep groan his breath had fetch'd  
The waters of the spring were trembling still.

And now, too happy for repose or rest,  
Was never man in such a joyful case,  
Sir Walter walk'd all round, north, south and west,  
And gaz'd, and gaz'd upon that darling place.

---

1 *yeon'd*] Born.

And turning up the hill, it was at least  
Nine roods of sheer ascent, Sir Walter found 50  
Three several marks which with his hoofs the beast  
Had left imprinted on the verdant ground.

Sir Walter wiped his face, and cried, “Till now  
Such sight was never seen by living eyes:  
Three leaps have borne him from this lofty brow,  
Down to the very fountain where he lies.

I’ll build a Pleasure-house upon this spot,  
And a small Arbour, made for rural joy;  
’Twill be the traveller’s shed, the pilgrim’s cot,  
A place of love for damsels that are coy. 60

A cunning Artist will I have to frame  
A bason for that fountain in the dell;  
And they, who do make mention of the same,  
From this day forth, shall call it Hart-leap Well.

And, gallant brute! to make thy praises known,  
Another monument shall here be rais’d;  
Three several pillars, each a rough hewn stone,  
And planted where thy hoofs the turf have graz’d.

And in the summer-time when days are long,  
I will come hither with my paramour, 70  
And with the dancers, and the minstrel’s song,  
We will make merry in that pleasant bower.

Till the foundations of the mountains fail  
My mansion with its arbour shall endure,  
—The joy of them who till the fields of Swale,  
And them who dwell among the woods of Ure.”<sup>1</sup>

Then home he went, and left the Hart, stone-dead,  
With breathless nostrils stretch’d above the spring.  
And soon the Knight perform’d what he had said,  
The fame whereof through many a land did ring. 80

---

1 *Swale ... Ure*] Rivers in Northern Yorkshire that run parallel to one another until they merge into the River Ouse.

Ere thrice the moon into her port had steer'd,  
A cup of stone receiv'd the living well;  
Three pillars of rude stone Sir Walter rear'd,  
And built a house of pleasure in the dell.

And near the fountain, flowers of stature tall  
With trailing plants and trees were interwin'd,  
Which soon composed a little sylvan hall,  
A leafy shelter from the sun and wind.

And thither, when the summer days were long,  
Sir Walter journey'd with his paramour; 90  
And with the dancers and the minstrel's song  
Made merriment within that pleasant bower.

The Knight, Sir Walter, died in course of time,  
And his bones lie in his paternal vale.—  
But there is matter for a second rhyme,  
And I to this would add another tale.

*PART SECOND*

=====

The moving accident is not my trade.  
To curl the blood I have no ready arts;  
'Tis my delight, alone in summer shade,  
To pipe a simple song to thinking hearts. 100

As I from Hawes<sup>1</sup> to Richmond did repair,  
It chanc'd that I saw standing in a dell  
Three aspens at three corners of a square,  
And one, not four yards distant, near a well.

What this imported I could ill divine,  
And, pulling now the rein my horse to stop,  
I saw three pillars standing in a line,  
The last stone pillar on a dark hill-top.

---

1 *Hawes*] Town on the River Ure in North Yorkshire five miles west of Askrigg.



The trees were grey, with neither arms nor head;  
Half-wasted the square mound of tawny green; 110  
So that you just might say, as then I said,  
“Here in old time the hand of man has been.”

I look'd upon the hills both far and near;  
More doleful place did never eye survey;  
It seem'd as if the spring-time came not here,  
And Nature here were willing to decay.

I stood in various thoughts and fancies lost,  
When one who was in Shepherd's garb attir'd,  
Came up the hollow. Him did I accost,  
And what this place might be I then inquir'd. 120

The Shepherd stopp'd, and that same story told  
Which in my former rhyme I have rehears'd.  
“A jolly place,” said he, “in times of old,  
But something ails it now; the spot is curs'd.

You see these lifeless stumps of aspin wood,  
Some say that they are beeches, others elms,  
These were the Bower; and here a Mansion stood,  
The finest palace of a hundred realms.

The arbour does its own condition tell,  
You see the stones, the fountain, and the stream, 130  
But as to the great Lodge, you might as well  
Hunt half a day for a forgotten dream.

There's neither dog nor heifer, horse nor sheep,  
Will wet his lips within that cup of stone;  
And, oftentimes, when all are fast asleep,  
This water doth send forth a dolorous groan.

Some say that here a murder has been done,  
And blood cries out for blood: but, for my part,  
I've guess'd, when I've been sitting in the sun,  
That it was all for that unhappy Hart. 140

What thoughts must through the creature's brain have pass'd!  
To this place from the stone upon the steep  
Are but three bounds, and look, Sir, at this last!  
O Master! it has been a cruel leap.

For thirteen hours he ran a desperate race;  
And in my simple mind we cannot tell  
What cause the Hart might have to love this place,  
And come and make his death-bed near the well.

Here on the grass perhaps asleep he sank,  
Lull'd by this fountain in the summer-tide; 150  
This water was perhaps the first he drank  
When he had wander'd from his mother's side.

In April here beneath the scented thorn  
He heard the birds their morning carols sing,  
And he, perhaps, for aught we know, was born  
Not half a furlong from that self-same spring.

But now here's neither grass nor pleasant shade;  
The sun on drearier hollow never shone:  
So will it be, as I have often said,  
Till trees, and stones, and fountain all are gone." 160

"Grey-headed Shepherd, thou hast spoken well;  
Small difference lies between thy creed and mine;  
This beast not unobserv'd by Nature fell,  
His death was mourn'd by sympathy divine.

The Being, that is in the clouds and air,  
That is in the green leaves among the groves,  
Maintains a deep and reverential care  
For them the quiet creatures whom he loves.

The Pleasure-house is dust:—behind, before,  
This is no common waste, no common gloom; 170  
But Nature, in due course of time, once more  
Shall here put on her beauty and her bloom.

She leaves these objects to a slow decay  
That what we are, and have been, may be known;  
But, at the coming of the milder day,  
These monuments shall all be overgrown.

One lesson, Shepherd, let us two divide,  
Taught both by what she shews, and what conceals,  
Never to blend our pleasure or our pride  
With sorrow of the meanest thing that feels. 180

=====

There was a Boy, ye knew him well, ye Cliffs<sup>1</sup>  
 And Islands of Winander!<sup>2</sup> many a time,  
 At evening, when the stars had just begun  
 To move along the edges of the hills,  
 Rising or setting, would he stand alone,  
 Beneath the trees, or by the glimmering lake,  
 And there, with fingers interwoven, both hands  
 Press'd closely palm to palm and to his mouth  
 Uplifted, he, as through an instrument,  
 Blew mimic hootings to the silent owls 10  
 That they might answer him. And they would shout  
 Across the wat'ry vale and shout again  
 Responsive to his call, with quivering peals,  
 And long halloos, and screams, and echoes loud  
 Redoubled and redoubled, a wild scene  
 Of mirth and jocund din.<sup>3</sup> And, when it chanced  
 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 20  
 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, receiv'd  
 Into the bosom of the steady lake.

Fair are the woods, and beauteous is the spot,  
 The vale where he was born: the Church-yard hangs  
 Upon a slope above the village school,  
 And there along that bank when I have pass'd  
 At evening, I believe, that near his grave 30  
 A full half-hour together I have stood,  
 Mute—for he died when he was ten years old.

---

1 By Wordsworth.

2 *Winander*] The older name for Lake Windermere in the southern Lake District.

3 *Blew mimic hootings ... din*] See lines 31–32 of Coleridge's "The Foster-Mother's Tale," p. 74, and the excerpt from Joanna Baillie's *De Monfort* in Appendix G, pp. 526–27.

THE  
BROTHERS,  
A PASTORAL POEM.<sup>1</sup>

---

1 By Wordsworth.

*The BROTHERS* \*

=====

“These Tourists, Heaven preserve us! needs must live  
 A profitable life: some glance along,  
 Rapid and gay, as if the earth were air,  
 And they were butterflies to wheel about  
 Long as their summer lasted; some, as wise,  
 Upon the forehead of a jutting crag  
 Sit perch’d with book and pencil on their knee,  
 And look and scribble, scribble on and look,  
 Until a man might travel twelve stout miles,  
 Or reap an acre of his neighbour’s corn. 10  
 But, for that moping son of Idleness  
 Why can he tarry *yonder?*—In our church-yard  
 Is neither epitaph nor monument,  
 Tomb-stone nor name, only the turf we tread,  
 And a few natural graves.” To Jane, his Wife,  
 Thus spake the homely Priest of Ennerdale.<sup>1</sup>  
 It was a July evening, and he sate  
 Upon the long stone-seat beneath the eaves  
 Of his old cottage, as it chanced that day,  
 Employ’d in winter’s work. Upon the stone 20  
 His Wife sate near him, teasing matted wool,  
 While, from the twin cards tooth’d with glittering wire,  
 He fed the spindle of his youngest child,  
 Who turn’d her large round wheel in the open air  
 With back and forward steps. Towards the field  
 In which the parish chapel stood alone,  
 Girt round with a bare ring of mossy wall,  
 While half an hour went by, the Priest had sent  
 Many a long look of wonder, and at last,  
 Risen from his seat, beside the snowy ridge 30

---

\* This Poem was intended to be the concluding poem of a series of pastorals, the scene of which was laid among the mountains of Cumberland and Westmoreland. I mention this to apologise for the abruptness with which the poem begins. [Wordsworth’s note.]

---

1 *Ennerdale*] A lake and small village in the northwest quadrant of the Lake District. See Appendix H, p. 544.

Of carded<sup>1</sup> wool which the old Man had piled  
 He laid his implements with gentle care,  
 Each in the other lock'd; and, down the path  
 Which from his cottage to the church-yard led,  
 He took his way, impatient to accost  
 The Stranger, whom he saw still lingering there.

'Twas one well known to him in former days,  
 A Shepherd-lad: who ere his thirteenth year  
 Had chang'd his calling, with the mariners  
 A fellow-mariner, and so had fared 40  
 Through twenty seasons; but he had been rear'd  
 Among the mountains, and he in his heart  
 Was half a Shepherd on the stormy seas.  
 Oft in the piping shrouds had Leonard heard  
 The tones of waterfalls, and inland sounds  
 Of caves and trees; and when the regular wind  
 Between the tropics fill'd the steady sail  
 And blew with the same breath through days and weeks,  
 Lengthening invisibly its weary line  
 Along the cloudless main, he, in those hours 50  
 Of tiresome indolence would often hang  
 Over the vessel's side, and gaze and gaze,  
 And, while the broad green wave and sparkling foam  
 Flash'd round him images and hues, that wrought  
 In union with the employment of his heart,  
 He, thus by feverish passion overcome,  
 Even with the organs of his bodily eye,  
 Below him, in the bosom of the deep  
 Saw mountains, saw the forms of sheep that graz'd  
 On verdant hills, with dwellings among trees, 60  
 And Shepherds clad in the same country grey  
 Which he himself had worn.\*

\* This description of the Calenture is sketched from an imperfect recollection of an admirable one in prose, by Mr. Gilbert, Author of the Hurricane. [Wordsworth's note. Calenture is a disease of sailors in the tropics characterized by a delirium where the sailor fancies the sea to be a green field and desires to jump in. Wordsworth refers here to William Gilbert's *Hurricane; a Theosophical and Western Eclogue* (1796).]

1 *carded*] The process, described in lines 21–22, of preparing wool for spinning by parting and straightening wool fibers with cards, one held in the hand and the other fastened to a support.

And now at length,

From perils manifold, with some small wealth  
 Acquir'd by traffic in the Indian Isles,  
 To his paternal home he is return'd,  
 With a determin'd purpose to resume  
 The life which he liv'd there, both for the sake  
 Of many darling pleasures, and the love  
 Which to an only brother he has borne  
 In all his hardships, since that happy time 70  
 When, whether it blew foul or fair, they two  
 Were brother Shepherds on their native hills.  
 —They were the last of all their race; and now,  
 When Leonard had approach'd his home, his heart  
 Fail'd in him, and, not venturing to inquire  
 Tidings of one whom he so dearly lov'd,  
 Towards the church-yard he had turn'd aside,  
 That, as he knew in what particular spot  
 His family were laid, he thence might learn  
 If still his Brother liv'd, or to the file 80  
 Another grave was added.—He had found  
 Another grave, near which a full half hour  
 He had remain'd, but, as he gaz'd, there grew  
 Such a confusion in his memory,  
 That he began to doubt, and he had hopes  
 That he had seen this heap of turf before,  
 That it was not another grave, but one,  
 He had forgotten. He had lost his path,  
 As up the vale he came that afternoon,  
 Through fields which once had been well known to him. 90  
 And Oh! what joy the recollection now  
 Sent to his heart! he lifted up his eyes,  
 And looking round he thought that he perceiv'd  
 Strange alteration wrought on every side  
 Among the woods and fields, and that the rocks,  
 And the eternal hills, themselves were chang'd.

By this the Priest who down the field had come  
 Unseen by Leonard, at the church-yard gate  
 Stopp'd short, and thence, at leisure, limb by limb  
 He scann'd him with a gay complacency. 100  
 Aye, thought the Vicar, smiling to himself,  
 'Tis one of those who needs must leave the path  
 Of the world's business, to go wild alone:

His arms have a perpetual holiday,  
The happy man will creep about the fields  
Following his fancies by the hour, to bring  
Tears down his cheek, or solitary smiles  
Into his face, until the setting sun  
Write Fool upon his forehead. Planted thus  
Beneath a shed that overarch'd the gate 110  
Of this rude church-yard, till the stars appear'd  
The good man might have commun'd with himself  
But that the Stranger, who had left the grave,  
Approach'd; he recogniz'd the Priest at once,  
And after greetings interchang'd, and given  
By Leonard to the Vicar as to one  
Unknown to him, this dialogue ensued.

LEONARD

You live, Sir, in these dales, a quiet life:  
Your years make up one peaceful family;  
And who would grieve and fret, if, welcome come 120  
And welcome gone, they are so like each other,  
They cannot be remember'd. Scarce a funeral  
Comes to this church-yard once in eighteen months;  
And yet, some changes must take place among you.  
And you, who dwell here, even among these rocks  
Can trace the finger of mortality,  
And see, that with our threescore years and ten  
We are not all that perish.—I remember,  
For many years ago I pass'd this road,  
There was a foot-way all along the fields 130  
By the brook-side—'tis gone—and that dark cleft!  
To me it does not seem to wear the face  
Which then it had.

PRIEST

Why, Sir, for aught I know,  
That chasm is much the same—

LEONARD

But, surely, yonder—



## PRIEST

Aye, there indeed, your memory is a friend  
 That does not play you false.—On that tall pike,  
 (It is the loneliest place of all these hills)  
 There were two Springs which bubbled side by side,  
 As if they had been made that they might be  
 Companions for each other: ten years back, 140  
 Close to those brother fountains, the huge crag  
 Was rent with lightning—one is dead and gone,  
 The other, left behind, is flowing still.—  
 For accidents and changes such as these,  
 Why we have store of them! a water-spout  
 Will bring down half a mountain; what a feast  
 For folks that wander up and down like you,  
 To see an acre's breadth of that wide cliff  
 One roaring cataract—a sharp May storm  
 Will come with loads of January snow, 150  
 And in one night send twenty score of sheep  
 To feed the ravens, or a Shepherd dies  
 By some untoward death among the rocks:  
 The ice breaks up and sweeps away a bridge—  
 A wood is fell'd:—and then for our own homes!  
 A child is born or christen'd, a field plough'd,  
 A daughter sent to service, a web spun,  
 The old house cloth is deck'd with a new face;  
 And hence, so far from wanting facts or dates  
 To chronicle the time, we all have here 160  
 A pair of diaries, one serving, Sir,  
 For the whole dale, and one for each fire-side,  
 Yours was a stranger's judgment: for historians  
 Commend me to these vallies.

## LEONARD

Yet your church-yard  
 Seems, if such freedom may be used with you,  
 To say that you are heedless of the past.  
 An orphan could not find his Mother's grave.<sup>1</sup>

---

1 *An orphan ... grave*] This line exists both in Dove Cottage MS 174 and in the second errata sheet of *Lyrical Ballads* (1800), and so is here emended.

Here's neither head nor foot-stone, plate of brass,  
Cross-bones or skull, type of our earthly state  
Or emblem of our hopes: the dead man's home 170  
Is but a fellow to that pasture field.

PRIEST

Why there, Sir, is a thought that's new to me.  
The Stone-cutters, 'tis true, might beg their bread  
If every English church-yard were like ours:  
Yet your conclusion wanders from the truth.  
We have no need of names and epitaphs,  
We talk about the dead by our fire-sides.  
And then for our immortal part, we want  
No symbols, Sir, to tell us that plain tale:  
The thought of death sits easy on the man 180  
Who has been born and dies among the mountains.

LEONARD

Your dalesmen, then, do in each other's thoughts  
Possess a kind of second life: no doubt  
You, Sir, could help me to the history  
Of half these Graves?

PRIEST

For eight-score winters past<sup>1</sup>  
With what I've witness'd, and with what I've heard,  
Perhaps I might, and, on a winter's evening,  
If you were seated at my chimney's nook  
By turning o'er these hillocks one by one,  
We two could travel, Sir, through a strange round, 190  
Yet all in the broad high-way of the world.  
Now there's a grave—your foot is half upon it,  
It looks just like the rest, and yet that man  
Died broken-hearted.

---

1 *For eight-score winters past*] This half-line exists both in Dove Cottage MS 174 and in the second errata sheet of *Lyrical Ballads* (1800), and so is here emended.

LEONARD

'Tis a common case,  
We'll take another: who is he that lies  
Beneath yon ridge, the last of those three graves;—  
It touches on that piece of native rock  
Left in the church-yard wall.

PRIEST

That's Walter Ewbank.  
He had as white a head and fresh a cheek  
As ever were produc'd by youth and age 200  
Engendering in the blood of hale fourscore.  
For five long generations had the heart  
Of Walter's forefathers o'erflow'd the bounds  
Of their inheritance, that single cottage,  
You see it yonder, and those few green fields.  
They toil'd and wrought, and still, from sire to son,  
Each struggled, and each yielded as before  
A little—yet a little—and old Walter,  
They left to him the family heart, and land 210  
With other burthens than the crop it bore.  
Year after year the old man still preserv'd  
A chearful mind, and buffeted with bond,  
Interest and mortgages; at last he sank,  
And went into his grave before his time.  
Poor Walter! whether it was care that spurr'd him  
God only knows, but to the very last  
He had the lightest foot in Ennerdale:  
His pace was never that of an old man:  
I almost see him tripping down the path  
With his two Grandsons after him—but you, 220  
Unless our Landlord be your host to-night,  
Have far to travel, and in these rough paths  
Even in the longest day of midsummer—

LEONARD

But these two Orphans!

PRIEST

Orphans! such they were—  
Yet not while Walter liv'd—for, though their Parents

Lay buried side by side as now they lie,  
 The old Man was a father to the boys,  
 Two fathers in one father: and if tears  
 Shed, when he talk'd of them where they were not,  
 And hauntings from the infirmity of love, 230  
 Are aught of what makes up a mother's heart,  
 This old Man in the day of his old age  
 Was half a mother to them.—If you weep, Sir,  
 To hear a stranger talking about strangers,  
 Heaven bless you when you are among your kindred!  
 Aye. You may turn that way—it is a grave  
 Which will bear looking at.

LEONARD

These Boys I hope  
 They lov'd this good old Man—

PRIEST

They did—and truly,  
 But that was what we almost overlook'd,  
 They were such darlings of each other. For 240  
 Though from their cradles they had liv'd with Walter,  
 The only kinsman near them in the house,  
 Yet he being old, they had much love to spare,  
 And it all went into each other's hearts.  
 Leonard, the elder by just eighteen months,  
 Was two years taller: 'twas a joy to see,  
 To hear, to meet them! from their house the School  
 Was distant three short miles, and in the time  
 Of storm and thaw, when every water-course  
 And unbridg'd stream, such as you may have notic'd 250  
 Crossing our roads at every hundred steps,  
 Was swoln into a noisy rivulet,  
 Would Leonard then, when elder boys perhaps  
 Remain'd at home, go staggering through the fords  
 Bearing his Brother on his back.—I've seen him,  
 On windy days, in one of those stray brooks,  
 Aye, more than once I've seen him mid-leg deep,  
 Their two books lying both on a dry stone  
 Upon the hither side:—and once I said,  
 As I remember, looking round these rocks 260

And hills on which we all of us were born,  
That God who made the great book of the world  
Would bless such piety—

LEONARD

It may be then—

PRIEST

Never did worthier lads break English bread:  
The finest Sunday that the Autumn saw,  
With all its mealy clusters of ripe nuts,  
Could never keep these boys away from church,  
Or tempt them to an hour of sabbath breach.  
Leonard and James! I warrant, every corner  
Among these rocks and every hollow place 270  
Where foot could come, to one or both of them  
Was known as well as to the flowers that grew there.  
Like roe-bucks they went bounding o'er the hills:  
They play'd like two young ravens on the crags:  
Then they could write, aye and speak too, as well  
As many of their betters—and for Leonard!  
The very night before he went away,  
In my own house I put into his hand  
A Bible, and I'd wager twenty pounds,  
That, if he is alive, he has it yet. 280

LEONARD

It seems, these Brothers have not liv'd to be  
A comfort to each other.—

PRIEST

That they might  
Live to that end, is what both old and young  
In this our valley all of us have wish'd,  
And what, for my part, I have often pray'd:  
But Leonard—

LEONARD

Then James still is left among you—

## PRIEST

'Tis of the elder Brother I am speaking:  
 They had an Uncle, he was at that time  
 A thriving man, and traffick'd on the seas:  
 And, but for this same Uncle, to this hour 290  
 Leonard had never handled rope or shroud.  
 For the Boy lov'd the life which we lead here;  
 And, though a very Stripling, twelve years old;  
 His soul was knit to this his native soil.  
 But, as I said, old Walter was too weak  
 To strive with such a torrent; when he died,  
 The estate and house were sold, and all their sheep,  
 A pretty flock, and which, for aught I know,  
 Had clothed the Ewbanks for a thousand years.  
 Well—all was gone, and they were destitute. 300  
 And Leonard, chiefly for his brother's sake,  
 Resolv'd to try his fortune on the seas.  
 'Tis now twelve years since we had tidings from him.  
 If there was one among us who had heard  
 That Leonard Ewbank was come home again,  
 From the great Gavel,\* down by Leeza's Banks,  
 And down the Enna, far as Egremont,  
 The day would be a very festival,  
 And those two bells of ours, which there you see  
 Hanging in the open air—but, O good Sir! 310  
 This is sad talk—they'll never sound for him  
 Living or dead—When last we heard of him  
 He was in slavery among the Moors  
 Upon the Barbary Coast—'Twas not a little  
 That would bring down his spirit, and, no doubt,  
 Before it ended in his death, the Lad  
 Was sadly cross'd—Poor Leonard! when we parted,  
 He took me by the hand and said to me,  
 If ever the day came when he was rich,  
 He would return, and on his Father's Land 320  
 He would grow old among us.

\* The great Gavel, so called I imagine, from its resemblance to the Gable end of a house, is one of the highest of the Cumberland mountains. It stands at the head of the several vales of Ennerdale, Wastdale, and Borrowdale. The Leeza is a River which follows into the Lake of Ennerdale: on issuing from the Lake, it changes its name, and is called the End, Eyne, or Enna. It falls into the sea a little below Egremont.  
 [Wordsworth's note. See Appendix H, p. 544.]

LEONARD

If that day  
Should come, 'twould needs be a glad day for him;  
He would himself, no doubt, be as happy then  
As any that should meet him—

PRIEST

Happy, Sir—

LEONARD

You said his kindred all were in their graves,  
And that he had one Brother—

PRIEST

That is but  
A fellow tale of sorrow. From his youth  
James, though not sickly, yet was delicate,  
And Leonard being always by his side  
Had done so many offices about him, 330  
That, though he was not of a timid nature,  
Yet still the spirit of a mountain boy  
In him was somewhat check'd, and when his Brother  
Was gone to sea and he was left alone  
The little colour that he had was soon  
Stolen from his cheek, he droop'd, and pin'd and pin'd:

LEONARD

But these are all the graves of full grown men!

PRIEST

Aye, Sir, that pass'd away: we took him to us.  
He was the child of all the dale—he liv'd  
Three months with one, and six months with another: 340  
And wanted neither food, nor clothes, nor love,  
And many, many happy days were his.  
But, whether blithe or sad, 'tis my belief  
His absent Brother still was at his heart.

And, when he liv'd beneath our roof, we found  
 (A practice till this time unknown to him)  
 That often, rising from his bed at night,  
 He in his sleep would walk about, and sleeping  
 He sought his Brother Leonard—You are mov'd!  
 Forgive me, Sir: before I spoke to you, 350  
 I judg'd you most unkindly.

## LEONARD

But this youth,  
 How did he die at last?

## PRIEST

One sweet May morning,  
 It will be twelve years since, when Spring returns,  
 He had gone forth among the new-dropp'd lambs,  
 With two or three companions whom it chanc'd  
 Some further business summon'd to a house  
 Which stands at the Dale-head. James, tir'd perhaps,  
 Or from some other cause remain'd behind.  
 You see yon precipice—it almost looks  
 Like some vast building made of many crags, 360  
 And in the midst is one particular rock  
 That rises like a column from the vale,  
 Whence by our Shepherds it is call'd, the Pillar.<sup>1</sup>  
 James, pointing to its summit, over which  
 They all had purpos'd to return together,  
 Inform'd them that he there would wait for them:  
 They parted, and his comrades pass'd 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, 370  
 Going by chance, at night, into the house  
 Which at this time was James's home, there learn'd  
 That nobody had seen him all that day:  
 The morning came, and still, he was unheard of:  
 The neighbours were alarm'd, and to the Brook  
 Some went, and some towards the Lake; ere noon  
 They found him at the foot of that same Rock

---

1 *Pillar*] Mountain at the head of Ennerdale, four miles west of Seathwaite.



Dead, and with mangled limbs. The third day after  
I buried him, poor Lad, and there he lies.

LEONARD

And that then *is* his grave!—Before his death 380  
You said that he saw many happy years?

PRIEST

Aye, that he did—

LEONARD

And all went well with him—

PRIEST

If he had one, the Lad had twenty homes.

LEONARD

And you believe then, that his mind was easy—

PRIEST

Yes, long before he died, he found that time  
Is a true friend to sorrow, and unless  
His thoughts were turn'd on Leonard's luckless fortune,  
He talk'd about him with a chearful love.

LEONARD

He could not come to an unhallow'd end!

PRIEST

Nay, God forbid! You recollect I mention'd 390  
A habit which disquietude and grief  
Had brought upon him, and we all conjectur'd  
That, as the day was warm, he had lain down  
Upon the grass, and, waiting for his comrades  
He there had fallen asleep, that in his sleep

He to the margin of the precipice  
Had walk'd, and from the summit had fallen head-long,  
And so no doubt he perish'd: at the time,  
We guess, that in his hands he must have had  
His Shepherd's staff; for midway in the cliff 400  
It had been caught, and there for many years  
It hung—and moulder'd there.

The Priest here ended—  
The Stranger would have thank'd him, but he felt  
Tears rushing in; both left the spot in silence,  
And Leonard, when they reach'd the church-yard gate,  
As the Priest lifted up the latch, turn'd round,  
And, looking at the grave, he said, "My Brother."  
The Vicar did not hear the words: and now,  
Pointing towards the Cottage, he entreated  
That Leonard would partake his homely fare: 410  
The other thank'd him with a fervent voice,  
But added, that, the evening being calm,  
He would pursue his journey. So they parted.

It was not long ere Leonard reach'd a grove  
That overhung the road: he there stopp'd short,  
And, sitting down beneath the trees, review'd  
All that the Priest had said: his early years  
Were with him in his heart: his cherish'd hopes,  
And thoughts which had been his an hour before,  
All press'd on him with such a weight, that now, 420  
This vale, where he had been so happy, seem'd  
A place in which he could not bear to live:  
So he relinquish'd all his purposes.  
He travell'd on to Egremont; and thence,  
That night, address'd a letter to the Priest  
Reminding him of what had pass'd between them.  
And adding, with a hope to be forgiven,  
That it was from the weakness of his heart,  
He had not dared to tell him, who he was.

This done, he went on shipboard, and is now 430  
A Seaman, a grey headed Mariner.

*ELLEN IRWIN,<sup>1</sup>*  
*Or the BRAES<sup>2</sup> of KIRTLE\**

Fair Ellen Irwin, when she sate  
Upon the Braes of Kirtle,  
Was lovely as a Grecian Maid  
Adorn'd with wreaths of myrtle.  
Young Adam Bruce beside her lay,  
And there did they beguile the day  
With love and gentle speeches,  
Beneath the budding beeches.

From many Knights and many Squires  
The Bruce had been selected, 10  
And Gordon, fairest of them all,  
By Ellen was rejected.  
Sad tidings to that noble Youth!  
For it may be proclaim'd with truth,  
If Bruce hath lov'd sincerely,  
The Gordon loves as dearly.

But what is Gordon's beauteous face?  
And what are Gordon's crosses  
To them who sit by Kirtle's Braes  
Upon the verdant mosses? 20  
Alas that ever he was born!  
The Gordon, couch'd behind a thorn,  
Sees them and their caressing,  
Beholds them bless'd and blessing.

Proud Gordon cannot bear the thoughts  
That through his brain are travelling,  
And, starting up, to Bruce's heart  
He launch'd a deadly jav'lin!  
Fair Ellen saw it when it came,  
And, stepping forth to meet the same, 30  
Did with her body cover  
The Youth her chosen lover.

---

\* The Kirtle is a River in the Southern part of Scotland, on whose banks the events here related took place. [Wordsworth's note. See Appendix H, p. 542.]

1 By Wordsworth.

2 *BRAES*] Steep banks bounding a river valley.

And, falling into Bruce's arms,  
Thus died the beauteous Ellen,  
Thus from the heart of her true-love  
The mortal spear repelling.  
And Bruce, as soon as he had slain  
The Gordon, sail'd away to Spain,  
And fought with rage incessant  
Against the Moorish Crescent.<sup>1</sup> 40

But many days and many months,  
And many years ensuing,  
This wretched Knight did vainly seek  
The death that he was wooing:  
So coming back across the wave,  
Without a groan on Ellen's grave  
His body he extended,  
And there his sorrow ended.

Now ye who willingly have heard  
The tale I have been telling, 50  
May in Kirkonnel<sup>2</sup> church-yard view  
The grave of lovely Ellen:  
By Ellen's side the Bruce is laid,  
And, for the stone upon his head,  
May no rude hand deface it,  
And its forlorn HIC JACET.<sup>3</sup>

=====

Strange fits of passion I have known,<sup>4</sup>  
And I will dare to tell,  
But in the lover's ear alone,  
What once to me befel.

- 
- 1 *Moorish Crescent*] The crescent moon was a long-standing Turkish symbol, adopted by the Ottoman Empire after the conquest of Constantinople in 1453 and used on the flags of many nations today.
  - 2 *Kirkonnel*] A village south of Dumfries in Scotland.
  - 3 *HIC JACET*] Latin phrase, usually inscribed on graves as "hic jacet X, filius X" ["here lies X, son (or daughter) of X"].
  - 4 By Wordsworth.

When she I lov'd, was strong and gay  
And like a rose in June,  
I to her cottage bent my way,  
Beneath the evening moon.

Upon the moon I fix'd my eye,  
All over the wide lea;<sup>1</sup> 10  
My horse trudg'd on, and we drew nigh  
Those paths so dear to me.

And now we reach'd the orchard plot,  
And, as we climb'd the hill,  
Towards the roof of Lucy's cot  
The moon descended still.

In one of those sweet dreams I slept,  
Kind Nature's gentlest boon!  
And, all the while, my eyes I kept  
On the descending moon. 20

My horse mov'd on; hoof after hoof  
He rais'd and never stopp'd:  
When down behind the cottage roof  
At once the planet dropp'd.

What fond and wayward thoughts will slide  
Into a Lover's head—  
"O mercy!" to myself I cried,  
"If Lucy should be dead!"

SONG<sup>2</sup>

=====

She dwelt among th' untrodden ways  
Beside the springs of Dove,<sup>3</sup>  
A Maid whom there were none to praise  
And very few to love.

---

1 *lea*] Tract of open meadow or pasture.

2 By Wordsworth.

3 *Dove*] A tributary of the Trent River in Derbyshire.

A Violet by a mossy stone  
Half-hidden from the Eye!  
—Fair, as a star when only one  
Is shining in the sky!

She *liv'd* unknown, and few could know  
When Lucy ceas'd to be; 10  
But she is in her Grave, and Oh!  
The difference to me.

=====

A slumber did my spirit seal,<sup>1</sup>  
I had no human fears:  
She seem'd a thing that could not feel  
The touch of earthly years.

No motion has she now, no force  
She neither hears nor sees  
Roll'd round in earth's diurnal course  
With rocks and stones and trees!

*The WATERFALL and the EGLANTINE*<sup>2</sup>

=====

“Begone, thou fond presumptuous Elf,”  
Exclaim'd a thundering Voice,  
“Nor dare to thrust thy foolish self  
Between me and my choice!”  
A falling Water swoln with snows  
Thus spake to a poor Briar-rose,  
That all bespatter'd with his foam,  
And dancing high, and dancing low,  
Was living, as a child might know,  
In an unhappy home. 10

---

1 By Wordsworth.

2 By Wordsworth. *EGLANTINE*] Sweet-briar, a rose with strong hooked thorns and aromatic leaves.

“Dost thou presume my course to block?  
Off, off! or, puny Thing!  
I’ll hurl thee headlong with the rock  
To which thy fibres cling.”  
The Flood was tyrannous and strong;  
The patient Briar suffer’d long,  
Nor did he utter groan or sigh,  
Hoping the danger would be pass’d:  
But seeing no relief, at last  
He ventur’d to reply. 20

“Ah!” said the Briar, “Blame me not!  
Why should we dwell in strife?  
We who in this, our natal spot,  
Once liv’d a happy life!  
You stirr’d me on my rocky bed—  
What pleasure thro’ my veins you spread!  
The Summer long from day to day  
My leaves you freshen’d and bedew’d;  
Nor was it common gratitude  
That did your cares repay. 30

When Spring came on with bud and bell,  
Among these rocks did I  
Before you hang my wreath to tell  
That gentle days were nigh!  
And in the sultry summer hours  
I shelter’d you with leaves and flowers;  
And in my leaves now shed and gone  
The linnet lodg’d and for us two  
Chaunted his pretty songs when you  
Had little voice or none. 40

But now proud thoughts are in your breast—  
What grief is mine you see.  
Ah! would you think, ev’n yet how blest  
Together we might be!  
Though of both leaf and flower bereft,  
Some ornaments to me are left—  
Rich store of scarlet hips is mine,  
With which I in my humble way  
Would deck you many a Winter’s day,  
A happy Eglantine!” 50

What more he said, I cannot tell.  
The stream came thundering down the dell  
And gallop'd loud and fast;  
I listen'd, nor aught else could hear,  
The Briar quak'd and much I fear,  
Those accents were his last.

*The OAK and the BROOM,*<sup>1</sup>  
*A PASTORAL*

=====

His simple truths did Andrew glean  
Beside the babbling rills;  
A careful student he had been  
Among the woods and hills.  
One winter's night when through the Trees  
The wind was thundering, on his knees  
His youngest born did Andrew hold:  
And while the rest, a ruddy quire  
Were seated round their blazing fire,  
This Tale the Shepherd told. 10

I saw a crag, a lofty stone  
As ever tempest beat!  
Out of its head an Oak had grown,  
A Broom out of its feet.  
The time was March, a chearful noon—  
The thaw-wind with the breath of June  
Breath'd gently from the warm South-west;  
When in a voice sedate with age  
This Oak, half giant and half sage,  
His neighbour thus address'd. 20

“Eight weary weeks, thro' rock and clay,  
Along this mountain's edge  
The Frost hath wrought both night and day,  
Wedge driving after wedge.  
Look up, and think, above your head

---

1 By Wordsworth. *BROOM*] A shrub bearing yellow flowers, common on heaths and pastures throughout Britain.



What trouble surely will be bred;  
Last night I heard a crash—'tis true,  
The splinters took another road—  
I see them yonder—what a load  
For such a Thing as you! 30

You are preparing as before  
To deck your slender shape;  
And yet, just three years back—no more—  
You had a strange escape.  
Down from yon Cliff a fragment broke,  
It came, you know, with fire and smoke  
And hither did it bend its way.  
This pond'rous block was caught by me,  
And o'er your head, as you may see,  
'Tis hanging to this day. 40

The Thing had better been asleep,  
Whatever thing it were,  
Or Breeze, or Bird, or fleece of Sheep,  
That first did plant you there.  
For you and your green twigs decoy  
The little witless Shepherd-boy  
To come and slumber in your bower;  
And trust me, on some sultry noon,  
Both you and he, Heaven knows how soon!  
Will perish in one hour. 50

From me this friendly warning take"—  
—The Broom began to doze,  
And thus to keep herself awake  
Did gently interpose.  
“My thanks for your discourse are due;  
That it is true, and more than true,  
I know and I have known it long;  
Frail is the bond, by which we hold  
Our being, be we young or old,  
Wise, foolish, weak or strong. 60

Disasters, do the best we can,  
Will reach both great and small;  
And he is oft the wisest man,  
Who is not wise at all.

For me, why should I wish to roam?  
This spot is my paternal home,  
It is my pleasant Heritage;  
My Father many a happy year  
Here spread his careless blossoms, here  
Attain'd a good old age. 70

Even such as his may be my lot.  
What cause have I to haunt  
My heart with terrors? Am I not  
In truth a favor'd plant!  
The Spring for me a garland weaves  
Of yellow flowers and verdant leaves,  
And, when the Frost is in the sky,  
My branches are so fresh and gay  
That You might look on me and say  
This plant can never die. 80

The butterfly, all green and gold,  
To me hath often flown,  
Here in my Blossoms to behold  
Wings lovely as his own.  
When grass is chill with rain or dew,  
Beneath my shade the mother ewe  
Lies with her infant lamb; I see  
The love, they to each other make,  
And the sweet joy, which they partake,  
It is a joy to me." 90

Her voice was blithe, her heart was light;  
The Broom might have pursued  
Her speech, until the stars of night  
Their journey had renew'd.  
But in the branches of the Oak  
Two Ravens now began to croak  
Their nuptial song, a gladsome air;  
And to her own green bower the breeze  
That instant brought two stripling Bees  
To feed and murmur there. 100

One night the Wind came from the North  
And blew a furious blast,  
At break of day I ventur'd forth

And near the Cliff I pass'd.  
The storm had fall'n upon the Oak  
And struck him with a mighty stroke,  
And whirl'd and whirl'd him far away;  
And in one hospitable Cleft  
The little careless Broom was left  
To live for many a day.

110

*LUCY GRAY*<sup>1</sup>

=====

Oft I had heard of Lucy Gray,  
And when I cross'd the Wild,  
I chanc'd to see at break of day  
The solitary Child.

No Mate, no comrade Lucy knew;  
She dwelt on a wide Moor,  
The sweetest Thing that ever grew  
Beside a human door!

You yet may spy the Fawn at play,  
The Hare upon the Green;  
But the sweet face of Lucy Gray  
Will never more be seen.

10

“To-night will be a stormy night,  
You to the Town must go,  
And take a lantern, Child, to light  
Your Mother thro' the snow.”

“That, Father! will I gladly do;  
'Tis scarcely afternoon—  
The Minster-clock<sup>2</sup> has just struck two,  
And yonder is the Moon.”

20

---

1 By Wordsworth.

2 *Minster-clock*] Clock of a monastery or cathedral; it can be also simply a church clock.

At this the Father rais'd his hook  
And snapp'd a faggot-band;  
He plied his work, and Lucy took  
The lantern in her hand.

Not blither is the mountain roe,  
With many a wanton stroke  
Her feet disperse the powd'ry snow  
That rises up like smoke.

The storm came on before its time,  
She wander'd up and down, 30  
And many a hill did Lucy climb  
But never reach'd the Town.

The wretched Parents all that night  
Went shouting far and wide;  
But there was neither sound nor sight  
To serve them for a guide.

At day-break on a hill they stood  
That overlook'd the Moor;  
And thence they saw the Bridge of Wood  
A furlong from their door. 40

And now they homeward turn'd, and cry'd  
"In Heaven we all shall meet!"  
When in the snow the Mother spied  
The print of Lucy's feet.

Then downward from the steep hill's edge  
They track'd the footmarks small;  
And through the broken hawthorn-hedge,  
And by the long stone-wall;

And then an open field they cross'd,  
The marks were still the same; 50  
They track'd them on, nor ever lost,  
And to the Bridge they came.

They follow'd from the snowy bank  
The footmarks, one by one,  
Into the middle of the plank,  
And further there were none.

Yet some maintain that to this day  
She is a living Child,  
That you may see sweet Lucy Gray  
Upon the lonesome Wild.

60

O'er rough and smooth she trips along,  
And never looks behind;  
And sings a solitary song  
That whistles in the wind.

*The IDLE SHEPHERD-BOYS,*  
OR  
*DUNGEON-GILL FORCE,\**  
*A PASTORAL<sup>1</sup>*

=====

I

The valley rings with mirth and joy,  
Among the hills the Echoes play  
A never, never ending song  
To welcome in the May.  
The Magpie chatters with delight;  
The mountain Raven's youngling Brood  
Have left the Mother and the Nest,  
And they go rambling east and west  
In search of their own food,  
Or thro' the glittering Vapors dart  
In very wantonness of Heart.

10

II

Beneath a rock, upon the grass,  
Two Boys are sitting in the sun;

---

\* Gill in the dialect of Cumberland and Westmoreland is a short and for the most part a steep narrow valley, with a stream running through it. Force is the word universally employed in these dialects for Waterfall. [Wordsworth's note. Dungeon-Gill Force is located approximately six miles west of Ambleside in Langdale, near where Stickle Ghyll meets Great Langdale Beck. See Appendix H, p. 544.]

---

1 By Wordsworth.

It seems they have no work to do  
Or that their work is done.  
On pipes of sycamore they play  
The fragments of a Christmas Hymn,  
Or with that plant which in our dale  
We call Stag-horn, or Fox's Tail  
Their rusty Hats they trim: 20  
And thus as happy as the Day,  
Those Shepherds wear the time away.

III

Along the river's stony marge<sup>1</sup>  
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 rocks,  
All newly born! both earth and sky  
Keep jubilee, and more than all,  
Those Boys with their green Coronals,<sup>2</sup> 30  
They never hear the cry,  
That plaintive cry! which up the hill  
Comes from the depth of Dungeon-Gill.

IV

Said Walter, leaping from the ground,  
"Down to the stump of yon old yew  
I'll run with you a race."—No more—  
Away the Shepherds flew.  
They leapt, they ran, and when they came  
Right opposite to Dungeon-Gill,  
Seeing, that he should lose the prize, 40  
"Stop!" to his comrade Walter cries—  
James stopp'd with no good will:  
Said Walter then, "Your task is here,  
'Twill keep you working half a year.

---

1 *marge*] Bank or shore.

2 *Coronals*] A wreath of flowers or leaves worn on the head.

## V

Till you have cross'd where I shall cross,  
 Say that you'll neither sleep nor eat."  
 James proudly took him at his word,  
 But did not like the feat.  
 It was a spot, which you may see  
 If ever you to Langdale<sup>1</sup> go: 50  
 Into a chasm a mighty Block  
 Hath fallen, and made a bridge of rock;  
 The gulph is deep below,  
 And in a bason black and small  
 Receives a lofty Waterfall.

## VI

With staff in hand across the cleft  
 The Challenger began his march;  
 And now, all eyes and feet, hath gain'd  
 The middle of the arch. 60  
 When list! he hears a piteous moan—  
 Again! his heart within him dies—  
 His pulse is stopp'd, his breath is lost,  
 He totters, pale as any ghost,  
 And, looking down, he spies  
 A Lamb, that in the pool is pent  
 Within that black and frightful rent.

## VII

The Lamb had slipp'd into the stream,  
 And safe without a bruise or wound  
 The Cataract had borne him down  
 Into the gulph profound. 70  
 His dam had seen him when he fell,  
 She saw him down the torrent borne;  
 And while with all a mother's love  
 She from the lofty rocks above

---

1 *Langdale*] A valley approximately three miles west of Grasmere, through which runs the Great Langdale Beck. Just north of the beck are two peaks, the Pike of Stickle and Harrison Stickle.

Sent forth a cry forlorn,  
The Lamb, still swimming round and round  
Made answer to that plaintive sound.

VIII

When he had learnt, what thing it was,  
That sent this rueful cry; I ween,  
The Boy recover'd heart, and told 80  
The sight which he had seen.  
Both gladly now deferr'd their task;  
Nor was there wanting other aid—  
A Poet, one who loves the brooks  
Far better than the sages' books,  
By chance had thither stray'd;  
And there the helpless Lamb he found  
By those huge rocks encompass'd round.

IX

He drew it gently from the pool,  
And brought it forth into the light: 90  
The Shepherds met him with his charge  
An unexpected sight!  
Into their arms the Lamb they took,  
Said they, "He's neither maim'd nor scarr'd"—  
Then up the steep ascent they hied<sup>1</sup>  
And placed him at his Mother's side;  
And gently did the Bard  
Those idle Shepherd-boys upbraid,  
And bade them better mind their trade.

=====

'Tis said, that some have died for love:<sup>2</sup>  
And here and there a church-yard grave is found  
In the cold North's unhallow'd ground,  
Because the wretched man himself had slain,

---

1 *hied*] Hastened.

2 By Wordsworth.



His love was such a grievous pain.  
 And there is one whom I five years have known;  
 He dwells alone  
 Upon Helvellyn's side.<sup>1</sup>  
 He loved——The pretty Barbara died,  
 And thus he makes his moan: 10  
 Three years had Barbara in her grave been laid  
 When thus his moan he made.

“Oh! move thou Cottage from behind that oak  
 Or let the aged tree uprooted lie,  
 That in some other way yon smoke  
 May mount into the sky!  
 The clouds pass on; they from the Heavens depart:  
 I look—the sky is empty space;  
 I know not what I trace;  
 But when I cease to look, my hand is on my heart. 20

O! what a weight is in these shades! Ye leaves,  
 When will that dying murmur be suppress'd?  
 Your sound my heart of peace bereaves,  
 It robs my heart of rest.  
 Thou Thrush, that singest loud and loud and free,  
 Into yon row of willows flit,  
 Upon that alder sit;  
 Or sing another song, or chuse another tree.

Roll back, sweet rill! back to thy mountain bounds,  
 And there for ever be thy waters chain'd! 30  
 For thou dost haunt the air with sounds  
 That cannot be sustain'd;  
 If still beneath that pine-tree's ragged bough  
 Headlong yon waterfall must come,  
 Oh let it then be dumb!—  
 Be any thing, sweet rill, but that which thou art now.

Thou Eglantine whose arch so proudly towers  
 (Even like a rainbow spanning half the vale)  
 Thou one fair shrub, oh! shed thy flowers,  
 And stir not in the gale. 40

---

1 *Helvellyn*] One of the highest peaks in the Lake District (3117 feet), approximately five miles north of Grasmere.

For thus to see thee nodding in the air,  
To see thy arch thus stretch and bend,  
Thus rise and thus descend,  
Disturbs me, till the sight is more than I can bear.”

The man who makes this feverish complaint  
Is one of giant stature, who could dance  
Equipp'd from head to foot in iron mail.  
Ah gentle Love! if ever thought was thine  
To store up kindred hours for me, thy face  
Turn from me, gentle Love, nor let me walk  
Within the sound of Emma's voice, or know  
Such happiness as I have known to-day. 50

*POOR SUSAN*<sup>1</sup>

=====

At the corner of Wood-Street, when day-light appears,  
There's a Thrush that sings loud, it has sung for three years:  
Poor Susan has pass'd by the spot and has heard  
In the silence of morning the song of the bird.

'Tis a note of enchantment; what ails her? She sees  
A mountain ascending, a vision of trees;  
Bright volumes of vapour through Lothbury glide,  
And a river flows on through the vale of Cheapside.<sup>2</sup>

Green pastures she views in the midst of the dale,  
Down which she so often has tripp'd with her pail, 10  
And a single small cottage, a nest like a dove's,  
The only one dwelling on earth that she loves.

She looks, and her heart is in Heaven, but they fade,  
The mist and the river, the hill and the shade;  
The stream will not flow, and the hill will not rise,  
And the colours have all pass'd away from her eyes.

---

1 By Wordsworth.

2 *Lothbury ... Cheapside*] Adjoining neighborhoods in London south of the London Wall, east of St. Paul's Cathedral, and north of the Thames; Cheapside was infamous for prostitution.

Poor Outcast! return—to receive thee once more  
 The house of thy Father will open its door,  
 And thou once again, in thy plain russet gown,  
 May'st hear the thrush sing from a tree of its own. 20

INSCRIPTION

*for the Spot where the HERMITAGE stood on St. Herbert's  
 Island, Derwent-Water<sup>1</sup>*

=====

If thou in the dear love of some one friend  
 Hast been so happy, that thou know'st what thoughts  
 Will, sometimes, in the happiness of love  
 Make the heart sink, then wilt thou reverence  
 This quiet spot.—St. Herbert hither came  
 And here, for many seasons, from the world  
 Remov'd, and the affections of the world  
 He dwelt in solitude. He living here,  
 This island's sole inhabitant! had left  
 A Fellow-labourer, whom the good Man lov'd 10  
 As his own soul; and when within his cave  
 Alone he knelt before the crucifix  
 While o'er the lake the cataract of Lodore  
 Peal'd to his orisons,<sup>2</sup> and when he pac'd  
 Along the beach of this small isle and thought  
 Of his Companion, he had pray'd that both  
 Might die in the same moment. Nor in vain  
 So pray'd he:—as our Chronicles report,  
 Though here the Hermit number'd his last days,  
 Far from St. Cuthbert<sup>3</sup> his beloved friend, 20  
 Those holy men both died in the same hour.

---

1 By Wordsworth. *St. Herbert's Island, Derwent-Water*] One of seven islands on Derwent Water, which lies immediately south of Keswick. It was named for St. Herbert (d. 687), a priest and friend of St. Cuthbert of Lindisfarne, who made his abode there to avoid human contact. See Appendix H, p. 544.

2 *orisons*] Prayers.

3 *St. Cuthbert*] (635–87), Bishop of the abbey of Lindisfarne (or Holy Island) and one of the most venerated English saints, he evangelized Northumbria and was posthumously hailed as a wonder-worker.



He through that door-place looks toward the lake  
And to the stirring breezes, does he want  
Creations lovely as the work of sleep,  
Fair sights, and visions of romantic<sup>1</sup> joy.

To a *SEXTON*<sup>2</sup>

=====

Let thy wheel-barrow alone.  
Wherefore, Sexton, piling still  
In thy bone-house bone on bone?  
'Tis already like a hill  
In a field of battle made,  
Where three thousand skulls are laid.  
—These died in peace each with the other,  
Father, Sister, Friend, and Brother.

Mark the spot to which I point!  
From this platform eight feet square 10  
Take not even a finger-joint:  
Andrew's whole fire-side<sup>3</sup> is there.  
Here, alone, before thine eyes,  
Simon's sickly Daughter lies  
From weakness, now, and pain defended,  
Whom he twenty winters tended.

Look but at the gardener's pride,  
How he glories, when he sees  
Roses, lilies, side by side,  
Violets in families. 20  
By the heart of Man, his tears,  
By his hopes and by his fears,  
Thou, old Grey-beard! art the Warden  
Of a far superior garden.

- 
- 1 *romantic*] Imaginary or ideal; characterized by imaginative appeal.
  - 2 By Wordsworth. *Sexton*] A church officer having the care of the fabric of a church and its contents, and the duties of ringing the bells and digging graves.
  - 3 *fire-side*] Here, a metonym for those gathered in the home around the fire-side, i.e., his family.

Thus then, each to other dear,  
Let them all in quiet lie,  
Andrew there and Susan here,  
Neighbours in mortality.  
And should I live through sun and rain  
Seven widow'd years without my Jane, 30  
O Sexton, do not then remove her,  
Let one grave hold the Lov'd and Lover!

ANDREW JONES<sup>1</sup>

=====

I hate that Andrew Jones: he'll breed  
His children up to waste and pillage.  
I wish the press-gang or the drum<sup>2</sup>  
With its tantara sound<sup>3</sup> would come,  
And sweep him from the village!

I said not this, because he loves  
Through the long day to swear and tipple;  
But for the poor dear sake of one  
To whom a foul deed he had done,  
A friendless Man, a travelling Cripple! 10

For this poor crawling helpless wretch  
Some Horseman who was passing by,  
A penny on the ground had thrown;  
But the poor Cripple was alone  
And could not stoop—no help was nigh.

Inch-thick the dust lay on the ground  
For it had long been drougthy weather:  
So with his staff the Cripple wrought  
Among the dust till he had brought  
The halfpennies together. 20

---

1 By Wordsworth.

2 *press-gang ... drum*] A group of men under a military officer employed to pressure other men into military service. The gang often announced its purpose with a drum, the instrument associated with military marching. "To drum" also can mean to gather recruits.

3 *tantara sound*] With a flourish like that of a trumpet.

It chanc'd that Andrew pass'd that way  
Just at the time; and there he found  
The Cripple in the mid-day heat  
Standing alone, and at his feet  
He saw the penny on the ground.

He stopp'd and took the penny up:  
And when the Cripple nearer drew,  
Quoth Andrew, "Under half-a-crown,  
What a man finds is all his own,  
And so, my Friend, good day to you."

30

And *hence* I said, that Andrew's boys  
Will all be train'd to waste and pillage;  
And wish'd the press-gang, or the drum  
With its tantara sound, would come  
And sweep him from the village!

*The TWO THIEVES,  
Or the last Stage of AVARICE*<sup>1</sup>

=====

Oh now that the genius of Bewick<sup>2</sup> were mine  
And the skill which He learn'd on the Banks of the Tyne;  
When the Muses might deal with me just as they chose  
For I'd take my last leave both of verse and of prose.

What feats would I work with my magical hand!  
Book-learning and books should be banish'd the land<sup>3</sup>

---

1 By Wordsworth.

2 *Bewick*] Thomas Bewick (1753–1828), an engraver born in Cherryburn on the Tyne River in northeast England. He is known for his woodcuts of natural subjects, particularly those in his *General History of Quadrupeds* (1790) and *Birds* (1797, 1804).

3 *Oh now ... land*] In Dove Cottage MS 29, lines 1–6 begin differently, and in ways that make its homage to Thomas Bewick clearer:

Oh! now that the box-wood and graver were mine  
Of the Poet who lives on the banks of the Tyne!  
Who has plied his rude tools with more fortunate toil  
Than Reynolds e'er brought to his canvass and oil.

Then, Books and Book-learning! I'd ring out your knell!  
The Vicar should scarce know an A from a L;

And for hunger and thirst and such troublesome calls  
Every ale-house should then have a feast on its walls.<sup>1</sup>

The Traveller would hang his wet clothes on a chair  
Let them smoke, let them burn, not a straw would he care, 10  
For the Prodigal Son, Joseph's Dream and his Sheaves,<sup>2</sup>  
Oh what would they be to my tale of two Thieves!

Little Dan is unbreech'd, he is three birth-days old,  
His Grandsire that age more than thirty times told,  
There's ninety good seasons of fair and foul weather  
Between them, and both go a stealing together.

With chips is the Carpenter strewing his floor?  
Is a cart-load of peats at an old Woman's door?  
Old Daniel his hand to the treasure will slide,  
And his Grandson's as busy at work by his side. 20

Old Daniel begins, he stops short and his eye  
Through the lost look of dotage is cunning and sly.  
'Tis a look which at this time is hardly his own,  
But tells a plain tale of the days that are flown.

Dan once had a heart which was mov'd by the wires  
Of manifold pleasures and many desires:  
And what if he cherish'd his purse? 'Twas no more  
Than treading a path trod by thousands before.

'Twas a path trod by thousands, but Daniel is one  
Who went something farther than others have gone; 30  
And now with old Daniel you see how it fares  
You see to what end he has brought his grey hairs.

The pair sally forth hand in hand; ere the sun  
Has peer'd o'er the beeches their work is begun:  
And yet into whatever sin they may fall,  
This Child but half knows it and that not at all.

---

1 *feast on its walls*] A feast for the eyes that Wordsworth would create with woodcuts; also alluding to one of the many Renaissance versions of Christ's Last Supper.

2 *Joseph's Dream and his Sheaves*] See Genesis 37–50. Joseph, his father Jacob's favorite son, had two dreams. In the first, he and his eleven brothers were binding grain into sheaves or bundles, and their bundles bowed down to his. Joseph's dreams increased his brother's hatred for him, leading them to sell him into slavery.



They hunt through the street with deliberate tread,  
And each in his turn is both leader and led;  
And wherever they carry their plots and their wiles,  
Every face in the village is dimpled with smiles. 40

Neither check'd by the rich nor the needy they roam,  
For grey-headed Dan has a daughter at home;  
Who will gladly repair all the damage that's done,  
And three, were it ask'd, would be render'd for one.

Old Man! whom so oft I with pity have ey'd,  
I love thee and love the sweet boy at thy side:  
Long yet may'st thou live, for a teacher we see  
That lifts up the veil of our nature in thee.

=====

A whirl-blast from behind the hill<sup>1</sup>  
Rush'd o'er the wood with startling sound:  
Then all at once the air was still,  
And showers of hail-stones patter'd round.  
Where leafless Oaks tower'd high above,  
I sate within an undergrove  
Of tallest hollies, tall and green,  
A fairer bower was never seen.  
From year to year the spacious floor  
With wither'd leaves is cover'd o'er, 10  
You could not lay a hair between:  
And all the year the bower is green.  
But see! where'er the hailstones drop  
The wither'd leaves all skip and hop,  
There's not a breeze—no breath of air—  
Yet here, and there, and every where  
Along the floor, beneath the shade  
By those embowering hollies made,  
The leaves in myriads jump and spring,  
As if with pipes and music rare 20  
Some Robin Good-fellow<sup>2</sup> were there,

---

1 By Wordsworth.

2 *Robin Good-fellow*] Another name for Puck, a mischievous, shape-shifting fairy of English folklore and ballads.

And all those leaves, that jump and spring,  
Were each a joyous, living thing.

Oh! grant me Heaven a heart at ease  
That I may never cease to find,  
Even in appearances like these  
Enough to nourish and to stir my mind!

SONG  
FOR THE  
WANDERING JEW<sup>1</sup>

=====

Though the torrents from their fountains  
Roar down many a craggy steep,  
Yet they find among the mountains  
Resting-places calm and deep.

Though almost with eagle pinion<sup>2</sup>  
O'er the rocks the Chamois<sup>3</sup> roam,  
Yet he has some small dominion  
Which no doubt he calls his home.

If on windy days the Raven  
Gambol like a dancing skiff, 10  
Not the less he loves his haven  
On the bosom of the cliff.

Though the Sea-horse in the ocean  
Own no dear domestic cave;  
Yet he slumbers without motion  
On the calm and silent wave.

Day and night my toils redouble!  
Never nearer to the goal,  
Night and day, I feel the trouble,  
Of the Wanderer in my soul. 20

---

1 By Wordsworth.

2 *pinion*] The terminal segment of a bird's wing; here, a metonym of the eagle itself.

3 *Chamois*] The only antelope found wild in Europe, inhabiting the highest parts of the Alps and Pyrenees.

R U T H.<sup>1</sup>

---

1 By Wordsworth.

RUTH

=====

When Ruth was left half desolate,  
Her Father took another Mate;  
And so, not seven years old,  
The slighted Child at her own will  
Went wandering over dale and hill  
In thoughtless freedom bold.

And she had made a pipe of straw  
And from that oaten pipe could draw  
All sounds of winds and floods;  
Had built a bower upon the green, 10  
As if she from her birth had been  
An Infant of the woods.

There came a Youth from Georgia's shore,  
A military Casque<sup>1</sup> he wore  
With splendid feathers drest;  
He brought them from the Cherokees;  
The feathers nodded in the breeze<sup>2</sup>  
And made a gallant crest.

From Indian blood you deem him sprung:  
Ah no! he spake the English tongue 20  
And bare a Soldier's name;  
And when America was free  
From battle and from jeopardy  
He cross the ocean came.

With hues of genius on his cheek  
In finest tones the Youth could speak.  
—While he was yet a Boy  
The moon, the glory of the sun,  
And streams that murmur as they run  
Had been his dearest joy. 30

---

1 *Casque*] Helmet.

2 *The feathers nodded in the breeze*] Possibly recalling chapter one of Horace Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto* (1764), in which the black feathers of a giant helmet nod threateningly, as if blown by the wind.

He was a lovely Youth! I guess  
The panther in the wilderness  
Was not so fair as he;  
And when he chose to sport and play,  
No dolphin ever was so gay  
Upon the tropic sea.

Among the Indians he had fought,  
And with him many tales he brought  
Of pleasure and of fear,  
Such tales as told to any Maid 40  
By such a Youth in the green shade  
Were perilous to hear.<sup>1</sup>

He told of Girls, a happy rout,<sup>2</sup>  
Who quit their fold with dance and shout  
Their pleasant Indian Town  
To gather strawberries all day long,  
Returning with a choral song  
When day-light is gone down.

He spake of plants divine and strange  
That ev'ry day their blossoms change, 50  
Ten thousand lovely hues!  
With budding, fading, faded flowers  
They stand the wonder of the bowers  
From morn to evening dews.

He told of the Magnolia,\* spread  
High as a cloud, high over head!  
The Cypress and her spire,

---

\* *Magnolia grandiflora*. [Wordsworth's note. *Magnolia grandiflora* is the Southern magnolia, a large, broad-leafed evergreen tree that can grow ninety feet in height; its large white flowers grow up to a foot in diameter, and have a pleasant fragrance.]

---

1 *many tales ... to hear*] Referring to Othello's method of wooing Desdemona in Shakespeare's *Othello*, I.vii.

2 *rout*] Company or band.

Of flowers\* that with one scarlet gleam  
Cover a hundred leagues and seem  
To set the hills on fire. 60

The Youth of green Savannahs spake,  
And many an endless endless lake  
With all its fairy crowds  
Of islands that together lie  
As quietly as spots of sky  
Among the evening clouds:

And then he said "How sweet it were  
A fisher or a hunter there,  
A gardener in the shade,  
Still wandering with an easy mind 70  
To build a household fire and find  
A home in every glade.

What days and what sweet years! Ah me!  
Our life were life indeed, with thee  
So pass'd in quiet bliss,  
And all the while" said he "to know  
That we were in a world of woe,  
On such an earth as this!"

And then he sometimes interwove  
Dear thoughts about a Father's love, 80  
"For there," said he, "are spun  
Around the heart such tender ties  
That our own children to our eyes  
Are dearer than the sun.

---

\* The splendid appearance of these scarlet flowers, which are scattered with such profusion over the Hills in the Southern parts of North America is frequently mentioned by Bartram in his Travels. [Wordsworth's note. Referring to the description of the Azalea on p. 321 of William Bartram's *Travels through North and South Carolina, Georgia, East and West Florida* (1792); Bartram also describes the Indian girls with baskets of strawberries on p. 347; the Cypress on pp. 88–89; the *Gordonia lasianthus*, which renews its blossoms every morning, on pp. 159–60; and the *Magnolia grandiflora* numerous times throughout. Lines 61–66 derive from Bartram's description of Lake George and its islands, pp. 99–101.]

Sweet Ruth! and could you go with me  
My helpmate in the woods to be,  
Our shed at night to rear;  
Or run, my own adopted bride,  
A sylvan huntress at my side  
And drive the flying deer. 90

Beloved Ruth!" No more he said  
Sweet Ruth alone at midnight shed  
A solitary tear,  
She thought again—and did agree  
With him to sail across the sea,  
And drive the flying deer.

"And now, as fitting is and right,  
We in the Church our faith will plight,  
A Husband and a Wife."  
Even so they did; and I may say 100  
That to sweet Ruth that happy day  
Was more than human life.

Through dream and vision did she sink,  
Delighted all the while to think  
That on those lonesome floods  
And green Savannahs she should share  
His board with lawful joy, and bear  
His name in the wild woods.

But, as you have before been told,  
This Stripling, sportive gay and bold, 110  
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. 120

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 languor lent, 130  
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.

But ill he liv'd, much evil saw  
With men to whom no better law 140  
Nor better life was known;  
Deliberately and undeceiv'd  
Those wild men's vices he receiv'd,  
And gave them back his own.

His genius and his moral frame  
Were thus impair'd, and he became  
The slave of low desires;  
A man who without self-controul  
Would seek what the degraded soul  
Unworthily admires. 150

And yet he with no feign'd delight  
Had woo'd the Maiden, day and night  
Had lov'd her, night and morn;  
What could he less than love a Maid  
Whose heart with so much nature play'd  
So kind and so forlorn?

But now the pleasant dream was gone,  
No hope, no wish remain'd, not one,  
They stirr'd him now no more,



New objects did new pleasure give, 160  
And once again he wish'd to live  
As lawless as before.

Meanwhile as thus with him it fared,  
They for the voyage were prepared  
And went to the sea-shore,  
But, when they thither came, the Youth  
Deserted his poor Bride, and Ruth  
Could never find him more.

“God help thee Ruth!”—Such pains she had  
That she in half a year was mad 170  
And in a prison hous'd,  
And there, exulting in her wrongs,  
Among the music of her songs  
She fearfully carouz'd.

Yet sometimes milder hours she knew,  
Nor wanted sun, nor rain, nor dew,  
Nor pastimes of the May,  
They all were with her in her cell,  
And a wild brook with chearful knell  
Did o'er the pebbles play. 180

When Ruth three seasons thus had lain  
There came a respite to her pain,  
She from her prison fled;  
But of the Vagrant none took thought,  
And where it liked her best she sought  
Her shelter and her bread.

Among the fields she breath'd again:  
The master-current of her brain  
Ran permanent and free,  
And to the pleasant Banks of Tone\* 190

---

\* The Tone is a River of Somersetshire at no great distance from the Quantock Hills. These Hills, which are alluded to a few Stanzas below, are extremely beautiful, and in most places richly covered with Coppice woods. [Wordsworth's note.]

She took her way, to dwell alone  
Under the greenwood tree.<sup>1</sup>

The engines of her grief, the tools  
That shap'd her sorrow, rocks and pools,  
And airs that gently stir  
The vernal leaves, she loved them still,  
Nor ever tax'd them with the ill  
Which had been done to her.

A Barn her *winter* bed supplies,  
But till the warmth of summer skies 200  
And summer days is gone,  
(And in this tale we all agree)  
She sleeps beneath the greenwood tree,  
And other home hath none.

If she is press'd by want of food  
She from her dwelling in the wood  
Repairs to a road side,  
And there she begs at one steep place,  
Where up and down with easy pace  
The horsemen-travellers ride. 210

That oaten pipe of hers is mute  
Or thrown away, but with a flute  
Her loneliness she cheers;  
This flute made of a hemlock stalk  
At evening in his homeward walk  
The Quantock Woodman hears.

I, too have pass'd her on the hills  
Setting her little water-mills  
By spouts and fountains wild,  
Such small machinery as she turn'd 220  
Ere she had wept, ere she had mourn'd  
A young and happy Child!

---

1 *Under the greenwood tree*] Probably invoking II.v of Shakespeare's *As You Like It*: "Under the greenwood tree/Who loves to lie with me,/And turn his merry note/Unto the sweet bird's throat,/Come hither, come hither, come hither:/Here shall he see no enemy/But winter and rough weather."

Farewell! and when thy days are told  
Ill-fated Ruth! in hallow'd mold  
Thy corpse shall buried be,  
For thee a funeral bell shall ring,  
And all the congregation sing  
A Christian psalm for thee.

LINES

*Written with a Slate-pencil upon a Stone, the largest of a heap lying  
near a deserted Quarry upon one of the Islands at Rydale<sup>1</sup>*

=====

Stranger! this hillock of mishapen stones  
Is not a ruin of the ancient time,  
Nor, as perchance thou rashly deem'st, the Cairn<sup>2</sup>  
Of some old British Chief: 'tis nothing more  
Than the rude embryo of a little dome  
Or pleasure-house, which was to have been built  
Among the birch-trees of this rocky isle.  
But, as it chanc'd, Sir William having learn'd  
That from the shore a full-grown man might wade,  
And make himself a freeman of this spot 10  
At any hour he chose, the Knight forthwith  
Desisted, and the quarry and the mound  
Are monuments of his unfinish'd task.—  
The block on which these lines are trac'd, perhaps,  
Was once selected as the corner-stone  
Of the intended pile, which would have been  
Some quaint odd play-thing of elaborate skill,  
So that, I guess, the linnet and the thrush,  
And other little builders who dwell here,  
Had wonder'd at the work. But blame him not, 20  
For old Sir William was a gentle Knight  
Bred in this vale to which he appertain'd  
With all his ancestry. Then peace to him  
And for the outrage which he had devis'd  
Entire forgiveness.—But if thou art one  
On fire with thy impatience to become  
An Inmate of these mountains, if disturb'd  
By beautiful conceptions, thou hast hewn  
Out of the quiet rock the elements  
Of thy trim mansion destin'd soon to blaze 30  
In snow-white splendour, think again, and taught

---

1 By Wordsworth. *Islands of Rydale*] Rydale Water lies a half mile east of Grasmere.

2 *Cairn*] A pyramid or dome of stones raised as a memorial over a grave; here, perhaps a reference to Dunmail Raise, supposed burial place of King Dunmail, last king of Cumbria who died in battle in 945.

By old Sir William and his quarry, leave  
Thy fragments to the bramble and the rose,  
There let the vernal slow-worm sun himself,  
And let the red-breast hop from stone to stone.

=====

*In the School of ——<sup>1</sup> is a tablet on which are inscribed, in gilt letters, the names of the several persons who have been Schoolmasters there since the foundation of the School, with the time at which they entered upon and quitted their office. Opposite one of those names the Author wrote the following lines.*

If Nature, for a favorite Child<sup>2</sup>  
In thee hath temper'd so her clay,  
That every hour thy heart runs wild  
Yet never once doth go astray,

Read o'er these lines; and then review  
This tablet, that thus humbly rears  
In such diversity of hue  
Its history of two hundred years.

—When through this little wreck of fame,  
Cypher and syllable, thine eye 10  
Has travell'd down to Matthew's name,  
Pause with no common sympathy.

And if a sleeping tear should wake  
Then be it neither check'd nor stay'd:  
For Matthew a request I make  
Which for himself he had not made.

Poor Matthew, all his frolics o'er,  
Is silent as a standing pool,  
Far from the chimney's merry roar,  
And murmur of the village school. 20

---

1 ——] Hawkshead.

2 By Wordsworth.

The sighs which Matthew heav'd were sighs  
Of one tir'd out with fun and madness;  
The tears which came to Matthew's eyes  
Were tears of light, the oil of gladness.

Yet sometimes when the secret cup  
Of still and serious thought went round  
It seem'd as if he drank it up,  
He felt with spirit so profound.

—Thou soul of God's best earthly mould,  
Thou happy soul, and can it be 30  
That these two words of glittering gold  
Are all that must remain of thee?

THE  
*Two APRIL MORNINGS*<sup>1</sup>

=====

We walk'd along, while bright and red  
Uprose the morning sun,  
And Matthew stopp'd, he look'd, and said,  
"The will of God be done!"

A village Schoolmaster was he,  
With hair of glittering grey;  
As blithe a man as you could see  
On a spring holiday.

And on that morning, through the grass,  
And by the steaming rills, 10  
We travell'd merrily to pass  
A day among the hills.

"Our work," said I, "was well begun;  
Then, from thy breast what thought,  
Beneath so beautiful a sun,  
So sad a sigh has brought?"

---

1 By Wordsworth.

A second time did Matthew stop,  
And fixing still his eye  
Upon the eastern mountain-top  
To me he made reply. 20

“Yon cloud with that long purple cleft  
Brings fresh into my mind  
A day like this which I have left  
Full thirty years behind.

And on that slope of springing corn  
The self-same crimson hue  
Fell from the sky that April morn,  
The same which now I view!

With rod and line my silent sport  
I plied by Derwent’s wave, 30  
And, coming to the church, stopp’d short  
Beside my Daughter’s grave.

Nine summers had she scarcely seen  
The pride of all the vale;  
And then she sang!—she would have been  
A very nightingale.

Six feet in earth my Emma<sup>1</sup> lay,  
And yet I lov’d her more,  
For so it seem’d, than till that day  
I e’er had lov’d before. 40

And, turning from her grave, I met  
Beside the church-yard Yew  
A blooming Girl, whose hair was wet  
With points of morning dew.

A basket on her head she bare,  
Her brow was smooth and white,  
To see a Child so very fair,  
It was a pure delight!

---

1 *Emma*] Wordsworth often referred to his sister Dorothy as “Emma.”

No fountain from its rocky cave  
E'er tripp'd with foot so free, 50  
She seem'd as happy as a wave  
That dances on the sea.

There came from me a sigh of pain  
Which I could ill confine;  
I look'd at her and look'd again;  
—And did not wish her mine.”

Matthew is in his grave, yet now  
Methinks I see him stand,  
As at that moment, with his bough  
Of wilding<sup>1</sup> in his hand. 60

*The FOUNTAIN,  
A Conversation<sup>2</sup>*

=====

We talk'd with open heart, and tongue  
Affectionate and true,  
A pair of Friends, though I was young,  
And Matthew seventy-two.

We lay beneath a spreading oak,  
Beside a mossy seat,  
And from the turf a fountain broke,  
And gurgled at our feet.

“Now, Matthew, let us try to match  
This water's pleasant tune 10  
With some old Border-song, or catch<sup>3</sup>  
That suits a summer's noon.

Or of the Church-clock and the chimes  
Sing here beneath the shade,  
That half-mad thing of witty rhymes  
Which you last April made!”

---

1 *wilding*] A crab-tree or wild apple tree.

2 By Wordsworth.

3 *catch*] A melody sung as a round by three or more voices.



In silence Matthew lay, and eyed  
The spring beneath the tree;  
And thus the dear old Man replied,  
The grey-hair'd Man of glee. 20

“Down to the vale this water steers,  
How merrily it goes!  
'Twill murmur on a thousand years,  
And flow as now it flows.

And here, on this delightful day,  
I cannot chuse but think  
How oft, a vigorous Man, I lay  
Beside this Fountain's brink.

My eyes are dim with childish tears,  
My heart is idly stirr'd,  
For the same sound is in my ears,  
Which in those days I heard. 30

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. 40

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 press'd by heavy laws,  
And often, glad no more,  
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, 50  
The household hearts that were his own,  
It is the man of mirth.

My days, my Friend, are almost gone,  
My life has been approv'd,  
And many love me, but by none  
Am I enough belov'd."

"Now both himself and me he wrongs,  
The man who thus complains!  
I live and sing my idle songs  
Upon these happy plains,

60

And, Matthew, for thy Children dead  
I'll be a son to thee!"  
At this he grasp'd his hands, and said,  
"Alas! that cannot be."

We rose up from the fountain-side,  
And down the smooth descent  
Of the green sheep-track did we glide,  
And through the wood we went,

And, ere we came to Leonard's Rock,  
He sang those witty rhymes  
About the crazy old church-clock  
And the bewilder'd chimes.

70

### NUTTING<sup>1</sup>

=====

————— It seems a day,  
One of those heavenly days which cannot die,  
When forth I sallied from our cottage-door,\*  
And with a wallet o'er my shoulder slung,  
A nutting crook<sup>2</sup> in hand, I turn'd my steps  
Towards the distant woods, a Figure quaint,

\* The house at which I was boarded during the time I was at School.  
[Wordsworth's note.]

---

1 By Wordsworth.

2 *nutting crook*] A hooked stick used for pulling down branches in order to gather nuts.

Trick'd out in proud disguise of Beggar's weeds  
 Put on for the occasion, by advice  
 And exhortation of my frugal Dame.  
 Motley accoutrements! of power to smile 10  
 At thorns, and brakes, and brambles, and, in truth,  
 More ragged than need was. Among the woods,  
 And o'er the pathless rocks, I forc'd my way  
 Until, at length, I came to one dear nook  
 Unvisited, where not a broken bough  
 Droop'd with its wither'd leaves, ungracious sign  
 Of devastation, but the hazels rose  
 Tall and erect, with milk-white clusters hung,  
 A virgin scene!—A little while I stood,  
 Breathing with such suppression of the heart 20  
 As joy delights in; and with wise restraint  
 Voluptuous, fearless of a rival, eyed  
 The banquet, or beneath the trees I sate  
 Among the flowers, and with the flowers I play'd;  
 A temper known to those, who, after long  
 And weary expectation, have been bless'd  
 With sudden happiness beyond all hope.—  
 —Perhaps it was a bower beneath whose leaves  
 The violets of five seasons re-appear  
 And fade, unseen by any human eye, 30  
 Where fairy water-breaks do murmur on  
 For ever, and I saw the sparkling foam,  
 And with my cheek on one of those green stones  
 That, fleec'd with moss, beneath the shady trees,  
 Lay round me scatter'd like a flock of sheep,  
 I heard the murmur and the murmuring sound,  
 In that sweet mood when pleasure loves to pay  
 Tribute to ease, and, of its joy secure  
 The heart luxuriates with indifferent things,  
 Wasting its kindness on stocks<sup>1</sup> and stones, 40  
 And on the vacant air. Then up I rose,  
 And dragg'd to earth both branch and bough, with crash  
 And merciless ravage; and the shady nook  
 Of hazels, and the green and mossy bower  
 Deform'd and sullied, patiently gave up  
 Their quiet being: and unless I now  
 Confound my present feelings with the past,

---

1 *stocks*] Stumps.

Even then, when from the bower I turn'd away,  
Exulting, rich beyond the wealth of kings  
I felt a sense of pain when I beheld  
The silent trees and the intruding sky.— 50

Then, dearest Maiden! move along these shades  
In gentleness of heart with gentle hand  
Touch,—for there is a Spirit in the woods.

=====

Three years she grew in sun and shower,<sup>1</sup>  
Then Nature said, "A lovelier flower  
On earth was never sown;  
This Child I to myself will take,  
She shall be mine, and I will make  
A Lady of my own.

Myself will to my darling be  
Both law and impulse, and with me  
The Girl in rock and plain,  
In earth and heaven, in glade and bower, 10  
Shall feel an overseeing power  
To kindle or restrain.

She shall be sportive as the fawn  
That wild with glee across the lawn  
Or up the mountain springs,  
And hers shall be the breathing balm,  
And hers the silence and the calm  
Of mute insensate things.

The floating clouds their state shall lend  
To her, for her the willow bend, 20  
Nor shall she fail to see  
Even in the motions of the storm  
A beauty that shall mould her form  
By silent sympathy.

The stars of midnight shall be dear  
To her, and she shall lean her ear  
In many a secret place

---

1 By Wordsworth.

Where rivulets dance their wayward round,  
And beauty born of murmuring sound  
Shall pass into her face. 30

And vital feelings of delight  
Shall rear her form to stately height,  
Her virgin bosom swell,  
Such thoughts to Lucy I will give  
While she and I together live  
Here in this happy dell.”

Thus Nature spake—The work was done—  
How soon my Lucy’s race was run!  
She died and left to me  
This heath, this calm and quiet scene, 40  
The memory of what has been,  
And never more will be.

*The PET-LAMB,  
A PASTORAL*<sup>1</sup>

=====

The dew was falling fast, the stars began to blink;  
I heard a voice, it said, “Drink, pretty Creature, drink!”  
And, looking o’er the hedge, before me I espied,  
A snow-white mountain Lamb with a Maiden at its side.

No other sheep were near, the Lamb was all alone,  
And by a slender cord was tether’d to a stone;  
With one knee on the grass did the little Maiden kneel,  
While to that Mountain Lamb she gave its evening meal.

The Lamb while from her hand he thus his supper took  
Seem’d to feast with head and ears, and his tail with  
pleasure shook. 10  
“Drink, pretty Creature, drink,” she said in such a tone  
That I almost receiv’d her heart into my own.

’Twas little Barbara Lewthwaite,<sup>2</sup> a Child of beauty rare,  
I watch’d them with delight, they were a lovely pair.

---

1 By Wordsworth.

2 *Barbara Lewthwaite* In a note dictated to Isabella Fenwick in 1843, Wordsworth wrote, “Barbara Lewthwaite, now living at Ambleside, was one of two most lovely sisters ... [but she] was not in fact the child whom I had seen and overheard described in the poem.”

And now with empty Can the Maiden turn'd away,  
But ere ten yards were gone her footsteps did she stay.

Towards the Lamb she look'd, and from that shady place  
I unobserv'd could see the workings of her face:  
If Nature to her tongue could measur'd numbers bring  
Thus, thought I, to her Lamb that little Maid would sing.     20

“What ails thee, Young One? What? Why pull so at thy cord?  
Is it not well with thee? Well both for bed and board?  
Thy plot of grass is soft, and green as grass can be,  
Rest little Young One, rest; what is't that aileth thee?

What is it thou would'st seek? What is wanting to thy heart?  
Thy limbs are they not strong? And beautiful thou art:  
This grass is tender grass, these flowers they have no peers,  
And that green corn all day is rustling in thy ears.

If the Sun is shining hot, do but stretch thy woollen chain,  
This beech is standing by, its covert thou can'st gain,     30  
For rain and mountain storms the like thou need'st not fear,  
The rain and storm are things which scarcely can come here.

Rest, little Young One, rest; thou hast forgot the day  
When my Father found thee first in places far away:  
Many flocks are on the hills, but thou wert own'd by none,  
And thy Mother from thy side for evermore was gone.

He took thee in his arms, and in pity brought thee home,  
A blessed day for thee! then whither would'st thou roam?  
A faithful nurse thou hast, the dam that did thee year<sup>1</sup>  
Upon the mountain tops no kinder could have been.     40

Thou know'st that twice a day I have brought thee in this Can  
Fresh water from the brook as clear as ever ran;  
And twice in the day when the ground is wet with dew  
I bring thee draughts of milk, warm milk it is and new.

Thy limbs will shortly be twice as stout as they are now,  
Then I'll yoke thee to my cart like a pony in the plough,  
My playmate thou shalt be, and when the wind is cold  
Our hearth shall be thy bed, our house shall be thy fold.

---

1 *yea*n] To give birth.

It will not, will not rest!—poor Creature can it be  
That 'tis thy Mother's heart which is working so in thee? 50  
Things that I know not of belike to thee are dear,  
And dreams of things which thou can'st neither see nor hear.

Alas the mountain tops that look so green and fair!  
I've heard of fearful winds and darkness that come there,  
The little brooks, that seem all pastime and all play,  
When they are angry, roar like lions for their prey.

Here thou need'st not dread the raven in the sky,  
He will not come to thee, our Cottage is hard by,  
Night and day thou art safe as living thing can be,  
Be happy then and rest, what is't that aileth thee?" 60

As homeward through the lane I went with lazy feet,  
This song to myself did I oftentimes repeat,  
And it seem'd as I retrac'd the ballad line by line  
That but half of it was hers, and one half of it was mine.

Again, and once again did I repeat the song,  
"Nay" said I, "more than half to the Damsel must belong,  
For she look'd with such a look, and she spake with such a tone,  
That I almost receiv'd her heart into my own."

*Written in GERMANY,  
On one of the coldest days of the Century<sup>1</sup>*

*I must apprise the Reader that the stoves in North Germany generally  
have the impression of a galloping Horse upon them, this being part of  
the Brunswick Arms.*

=====

A fig for your languages, German and Norse,  
Let me have the song of the Kettle,  
And the tongs and the poker, instead of that horse  
That gallops away with such fury and force  
On this dreary dull plate of black metal.

---

1 By Wordsworth.

Our earth is no doubt made of excellent stuff,  
But her pulses beat slower and slower,<sup>1</sup>  
The weather in Forty<sup>2</sup> was cutting and rough,  
And then, as Heaven knows, the glass<sup>3</sup> stood low enough,  
And *now* it is four degrees lower. 10

Here's a Fly, a disconsolate creature, perhaps  
A child of the field, or the grove,  
And sorrow for him! this dull treacherous heat  
Has seduc'd the poor fool from his winter retreat,  
And he creeps to the edge of my stove.

Alas! how he fumbles about the domains  
Which this comfortless oven environ,  
He cannot find out in what track he must crawl,  
Now back to the tiles, and now back to the wall,  
And now on the brink of the iron. 20

Stock-still there he stands like a traveller bemaz'd,  
The best of his skill he has tried;  
His feelers methinks I can see him put forth  
To the East and the West, and the South and the North,  
But he finds neither guide-post nor guide.

See! his spindles sink under him, foot, leg and thigh,  
His eyesight and hearing are lost,  
Between life and death his blood freezes and thaws,  
And his two pretty pinions of blue dusky gauze  
Are glued to his sides by the frost. 30

No Brother, no Friend has he near him, while I  
Can draw warmth from the cheek of my Love,  
As blest and as glad in this desolate gloom,  
As if green summer grass were the floor of my room,  
And woodbines were hanging above.

---

1 *pulses beat slower and slower*] Referring to the geologic theory propounded by French naturalist George Louis Leclerc, Comte de Buffon (1707–88) in his *Des époques de la nature* (1788), that the earth began as a molten mass and was in the process of cooling.

2 *Forty*] 1740.

3 *glass*] A weather-glass, here a thermometer. German physicist Daniel Gabriel Fahrenheit (1686–1736) developed the mercury thermometer and his scale for measuring temperature in 1714.



Yet, God is my witness, thou small helpless Thing,  
Thy life I would gladly sustain  
Till summer comes up from the South, and with crowds  
Of thy brethren a march thou should'st sound through the  
clouds,  
And back to the forests again. 40

*The CHILDLESS FATHER*<sup>1</sup>

=====

Up, Timothy, up with your Staff and away!  
Not a soul in the village this morning will stay;  
The Hare has just started from Hamilton's grounds,<sup>2</sup>  
And Skiddaw<sup>3</sup> is glad with the cry of the hounds.

—Of coats and of jackets grey, scarlet, and green,  
On the slopes of the pastures all colours were seen,  
With their comely blue aprons and caps white as snow,  
The girls on the hills made a holiday show.

The bason of box-wood, \* just six months before,  
Had stood on the table at Timothy's door, 10  
A Coffin through Timothy's threshold had pass'd,  
One Child did it bear and that Child was his last.

Now fast up the dell came the noise and the fray,  
The horse and the horn, and the hark! hark away!  
Old Timothy took up his Staff, and he shut  
With a leisurely motion the door of his hut.

Perhaps to himself at that moment he said,  
"The key I must take, for my Ellen is dead"  
But of this in my ears not a word did he speak,  
And he went to the chase with a tear on his cheek. 20

---

\* In several parts of the North of England, when a funeral takes place, a bason full of Sprigs of Box-wood is placed at the door of the house from which the Coffin is taken up, and each person who attends the funeral ordinarily takes a Sprig of this Box-wood, and throws it into the grave of the deceased. [Wordsworth's note.]

1 By Wordsworth.

2 *Hamilton's grounds*] Untraced.

3 *Skiddaw*] A high peak (3054 feet) approximately three miles north of Keswick.

THE OLD  
CUMBERLAND BEGGAR.  
*A DESCRIPTION.*<sup>1</sup>

---

1 By Wordsworth.

*The OLD CUMBERLAND BEGGAR,  
A DESCRIPTION*

=====

*The class of Beggars to which the old man here described belongs, will probably soon be extinct. It consisted of poor, and, mostly, old and infirm persons, who confined themselves to a stated round in their neighbourhood, and had certain fixed days, on which, at different houses, they regularly received charity; sometimes in money, but mostly in provisions.*

=====

I saw an aged Beggar in my walk,  
And he was seated by the highway side  
On a low structure of rude masonry  
Built at the foot of a huge hill, that they  
Who lead their horses down the steep rough road  
May thence remount at ease. The aged man  
Had placed his staff across the broad smooth stone  
That overlays the pile, and from a bag  
All white with flour the dole of village dames,  
He drew his scraps and fragments, one by one, 10  
And scann'd them with a fix'd and serious look  
Of idle computation. In the sun,  
Upon the second step of that small pile,  
Surrounded by those wild unpeopled hills,  
He sate, and eat his food in solitude;  
And ever, scatter'd from his palsied hand,  
That still attempting to prevent the waste,  
Was baffled still, the crumbs in little showers  
Fell on the ground, and the small mountain birds,  
Not venturing yet to peck their destin'd meal, 20  
Approached within the length of half his staff.

Him from my childhood have I known, and then  
He was so old, he seems not older now;  
He travels on, a solitary man,  
So helpless in appearance, that for him  
The sauntering horseman-traveller does not throw  
With careless hand his alms upon the ground,  
But stops, that he may safely lodge the coin  
Within the old Man's hat; nor quits him so,

But still when he has given his horse the rein 30  
 Towards the aged Beggar turns a look,  
 Sidelong and half-reverted. She who tends  
 The toll-gate, when in summer at her door  
 She turns her wheel, if on the road she sees  
 The aged Beggar coming, quits her work,  
 And lifts the latch for him that he may pass.  
 The Post-boy when his rattling wheels o'ertake  
 The aged Beggar, in the woody lane,  
 Shouts to him from behind, and, if perchance  
 The old Man does not change his course, the Boy 40  
 Turns with less noisy wheels to the road-side,  
 And passes gently by, without a curse  
 Upon his lips, or anger at his heart.  
 He travels on, a solitary Man,  
 His age has no companion. On the ground  
 His eyes are turn'd, and, as he moves along,  
*They* move along the ground; and evermore,  
 Instead of common and habitual sight  
 Of fields with rural works, of hill and dale,  
 And the blue sky, one little span of earth 50  
 Is all his prospect. Thus, from day to day,  
 Bowbent, his eyes for ever on the ground,  
 He plies his weary journey, seeing still,  
 And never knowing that he sees, some straw,  
 Some scatter'd leaf, or marks which, in one track,  
 The nails of cart or chariot wheel have left  
 Impress'd on the white road, in the same line,  
 At distance still the same. Poor Traveller!  
 His staff trails with him, scarcely do his feet  
 Disturb the summer dust, he is so still 60  
 In look and motion that the cottage curs,  
 Ere he have pass'd the door, will turn away  
 Weary of barking at him. Boys and girls,  
 The vacant and the busy, maids and youths,  
 And urchins newly breech'd all pass him by:  
 Him even the slow-pac'd waggon leaves behind.

But deem not this man useless.—Statesmen! ye  
 Who are so restless in your wisdom, ye  
 Who have a broom still ready in your hands  
 To rid the world of nuisances; ye proud, 70  
 Heart-swoln, while in your pride ye contemplate

Your talents, power, and wisdom, deem him not  
 A burthen of the earth. 'Tis Nature's law  
 That none, the meanest of created things,  
 Of forms created the most vile and brute,  
 The dullest or most noxious, should exist  
 Divorced from good, a spirit and pulse of good,  
 A life and soul to every mode of being  
 Inseparably link'd. While thus he creeps  
 From door to door, the Villagers in him 80  
 Behold a record which together binds  
 Past deeds and offices of charity  
 Else unremember'd, and so keeps alive  
 The kindly mood in hearts which lapse of years,  
 And that half-wisdom half-experience gives  
 Make slow to feel, and by sure steps resign  
 To selfishness and cold oblivious cares.  
 Among the farms and solitary huts  
 Hamlets, and thinly-scattered villages,  
 Where'er the aged Beggar takes his rounds, 90  
 The mild necessity of use compels  
 To acts of love; and habit does the work  
 Of reason, yet prepares that after joy  
 Which reason cherishes. And thus the soul,  
 By that sweet taste of pleasure unpursu'd  
 Doth find itself insensibly dispos'd  
 To virtue and true goodness. Some there are,  
 By their good works exalted, lofty minds  
 And meditative, authors of delight  
 And happiness, which to the end of time 100  
 Will live, and spread, and kindle; minds like these,  
 In childhood, from this solitary being,  
 This helpless wanderer, have perchance receiv'd,  
 (A thing more precious far than all that books  
 Or the sollicitudes of love can do!)  
 That first mild touch of sympathy and thought,  
 In which they found their kindred with a world  
 Where want and sorrow were. The easy man  
 Who sits at his own door, and like the pear  
 Which overhangs his head from the green wall, 110  
 Feeds in the sunshine; the robust and young,  
 The prosperous and unthinking, they who live  
 Shelter'd, and flourish in a little grove  
 Of their own kindred, all behold in him

A silent monitor, which on their minds  
Must needs impress a transitory thought  
Of self-congratulation, to the heart  
Of each recalling his peculiar boons,  
His charters and exemptions; and perchance,  
Though he to no one give the fortitude 120  
And circumspection needful to preserve  
His present blessings, and to husband up  
The respite of the season, he, at least,  
And 'tis no vulgar service, makes them felt.

Yet further.—Many, I believe, there are  
Who live a life of virtuous decency,  
Men who can hear the Decalogue and feel  
No self-reproach, who of the moral law  
Establish'd in the land where they abide 130  
Are strict observers, and not negligent,  
Meanwhile, in any tenderness of heart  
Or act of love to those with whom they dwell,  
Their kindred, and the children of their blood.  
Praise be to such, and to their slumbers peace!  
—But of the poor man ask, the abject poor,  
Go and demand of him, if there be here,  
In this cold abstinence from evil deeds,  
And these inevitable charities,  
Wherewith to satisfy the human soul.

No—man is dear to man: the poorest poor 140  
Long for some moments in a weary life  
When they can know and feel that they have been  
Themselves the fathers and the dealers out  
Of some small blessings, have been kind to such  
As needed kindness, for this single cause,  
That we have all of us one human heart.  
—Such pleasure is to one kind Being known  
My Neighbour, when with punctual care, each week  
Duly as Friday comes, though press'd herself  
By her own wants, she from her chest of meal 150  
Takes one unsparing handful for the scrip  
Of this old Mendicant, and, from her door  
Returning with exhilarated heart,  
Sits by her fire and builds her hope in heav'n.

Then let him pass, a blessing on his head!  
And while, in that vast solitude to which

The tide of things has led him, he appears  
 To breathe and live but for himself alone,  
 Unblam'd, uninjur'd, let him bear about  
 The good which the benignant law of heaven 160  
 Has hung around him, and, while life is his,  
 Still let him prompt the unletter'd Villagers  
 To tender offices and pensive thoughts.  
 Then let him pass, a blessing on his head!  
 And, long as he can wander, let him breathe  
 The freshness of the vallies, let his blood  
 Struggle with frosty air and winter snows,  
 And let the charter'd wind that sweeps the heath  
 Beat his grey locks against his wither'd face.  
 Reverence the hope whose vital anxiousness 170  
 Gives the last human interest to his heart.  
 May never House,<sup>1</sup> misnamed of industry,  
 Make him a captive; for that pent-up din,  
 Those life-consuming sounds that clog the air,  
 Be his the natural silence of old age.  
 Let him be free of mountain solitudes,  
 And have around him, whether heard or not,  
 The pleasant melody of woodland birds.  
 Few are his pleasures; if his eyes, which now  
 Have been so long familiar with the earth, 180  
 No more behold the horizontal sun  
 Rising or setting, let the light at least  
 Find a free entrance to their languid orbs.  
 And let him, *where* and *when* he will, sit down  
 Beneath the trees, or by the grassy bank  
 Of high-way side, and with the little birds  
 Share his chance-gather'd meal, and, finally,  
 As in the eye of Nature he has liv'd,  
 So in the eye of Nature let him die.

---

1 *House*] The Workhouse, established to provide work for the unemployed and indigent of a parish. The Poor Law of 1601 assigned responsibility for the poor to parishes, which later built workhouses to employ paupers and the indigent at profitable work. It proved difficult to employ them on a profitable basis, however, and workhouses degenerated into dumping grounds for every type of pauper, whether young, healthy, criminal, elderly, or insane. The Poor Law Amendment of 1834 standardized the system of poor relief throughout Britain; under the new law, all who wished to receive aid had to live in workhouses.

RURAL ARCHITECTURE<sup>1</sup>

=====

There's George Fisher, Charles Fleming, and Reginald Shore,  
Three rosy-cheek'd School-boys, the highest not more  
Than the height of a Counsellor's bag;  
To the top of Great How did it please them to climb,  
And there they built up without mortar or lime  
A Man on the peak of the crag.

They built him of stones gather'd up as they lay,  
They built him and christen'd him all in one day,  
An Urchin both vigorous and hale;  
And so without scruple they call'd him Ralph Jones.           10  
Now Ralph is renown'd for the length of his bones;  
The Magog of Legberthwaite dale.\*

Just half a week after the Wind sallied forth,  
And, in anger or merriment, out of the North  
Coming on with a terrible pother,<sup>2</sup>  
From the peak of the crag blew the Giant away.  
And what did these School-boys?—The very next day  
They went and they built up another.

—Some little I've seen of blind boisterous works  
In Paris and London, 'mong Christians or Turks,           20  
Spirits busy to do and undo:  
At remembrance whereof my blood sometimes will flag.  
—Then, light-hearted Boys, to the top of the Crag!  
And I'll build up a Giant with you.

---

\* Great How is a single and conspicuous hill, which rises towards the foot of Thirl-mere, on the western side of the beautiful dale of Legberthwaite, along the high road between Keswick and Ambleside. [Wordsworth's note. Great How and Thirlmere lie between Keswick and Grasmere. "Gog and Magog" recur in the Bible, and are the names, respectively, of an enemy king and of his supposed kingdom; they are mentioned several times in Ezekiel chapters 38 and 39, and in Revelation 20:7.]

---

1 By Wordsworth.

2 *pother*] A disturbance or tumult.



A POET'S EPITAPH<sup>1</sup>

=====

Art thou a Statesman, in the van  
Of public business train'd and bred,  
—First learn to love one living man;  
*Then* may'st thou think upon the dead.

A Lawyer art thou?—draw not nigh;  
Go, carry to some other place  
The hardness of thy coward eye,  
The falshood of thy sallow face.

Art thou a man of purple cheer?  
A rosy man, right plump to see? 10  
Approach; yet Doctor, not too near:  
This grave no cushion is for thee.

Art thou a man of gallant pride,  
A Soldier, and no man of chaff?  
Welcome!—but lay thy sword aside,  
And lean upon a Peasant's staff.

Physician art thou? One, all eyes,  
Philosopher! a fingering slave,  
One that would peep and botanize  
Upon his mother's grave? 20

Wrapp'd closely in thy sensual fleece  
O turn aside, and take, I pray,  
That he below may rest in peace,  
Thy pin-point of a soul away!

—A Moralist perchance appears;  
Led, Heaven knows how! to this poor sod:  
And He has neither eyes nor ears;  
Himself his world, and his own God;

One to whose smooth-rubb'd soul can cling  
Nor form nor feeling great nor small, 30

---

1 By Wordsworth.

A reasoning, self-sufficing thing,  
An intellectual All in All!

Shut close the door! press down the latch:  
Sleep in thy intellectual crust,  
Nor lose ten tickings of thy watch,  
Near this unprofitable dust.

But who is He with modest looks,  
And clad in homely russet brown?  
He murmurs near the running brooks  
A music sweeter than their own.

40

He is retired as noontide dew,  
Or fountain in a noonday grove;  
And you must love him, ere to you  
He will seem worthy of your love.

The outward shews of sky and earth,  
Of hill and valley he has view'd;  
And impulses of deeper birth  
Have come to him in solitude.

In common things that round us lie  
Some random truths he can impart  
The harvest of a quiet eye  
That broods and sleeps on his own heart.

50

But he is weak, both man and boy,  
Hath been an idler in the land;  
Contented if he might enjoy  
The things which others understand.

—Come hither in thy hour of strength,  
Come, weak as is a breaking wave!  
Here stretch thy body at full length;  
Or build thy house upon this grave.—

60

*A CHARACTER,  
In the antithetical Manner*<sup>1</sup>

=====

I marvel how Nature could ever find space  
For the weight and the levity seen in his face:  
There's thought and no thought, and there's paleness and bloom,  
And bustle and sluggishness, pleasure and gloom.

There's weakness, and strength both redundant and vain;  
Such strength, as if ever affliction and pain  
Could pierce through a temper that's soft to disease,  
Would be rational peace—a philosopher's ease.

There's indifference, alike when he fails and succeeds,  
And attention full ten times as much as there needs,           10  
Pride where there's no envy, there's so much of joy;  
And mildness, and spirit both forward and coy.

There's freedom, and sometimes a diffident stare  
Of shame scarcely seeming to know that she's there.  
There's virtue, the title it surely may claim,  
Yet wants, heaven knows what, to be worthy the name.

What a picture! 'tis drawn without nature or art,  
—Yet the Man would at once run away with your heart,  
And I for five centuries right gladly would be  
Such an odd, such a kind happy creature as he.           20

*A FRAGMENT*<sup>2</sup>

=====

Between two sister moorland rills  
There is a spot that seems to lie  
Sacred to flowrets of the hills,  
And sacred to the sky.  
And in this smooth and open dell  
There is a tempest-stricken tree;

---

1 By Wordsworth.

2 By Wordsworth.

A corner-stone by lightning cut,  
The last stone of a cottage hut;  
And in this dell you see  
A thing no storm can e'er destroy, 10  
The shadow of a Danish Boy.

In clouds above, the lark is heard,  
He sings his blithest and his best;  
But in this lonesome nook the bird  
Did never build his nest.  
No beast, no bird hath here his home;  
The bees borne on the breezy air  
Pass high above those fragrant bells  
To other flowers, to other dells,  
Nor ever linger there. 20  
The Danish Boy walks here alone:  
The lovely dell is all his own.

A spirit of noon day is he,  
He seems a Form of flesh and blood;  
A piping Shepherd he might be,  
A Herd-boy of the wood.  
A regal vest of fur he wears,  
In colour like a raven's wing;  
It fears nor rain, nor wind, nor dew,  
But in the storm 'tis fresh and blue 30  
As budding pines in Spring;  
His helmet has a vernal grace,  
Fresh as the bloom upon his face.

A harp is from his shoulder slung;  
He rests the harp upon his knee,  
And there in a forgotten tongue  
He warbles melody.  
Of flocks and herds both far and near  
He is the darling and the joy,  
And often, when no cause appears, 40  
The mountain ponies prick their ears,  
They hear the Danish Boy,  
While in the dell he sits alone  
Beside the tree and corner-stone.

When near this blasted tree you pass,  
Two sods are plainly to be seen  
Close at its root, and each with grass  
Is cover'd fresh and green.  
Like turf upon a new-made grave  
These two green sods together lie,  
Nor heat, nor cold, nor rain, nor wind  
Can these two sods together bind,  
Nor sun, nor earth, nor sky,  
But side by side the two are laid,  
As if just sever'd by the spade.

50

There sits he: in his face you spy  
No trace of a ferocious air,  
Nor ever was a cloudless sky  
So steady or so fair.  
The lovely Danish Boy is blest  
And happy in his flowery cove;  
From bloody deeds his thoughts are far;  
And yet he warbles songs of war;  
They seem like songs of love,  
For calm and gentle is his mien;  
Like a dead Boy he is serene.

60

POEMS  
ON THE  
*NAMING OF PLACES.*<sup>1</sup>

---

1 By Wordsworth.

## ADVERTISEMENT

By Persons resident in the country and attached to rural objects, many places will be found unnamed or of unknown names, where little Incidents will have occurred, or feelings been experienced, which will have given to such places a private and peculiar interest. From a wish to give some sort of record to such Incidents or renew the gratification of such Feelings, Names have been given to Places by the Author and some of his Friends, and the following Poems written in consequence.

POEMS on the NAMING of PLACES

=====

I

It was an April Morning: fresh and clear  
The Rivulet, delighting in its strength,  
Ran with a young man's speed, and yet the voice  
Of waters which the winter had supplied  
Was soften'd down into a vernal tone.  
The spirit of enjoyment and desire,  
And hopes and wishes, from all living things  
Went circling, like a multitude of sounds.  
The budding groves appear'd as if in haste  
To spur the steps of June; as if their shades 10  
Of *various* green were hindrances that stood  
Between them and their object: yet, meanwhile,  
There was such deep contentment in the air  
That every naked ash, and tardy tree  
Yet leafless, seem'd as though the countenance  
With which it look'd on this delightful day  
Were native to the summer.—Up the brook  
I roam'd in the confusion of my heart,  
Alive to all things and forgetting all.  
At length I to a sudden turning came 20  
In this continuous glen, where down a rock  
The stream, so ardent in its course before,  
Sent forth such sallies of glad sound, that all  
Which I till then had heard, appear'd the voice  
Of common pleasure: beast and bird, the lamb,  
The Shepherd's dog, the linnet and the thrush  
Vied with this waterfall, and made a song  
Which, while I listen'd, seem'd like the wild growth  
Or like some natural produce of the air  
That could not cease to be. Green leaves were here, 30  
But 'twas the foliage of the rocks, the birch,  
The yew, the holly, and the bright green thorn,  
With hanging islands of resplendent furze:  
And on a summit, distant a short space,  
By any who should look beyond the dell,  
A single mountain Cottage might be seen.  
I gaz'd and gaz'd, and to myself I said,



“Our thoughts at least are ours; and this wild nook,  
 My EMMA, I will dedicate to thee.”  
 —Soon did the spot become my other home, 40  
 My dwelling, and my out-of-doors abode.  
 And, of the Shepherds who have seen me there,  
 To whom I sometimes in our idle talk  
 Have told this fancy, two or three, perhaps,  
 Years after we are gone and in our graves,  
 When they have cause to speak of this wild place,  
 May call it by the name of EMMA’S DELL.<sup>1</sup>

=====

II

To JOANNA<sup>2</sup>

Amid the smoke of cities did you pass  
 Your time of early youth, and there you learn’d,  
 From years of quiet industry, to love  
 The living Beings by your own fire-side,  
 With such a strong devotion, that your heart  
 Is slow towards the sympathies of them  
 Who look upon the hills with tenderness,  
 And make dear friendships with the streams and groves.  
 Yet we who are transgressors in this kind,  
 Dwelling retired in our simplicity 10  
 Among the woods and fields, we love you well,  
 Joanna! and I guess, since you have been  
 So distant from us now for two long years,  
 That you will gladly listen to discourse  
 However trivial, if you thence are taught  
 That they, with whom you once were happy, talk  
 Familiarly of you and of old times.

While I was seated, now some ten days past,  
 Beneath those lofty firs, that overtop  
 Their ancient neighbour, the old Steeple tower, 20  
 The Vicar from his gloomy house hard by

- 
- 1 *EMMA’S DELL*] Located half a mile northwest of Grasmere, across the road from Goody Bridge Farm. See Appendix H, p. 544.  
 2 *JOANNA*] Joanna Hutchinson (1780–1843, youngest sister of Mary Hutchinson, whom Wordsworth married 4 October 1802. As Joanna Hutchinson did not visit the Lake District in these years, the poem’s situation is entirely a fiction.

Came forth to greet me, and when he had ask'd,  
 "How fares Joanna, that wild-hearted Maid!  
 And when will she return to us?" he paus'd,  
 And after short exchange of village news,  
 He with grave looks demanded, for what cause,  
 Reviving obsolete Idolatry,  
 I like a Runic Priest, in characters  
 Of formidable size, had chisel'd out  
 Some uncouth name upon the native rock, 30  
 Above the Rotha,<sup>1</sup> by the forest side.  
 —Now, by those dear immunities of heart  
 Engender'd betwixt malice and true love,  
 I was not loth to be so catechiz'd,  
 And this was my reply.—"As it befel,  
 One summer morning we had walk'd abroad  
 At break of day, Joanna and myself.  
 —'Twas that delightful season, when the broom,  
 Full flower'd, and visible on every steep,  
 Along the copses<sup>2</sup> runs in veins of gold. 40  
 Our pathway led us on to Rotha's banks,  
 And when we came in front of that tall rock  
 Which looks towards the East, I there stopp'd short,  
 And trac'd the lofty barrier with my eye  
 From base to summit; such delight I found  
 To note in shrub and tree, in stone and flower,  
 That intermixture of delicious hues,  
 Along so vast a surface, all at once,  
 In one impression, by connecting force  
 Of their own beauty, imag'd in the heart. 50  
 —When I had gaz'd 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<sup>3</sup>  
 Was ready with her cavern; Hammar-Scar,<sup>4</sup>  
 And the tall Steep of Silver-How sent forth

---

1 *Rotha*] See Wordsworth's note at the end of this poem.

2 *copses*] Thickets of small trees or underbrush.

3 *Helm-crag*] With Silver How, Loughrigg, and Fairfield, one of the peaks that rings Grasmere. Helm-Crag lies a mile to the northwest, Fairfield three miles north, Silver How a half-mile southwest, and Loughrigg two miles south and just south of the stretch of the Rothay river connecting the lakes of Grasmere and Rydal.

4 *Hammar-Scar*] Gorge just south of Grasmere Lake.

A noise of laughter; southern Loughrigg heard,  
 And Fairfield answer'd with a mountain tone: 60  
 Helvellyn far into the clear blue sky  
 Carried the Lady's voice,—old Skiddaw blew  
 His speaking trumpet;—back out of the clouds  
 Of Glaramara<sup>1</sup> southward came the voice;  
 And Kirkstone<sup>2</sup> toss'd it from his misty head.<sup>3</sup>  
 Now whether, (said I to our cordial Friend  
 Who in the hey-day of astonishment  
 Smil'd in my face) this were in simple truth  
 A work accomplish'd by the brotherhood  
 Of ancient mountains, or my ear was touch'd 70  
 With dreams and visionary impulses,  
 Is not for me to tell; but sure I am  
 That there was a loud uproar in the hills.  
 And, while we both were listening, to my side  
 The fair Joanna drew, as if she wish'd  
 To shelter from some object of her fear.  
 —And hence, long afterwards, when eighteen moons  
 Were wasted, as I chanc'd to walk alone  
 Beneath this rock, at sun-rise, on a calm  
 And silent morning, I sate down, and there, 80  
 In memory of affections old and true,  
 I chissel'd out in those rude characters  
 Joanna's name upon the living stone.  
 And I, and all who dwell by my fire-side  
 Have call'd the lovely rock, Joanna's Rock."

## NOTE

In Cumberland and Westmoreland are several Inscriptions upon the native rock which from the wasting of Time and the rudeness

- 
- 1 *Glaramara*] A peak (2562 feet) approximately six miles south of Derwent Water.
  - 2 *Kirkstone*] A pass (1490 feet) approximately four miles south of Ullswater.
  - 3 *The rock ... misty head.*] In chapter 20 of the *Biographia Literaria*, Coleridge suggests that lines 54–65 imitate a passage in Song XXX of Michael Drayton's *Poly-Olbion* (1622): “‘Till to your shouts the hills with echoes all reply./Copland scarce had spoke, but quickly every hill,/Upon her verge that stands, the neighbouring vallies fill;/Helvillon from his height, it through the mountains threw,/ From whom as soon again, the sound Dunbalrase drew,/From whose stone-trophied head, it on to Wendross went,/Which tow’rds the sea again, surrounded it to Dent.”



Of copse and thicket, leaves the eastern shore  
 Of Grasmere safe in its own privacy.  
 And there, myself and two beloved Friends,  
 One calm September morning, ere the mist  
 Had altogether yielded to the sun,  
 Saunter'd on this retir'd and difficult way.  
 —Ill suits the road with one in haste, but we 10  
 Play'd with our time; and, as we stroll'd along,  
 It was our occupation to observe  
 Such objects as the waves had toss'd ashore,  
 Feather, or leaf, or weed, or wither'd bough,  
 Each on the other heap'd along the line  
 Of the dry wreck. And in our vacant mood,  
 Not seldom did we stop to watch some tuft  
 Of dandelion seed or thistle's beard,  
 Which, seeming lifeless half, and half impell'd  
 By some internal feeling, skimm'd along 20  
 Close to the surface of the lake that lay  
 Asleep in a dead calm, ran closely on  
 Along the dead calm lake, now here, now there,  
 In all its sportive wanderings all the while  
 Making report of an invisible breeze  
 That was its wings, its chariot, and its horse,  
 Its very playmate, and its moving soul.  
 —And often, trifling with a privilege  
 Alike indulg'd to all, we paus'd, one now, 30  
 And now the other, to point out, perchance  
 To pluck, some flower or water-weed, too fair  
 Either to be divided from the place  
 On which it grew, or to be left alone  
 To its own beauty. Many such there are,  
 Fair ferns and flowers, and chiefly that tall plant  
 So stately, of the Queen Osmunda nam'd,  
 Plant lovelier in its own retir'd abode<sup>1</sup>

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1 *Queen Osmunda ... retir'd abode*] *Osmunda regalis*, a fern growing in moist places. In *Loves of the Plants* (1789), Erasmus Darwin describes the fern: "The fair Osmunda seeks the silent dell,/the ivy canopy, and dripping cell;/There hid in shades *clandestine* rites approves,/Till the green progeny betrays her loves." Linnaeus had used "clandestine" to indicate that the plant's flowers and seeds, and thus its method of propagation, are invisible to the eye.

On Grasmere's beach, than Naid<sup>1</sup> by the side  
 Of Grecian brook, or Lady of the Mere  
 Sole-sitting by the shores of old Romance.<sup>2</sup> 40  
 —So fared we that sweet morning: from the fields  
 Meanwhile, a noise was heard, the busy mirth  
 Of Reapers, Men and Women, Boys and Girls.  
 Delighted much to listen to those sounds,  
 And in the fashion which I have describ'd,  
 Feeding unthinking fancies, we advanc'd  
 Along the indented shore; when suddenly,  
 Through a thin veil of glittering haze, we saw  
 Before us on a point of jutting land  
 The tall and upright figure of a Man 50  
 Attir'd in peasant's garb, who stood alone  
 Angling beside the margin of the lake.  
 That way we turn'd our steps; nor was it long,  
 Ere making ready comments on the sight  
 Which then we saw, with one and the same voice  
 We all cried out, that he must be indeed  
 An idle man, who thus could lose a day  
 Of the mid harvest, when the labourer's hire  
 Is ample, and some little might be stor'd  
 Wherewith to cheer him in the winter time. 60  
 Thus talking of that Peasant we approach'd  
 Close to the spot where with his rod and line  
 He stood alone; whereat he turn'd his head  
 To greet us—and we saw a man worn down  
 By sickness, gaunt and lean, with sunken cheeks  
 And wasted limbs, his legs so long and lean  
 That for my single self I look'd at them,  
 Forgetful of the body they sustain'd.—  
 Too weak to labour in the harvest field,  
 The man was using his best skill to gain 70  
 A pittance from the dead unfeeling lake  
 That knew not of his wants. I will not say  
 What thoughts immediately were ours, nor how  
 The happy idleness of that sweet morn,  
 With all its lovely images, was chang'd

1 *Naid*] An obscure spelling of “naiad”; Wordsworth changed the spelling in the 1802 edition.

2 *Lady ... Romance*] Wordsworth likely refers to the Lady of the Lake of Arthurian romance.

To serious musing and to self-reproach.  
Nor did we fail to see within ourselves  
What need there is to be reserv'd in speech,  
And temper all our thoughts with charity.  
—Therefore, unwilling to forget that day, 80  
My Friend, Myself, and She who then receiv'd  
The same admonishment, have call'd the place  
By a memorial name, uncouth indeed  
As e'er by Mariner was given to Bay  
Or Foreland on a new-discover'd coast,  
And POINT RASH-JUDGMENT<sup>1</sup> is the Name it bears.

=====

V

*To M.H.*<sup>2</sup>

Our walk was far among the ancient trees:  
There was no road, nor any wood-man's path,  
But the thick umbrage, checking the wild growth  
Of weed and sapling, on the soft green turf  
Beneath the branches of itself had made  
A track which brought us to a slip of lawn,  
And a small bed of water in the woods.  
All round this pool both flocks and herds might drink  
On its firm margin, even as from a well  
Or some stone-bason which the Herdsman's hand 10  
Had shap'd for their refreshment, nor did sun  
Or wind from any quarter ever come  
But as a blessing to this calm recess,  
This glade of water and this one green field.  
The spot was made by Nature for herself:  
The travellers know it not, and 'twill remain  
Unknown to them; but it is beautiful,

- 
- 1 *POINT RASH-JUDGMENT*] Located on the mid-eastern shore of Grasmere Lake a few hundred yards south of Dove Cottage. See Appendix H, p. 544.
- 2 *M. H.*] In a later note, Wordsworth identified "M.H." as Mary Hutchinson. Wordsworth composed the poem in December of 1799; he and Mary Hutchinson were married 4 October 1802.

And if a man should plant his cottage near,  
Should sleep beneath the shelter of its trees,  
And blend its waters with his daily meal,  
He would so love it that in his death-hour  
Its image would survive among his thoughts,  
And, therefore, my sweet MARY, this still nook<sup>1</sup>  
With all its beeches we have named from You.

20

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1 *this still nook*] In the note to this poem he narrated to Isabella Fenwick, Wordsworth stated that Mary's nook was "in Rydal Upper Park."



MICHAEL,  
*A PASTORAL POEM.*<sup>1</sup>

---

1 By Wordsworth.

*MICHAEL,*  
*A PASTORAL POEM*

=====

If from the public way you turn your steps  
Up the tumultuous brook of Green-head Gill,<sup>1</sup>  
You will suppose that with an upright path  
Your feet must struggle; in such bold ascent  
The pastoral Mountains front you, face to face.  
But, courage! for beside that boisterous Brook  
The mountains have all open'd out themselves,  
And made a hidden valley of their own.  
No habitation there is seen; but such  
As journey thither find themselves alone 10  
With a few sheep, with rocks and stones, and kites  
That overhead are sailing in the sky.  
It is in truth an utter solitude,  
Nor should I have made mention of this Dell  
But for one object which you might pass by,  
Might see and notice not. Beside the brook  
There is a straggling heap of unhewn stones!  
And to that place a story appertains,  
Which, though it be ungarnish'd with events,  
Is not unfit, I deem, for the fire-side, 20  
Or for the summer shade. It was the first,  
The earliest of those tales that spake to me  
Of Shepherds, dwellers in the vallies, men  
Whom I already lov'd, not verily  
For their own sakes, but for the fields and hills  
Where was their occupation and abode.  
And hence this Tale, while I was yet a boy  
Careless of books, yet having felt the power  
Of Nature, by the gentle agency  
Of natural objects led me on to feel 30  
For passions that were not my own, and think  
At random and imperfectly indeed  
On man; the heart of man and human life.  
Therefore, although it be a history  
Homely and rude, I will relate the same  
For the delight of a few natural hearts,

---

1 *Green-head Gill*] A narrow valley that begins a few hundred yards north-east of Grasmere.

And with yet fonder feeling, for the sake  
Of youthful Poets, who among these Hills  
Will be my second self when I am gone.

UPON the Forest-side in Grasmere Vale 40  
There dwelt a Shepherd, Michael was his name,  
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  
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 learn'd the meaning of all winds,  
Of blasts of every tone, and often-times  
When others heeded not, He heard the South 50  
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. 60  
So liv'd he till his eightieth year was pass'd.

And grossly that man errs, who should suppose  
That the green Valleys, 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 preserv'd the memory 70  
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.

He had not passed his days in singleness. 80

He had a Wife, a comely Matron, old  
Though younger than himself full twenty years.  
She was a woman of a stirring life  
Whose heart was in her house: two wheels she had  
Of antique form, this large for spinning wool,  
That small for flax, and if one wheel had rest,  
It was because the other was at work.

The Pair had but one Inmate in their house,  
An only Child, who had been born to them  
When Michael telling o'er his years began 90

To deem that he was old, in Shepherd's phrase,  
With one foot in the grave. This only son,  
With two brave sheep dogs tried in many a storm,  
The one of an inestimable worth,  
Made all their Household. I may truly say,  
That they were as a proverb in the vale  
For endless industry. When day was gone,  
And from their occupations out of doors  
The Son and Father were come home, even then  
Their labour did not cease, unless when all 100  
Turn'd to their cleanly supper-board, and there  
Each with a mess of pottage and skimm'd milk,  
Sate round their basket pil'd with oaten cakes,  
And their plain home-made cheese. Yet when their meal  
Was ended, LUKE (for so the Son was nam'd)  
And his old Father, both betook themselves  
To such convenient work, as might employ  
Their hands by the fire-side; perhaps to card  
Wool for the House-wife's spindle, or repair  
Some injury done to sickle, flail, or scythe, 110  
Or other implement of house or field.

Down from the cieling by the chimney's edge,  
Which in our ancient uncouth country style  
Did with a huge projection overbrow  
Large space beneath, as duly as the light  
Of day grew dim, the House-wife hung a lamp;  
An aged utensil, which had perform'd  
Service beyond all others of its kind.

Early at evening did it burn and late,  
 Surviving Comrade of uncounted Hours 120  
 Which going by from year to year had found  
 And left the Couple neither gay perhaps  
 Nor chearful, yet with objects and with hopes  
 Living a life of eager industry.  
 And now, when LUKE was in his eighteenth year,  
 There by the light of this old lamp they sate,  
 Father and Son, while late into the night  
 The House-wife plied her own peculiar work,  
 Making the cottage thro' the silent hours  
 Murmur as with the sound of summer flies.<sup>1</sup> 130  
 Not with a waste of words, but for the sake  
 Of pleasure, which I know that I shall give  
 To many living now, I of this Lamp  
 Speak thus minutely: for there are no few  
 Whose memories will bear witness to my tale.  
 The Light was famous in its neighbourhood,  
 And was a public Symbol of the life,  
 The thrifty Pair had liv'd. For, as it chanc'd,  
 Their Cottage on a plot of rising ground

- 
- 1 *Murmur ... flies*] In a 9 April 1801 letter, Wordsworth wrote to Thomas Poole that he was considering inserting the following lines after line 130:

Though in these occupations they would pass  
 Whole hours with but small interchange of speech,  
 Yet there were times in which they did not want  
 Discourse both wise and pleasant, shrewd remarks  
 Of daily prudence, cloth'd in images  
 Lively and beautiful, in rural forms  
 That made their conversation fresh and fair  
 As is a landscape:—And the Shepherd oft  
 Would draw out of his heart the obscurities,  
 And admirations, that were there, of God  
 And of his works, or, yielding to the bent  
 Of his peculiar humour, would let loose  
 His tongue, and give it the mind's freedom, then  
 Discoursing on remote imaginations, strong  
 Conceits, devices, day-dreams, thoughts and schemes,  
 The fancies of a solitary Man!

These lines were not adopted into later editions, and instead lines 131–35 were removed beginning in 1805.

Stood single, with large prospect North and South, 140  
High into Easedale,<sup>1</sup> up to Dunmal-Raise,  
And Westward to the village<sup>2</sup> near the Lake.  
And from this constant light so regular  
And so far seen, the House itself by all  
Who dwelt within the limits of the vale,  
Both old and young, was nam'd The Evening Star.

Thus living on through such a length of years,  
The Shepherd, if he lov'd himself, must needs  
Have lov'd his Help-mate; but to Michael's heart  
This Son of his old age was yet more dear— 150  
Effect which might perhaps have been produc'd  
By that instinctive tenderness, the same  
Blind Spirit, which is in the blood of all,  
Or that a child, more than all other gifts,  
Brings hope with it, and forward-looking thoughts,  
And stirrings of inquietude, when they  
By tendency of nature needs must fail.  
From such, and other causes, to the thoughts  
Of the old Man his only Son was now  
The dearest object that he knew on earth. 160  
Exceeding was the love he bare to him,  
His Heart and his Heart's joy! For oftentimes  
Old Michael, while he was a babe in arms,  
Had done him female service, not alone  
For dalliance and delight, as is the use  
Of Fathers, but with patient mind enforc'd  
To acts of tenderness; and he had rock'd  
His cradle with a woman's gentle hand.

And in a later time, ere yet the Boy  
Had put on Boy's attire, did Michael love, 170  
Albeit of a stern unbending mind,  
To have the young one in his sight, when he  
Had work by his own door, or when he sate  
With sheep before him on his Shepherd's stool,  
Beneath that large old Oak, which near their door  
Stood, and from its enormous breadth of shade  
Chosen for the Shearer's covert from the sun,

---

1 *Easedale*] The valley running northwest from Grasmere.

2 *village*] Probably Grasmere.

Thence in our rustic dialect was call'd  
 The CLIPPING TREE,\* a name which yet it bears.  
 There, while they two were sitting in the shade, 180  
 With others round them, earnest all and blithe,  
 Would Michael exercise his heart with looks  
 Of fond correction and reproof bestow'd  
 Upon the child, if he disturb'd the sheep  
 By catching at their legs, or with his shouts  
 Scar'd them, while they lay still beneath the shears.

And when by Heaven's good grace the Boy grew up  
 A healthy Lad, and carried in his cheek  
 Two steady roses that were five years old,  
 Then Michael from a winter coppice cut 190  
 With his own hand a sapling, which he hoop'd  
 With iron, making it throughout in all  
 Due requisites a perfect Shepherd's Staff,  
 And gave it to the Boy; wherewith equipp'd  
 He as a Watchman oftentimes was plac'd  
 At gate or gap, to stem or turn the flock,  
 And to his office prematurely call'd  
 There stood the urchin, as you will divine,  
 Something between a hindrance and a help,  
 And for this cause not always, I believe, 200  
 Receiving from his Father hire of praise  
 Though nought was left undone, which staff or voice  
 Or looks or threatening gestures could perform.  
 But soon as Luke, now ten years old, could stand  
 Against the mountain blasts, and to the Heights,  
 Not fearing toil, nor length of weary ways,  
 He with his Father daily went, and they  
 Were as companions, why should I relate  
 That objects which the Shepherd lov'd before  
 Were dearer now? That from the Boy there came 210  
 Feelings and emanations, things which were  
 Light to the sun, and music to the wind,  
 And that the Old Man's Heart seem'd born again.

Thus in the his Father's sight the Boy grew up,

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\* Clipping is the word used in the North of England for shearing.  
 [Wordsworth's note.]

And now when he had reach'd his eighteenth year,  
He was his comfort and his daily hope.<sup>1</sup>

WHILE this good household thus were living on  
From day to day, to Michael's ear there came  
Distressful tidings. Long before the time  
Of which I speak, the Shepherd had been bound 220  
In surety for his Brother's Son, a man  
Of an industrious life, and ample means,  
But unforeseen misfortunes suddenly  
Had press'd upon him, and old Michael now  
Was summon'd to discharge the forfeiture,  
A grievous penalty, but little less  
Than half his substance. This un-look'd for claim  
At the first hearing, for a moment took  
More hope out of his life than he supposed  
That any old man ever could have lost. 230  
As soon as he had gather'd so much strength  
That he could look his trouble in the face,  
It seem'd that his sole refuge was to sell  
A portion of his patrimonial fields.  
Such was his first resolve; he thought again,  
And his heart fail'd him. "Isabel," said he,  
Two evenings after he had heard the news,  
"I have been toiling more than seventy years,  
And in the open sun-shine of God's love  
Have we all liv'd, yet if these fields of ours 240  
Should pass into a Stranger's hand, I think  
That I could not lie quiet in my grave.  
Our lot is a hard lot; the Sun itself  
Has scarcely been more diligent than I,  
And I have liv'd to be a fool at last  
To my own family. An evil Man  
That was, and made an evil choice, if he  
Were false to us; and if he were not false,  
There are ten thousand to whom loss like this  
Had been no sorrow. I forgive him—but 250  
'Twere better to be dumb than to talk thus.  
When I began, my purpose was to speak

---

1 *Though ... hope*] Because of a printer's error, the original 1800 edition of "Michael" omitted lines 202–16 of the poem. They were inserted in copies of the 1800 edition, when possible, and restored to later editions.



Of remedies and of a chearful hope.  
 Our Luke shall leave us, Isabel; the land  
 Shall not go from us, and it shall be free,  
 He shall possess it, free as is the wind  
 That passes over it. We have, thou knowest,  
 Another Kinsman, he will be our friend  
 In this distress. He is a prosperous man,  
 Thriving in trade, and Luke to him shall go, 260  
 And with his Kinsman's help and his own thrift,  
 He quickly will repair this loss, and then  
 May come again to us. If here he stay,  
 What can be done? Where every one is poor  
 What can be gain'd?" At this, the old man paus'd,  
 And Isabel sate silent, for her mind  
 Was busy, looking back into past times.  
 There's Richard Bateman, thought she to herself,  
 He was a parish-boy—at the church-door  
 They made a gathering for him, shillings, pence, 270  
 And halfpennies, wherewith the Neighbours bought  
 A Basket, which they fill'd with Pedlar's wares,  
 And with this Basket on his arm, the Lad  
 Went up to London, found a Master there,  
 Who out of many chose the trusty Boy  
 To go and overlook his merchandise  
 Beyond the seas, where he grew wond'rous rich,  
 And left estates and monies to the poor,  
 And at his birth-place built a Chapel, floor'd  
 With Marble, which he sent from foreign lands. 280  
 These thoughts, and many others of like sort,  
 Pass'd quickly thro' the mind of Isabel,  
 And her face brighten'd. The Old Man was glad,  
 And thus resum'd. "Well! Isabel, this scheme  
 These two days has been meat and drink to me.  
 Far more than we have lost is left us yet.  
 —We have enough—I wish indeed that I  
 Were younger, but this hope is a good hope.  
 —Make ready Luke's best garments, of the best  
 Buy for him more, and let us send him forth 290  
 To-morrow, or the next day, or to-night:  
 —If he could go, the Boy should go to-night."

Here Michael ceas'd, and to the fields went forth  
 With a light heart. The House-wife for five days

Was restless morn and night, and all day long  
Wrought on with her best fingers to prepare  
Things needful for the journey of her Son.  
But Isabel was glad when Sunday came  
To stop her in her work; for, when she lay  
By Michael's side, she for the two last nights 300  
Heard him, how he was troubled in his sleep:  
And when they rose at morning she could see  
That all his hopes were gone. That day at noon  
She said to Luke, while they two by themselves  
Were sitting at the door, "Thou must not go,  
We have no other Child but thee to lose,  
None to remember—do not go away,  
For if thou leave thy Father he will die."  
The Lad made answer with a jocund voice,  
And Isabel, when she had told her fears, 310  
Recover'd heart. That evening her best fare  
Did she bring forth, and all together sate  
Like happy people round a Christmas fire.

Next morning Isabel resum'd her work,  
And all the ensuing week the house appear'd  
As cheerful as a grove in Spring: at length  
The expected letter from their Kinsman came,  
With kind assurances that he would do  
His utmost for the welfare of the Boy,  
To which requests were added that forthwith 320  
He might be sent to him. Ten times or more  
The letter was read over; Isabel  
Went forth to shew it to the neighbours round:  
Nor was there at that time on English Land  
A prouder heart than Luke's. When Isabel  
Had to her house return'd, the Old Man said,  
"He shall depart to-morrow." To this word  
The House-wife answered, talking much of things  
Which, if at such short notice he should go,  
Would surely be forgotten. But at length 330  
She gave consent, and Michael was at ease.

Near the tumultuous brook of Green-head Gill,  
In that deep Valley, Michael had design'd  
To build a Sheep-fold, and, before he heard  
The tidings of his melancholy loss,

For this same purpose he had gathered up  
 A heap of stones, which close to the brook side  
 Lay thrown together, ready for the work.  
 With Luke that evening thitherward he walk'd;  
 And soon as they had reach'd the place he stopp'd, 340  
 And thus the Old Man spake to him. "My Son,  
 To-morrow thou wilt leave me; with full heart  
 I look upon thee, for thou art the same  
 That wert a promise to me ere thy birth,  
 And all thy life hast been my daily joy.  
 I will relate to thee some little part  
 Of our two histories; 'twill do thee good  
 When thou art from me, even if I should speak  
 Of things thou canst not know of.—After thou  
 First cam'st into the world, as it befalls 350  
 To new-born infants, thou didst sleep away  
 Two days, and blessings from thy Father's tongue  
 Then fell upon thee. Day by day pass'd on,  
 And still I lov'd thee with encreasing love.  
 Never to living ear came sweeter sounds  
 Than when I heard thee by our own fire-side  
 First uttering without words a natural tune,  
 When thou, a feeding babe, didst in thy joy  
 Sing at thy Mother's breast. Month follow'd month,  
 And in the open fields my life was pass'd 360  
 And in the mountains, else I think that thou  
 Hadst been brought up upon thy father's knees.  
 —But we were playmates, Luke; among these hills,  
 As well thou know'st, in us the old and young  
 Have play'd together, nor with me didst thou  
 Lack any pleasure which a boy can know."  
 Luke had a manly heart; but at these words  
 He sobb'd aloud; the Old Man grasp'd his hand,  
 And said, "Nay do not take it so—I see  
 That these are things of which I need not speak. 370  
 —Even to the utmost I have been to thee  
 A kind and a good Father: and herein  
 I but repay a gift which I myself  
 Receiv'd at others hands, for, though now old  
 Beyond the common life of man, I still  
 Remember them who lov'd me in my youth.  
 Both of them sleep together: here they liv'd  
 As all their Forefathers had done, and when

At length their time was come, they were not loth  
 To give their bodies to the family mold. 380  
 I wish'd that thou should'st live the life they liv'd.  
 But 'tis a long time to look back, my Son,  
 And see so little gain from sixty years.  
 These fields were burthen'd when they came to me;  
 'Till I was forty years of age, not more  
 Than half of my inheritance was mine.  
 I toil'd and toil'd; God bless'd me in my work,  
 And 'till these three weeks past the land was free.  
 —It looks as if it never could endure  
 Another Master. Heaven forgive me, Luke, 390  
 If I judge ill for thee, but it seems good  
 That thou should'st go." At this the Old Man paus'd,  
 Then, pointing to the Stones near which they stood,  
 Thus, after a short silence, he resum'd:  
 "This was a work for us, and now, my Son,  
 It is a work for me. But, lay one Stone—  
 Here, lay it for me, Luke, with thine own hands.  
 I for the purpose brought thee to this place.  
 Nay, Boy, be of good hope:—we both may live  
 To see a better day. At eighty-four 400  
 I still am strong and stout;—do thou thy part,  
 I will do mine.—I will begin again  
 With many tasks that were resign'd to thee;  
 Up to the heights, and in among the storms,  
 Will I without thee go again, and do  
 All works which I was wont to do alone,  
 Before I knew thy face.—Heaven bless thee, Boy!  
 Thy heart these two weeks has been beating fast  
 With many hopes—it should be so—yes—yes—  
 I knew that thou could'st never have a wish 410  
 To leave me, Luke, thou hast been bound to me  
 Only by links of love, when thou art gone  
 What will be left to us!—But, I forget  
 My purposes. Lay now the corner-stone,  
 As I requested, and hereafter, Luke,  
 When thou art gone away, should evil men  
 Be thy companions, let this Sheep-fold be  
 Thy anchor and thy shield; amid all fear  
 And all temptation, let it be to thee  
 An emblem of the life thy Fathers liv'd, 420  
 Who, being innocent, did for that cause

Bestir them in good deeds. Now, fare thee well—  
When thou return'st, thou in this place wilt see  
A work which is not here, a covenant  
'Twill be between us——but whatever fate  
Befall thee, I shall love thee to the last,  
And bear thy memory with me to the grave.”

The Shepherd ended here; and Luke stoop'd down,  
And as his Father had requested, laid  
The first stone of the Sheep-fold; at the sight 430  
The Old Man's grief broke from him, to his heart  
He press'd his Son, he kissed him and wept;  
And to the House together they return'd.

Next morning, as had been resolv'd, the Boy  
Began his journey, and when he had reach'd  
The public Way, he put on a bold face;  
And all the Neighbours as he pass'd their doors  
Came forth, with wishes and with farewell pray'rs,  
That follow'd him 'till he was out of sight.

A good report did from their Kinsman come, 440  
Of Luke and his well-doing; and the Boy  
Wrote loving letters, full of wond'rous news,  
Which, as the House-wife phrased it, were throughout  
The prettiest letters that were ever seen.  
Both parents read them with rejoicing hearts.  
So, many months pass'd on: and once again  
The Shepherd went about his daily work  
With confident and cheerful thoughts; and now  
Sometimes when he could find a leisure hour  
He to that valley took his way, and there 450  
Wrought at the Sheep-fold. Meantime Luke began  
To slacken in his duty, and at length  
He in the dissolute city gave himself  
To evil courses: ignominy and shame  
Fell on him, so that he was driven at last  
To seek a hiding-place beyond the seas.

There is a comfort in the strength of love;  
'Twill make a thing endurable, which else  
Would break the heart:—Old Michael found it so.  
I have convers'd with more than one who well 460

Remember the Old Man, and what he was  
 Years after he had heard this heavy news.  
 His bodily frame had been from youth to age  
 Of an unusual strength. Among the rocks  
 He went, and still look'd up upon the sun,  
 And listen'd to the wind; and as before  
 Perform'd all kinds of labour for his Sheep,  
 And for the land his small inheritance.  
 And to that hollow Dell from time to time  
 Did he repair, to build the Fold of which 470  
 His flock had need. 'Tis not forgotten yet  
 The pity which was then in every heart  
 For the Old Man—and 'tis believ'd by all  
 That many and many a day he thither went,  
 And never lifted up a single stone.  
 There, by the Sheep-fold, sometimes was he seen  
 Sitting alone, with that his faithful Dog,  
 Then old, beside him, lying at his feet.  
 The length of full seven years from time to time  
 He at the building of this Sheep-fold wrought, 480  
 And left the work unfinished when he died.

Three years, or little more, did Isabel,  
 Survive her Husband: at her death the estate  
 Was sold, and went into a Stranger's hand.  
 The Cottage which was nam'd The Evening Star  
 Is gone, the ploughshare has been through the ground  
 On which it stood; great changes have been wrought  
 In all the neighbourhood, yet the Oak is left  
 That grew beside their Door; and the remains 490  
 Of the unfinished Sheep-fold may be seen  
 Beside the boisterous brook of Green-head Gill.

## NOTES TO THE POEM OF THE BROTHERS

### NOTE I

Line 138: "There were two springs that bubbled side by side."  
 The impressive circumstance here described, actually took place  
 some years ago in this country, upon an eminence called Kidstow  
 Pike, one of the highest of the mountains that surround Hawes-  
 water. The summit of the pike was stricken by lightning; and

every trace of one of the fountains disappeared, while the other continued to flow as before.

#### NOTE II

Line 179: "The thought of death sits easy on the man," &c. There is not any thing more worthy of remark in the manners of the inhabitants of these mountains, than the tranquillity, I might say indifference, with which they think and talk upon the subject of death. Some of the country church-yards, as here described, do not contain a single tombstone, and most of them have a very small number.

### NOTES TO THE POEM OF MICHAEL

#### NOTE I

Line 268: "There's Richard Bateman," &c. The story alluded to here is well known in the country. The chapel is called Ings Chapel; and is on the right hand side of the road leading from Kendal to Ambleside.

#### NOTE II

Lines 333-4: "——— had design'd to build a Sheep-fold," &c. It may be proper to inform some readers, that a sheep-fold in these mountains is an unroofed building of stone walls, with different divisions. It is generally placed by the side of a brook, for the convenience of washing the sheep; but it is also useful as a shelter for them, and as a place to drive them into, to enable the shepherds conveniently to single out one or more for any particular purpose.

END.

## Reviews of the 1800 Edition

1. [John Stoddart.]<sup>1</sup> *The British Critic*<sup>2</sup> 17 (February 1801): 125–31.

In our Review for October, 1799, we noticed, with considerable satisfaction, the first edition of this work, then comprised in one anonymous volume. It is now extended, by the addition of another volume; and the author has given his name to it, with the exception of the *Ancient Mariner*, the *Foster Mother's Tale*, the *Nightingale*, the *Dungeon*, and the poem entitled *Love*; all of which, as he informs us, are furnished by a friend, whose opinions on the subject of Poetry agree almost entirely with his own. From this similarity of mind, and from some expressions in the Advertisement prefixed to the first edition, we were then led to attribute the whole to Mr. Coleridge, the supposed author of the *Ancient Mariner*: we now, therefore, add to the list of our Poets another name, no less likely to do it honour. Mr. Wordsworth has, indeed, appeared before the public some years ago, as author of *Descriptive Sketches in Verse*, and of an *Evening Walk*;<sup>3</sup> compositions, in which were discoverable the fire and fancy of a true poet, though obscured by diction, often and intentionally inflated. His style is now wholly changed, and he has adopted a purity of expression, which, to the fastidious ear, may sometimes sound poor and low, but which is infinitely more correspondent with true feeling than what, by the courtesy of the day, is usually called poetical language.

Whatever may be thought of these Poems, it is evident that they are not to be confounded with the flood of poetry, which is poured forth in such profusion by the modern Bards of Science, or their brethren, the Bards of Insipidity.<sup>4</sup> The author has thought

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- 1 John Stoddart (1773–1856) was a lawyer, translator of Friedrich Schiller's *Fiesco* (1796) and *Don Carlos* (1798), and author of *Remarks on the Local Scenery and Manners of Scotland* (1801).
  - 2 *The British Critic* (1793–1824) was a periodical founded to combat the reformist bias of the *Monthly*, *Critical*, and *Analytical* reviews; it espoused High Church, Tory principles.
  - 3 *Descriptive Sketches ... an Evening Walk*] Two loco-descriptive poems in heroic couplets by Wordsworth, published by Joseph Johnson in 1793.
  - 4 *Bards of Science ... Bards of Insipidity*] The reviewer here likely refers to "Bards of Science" like Erasmus Darwin, author of *The Botanic Garden*



for himself; he has deeply studied human nature, in the book of human action; and he has adopted his language from the same sources as his feelings. Aware that “his Poems are so materially different from those upon which general approbation is at present bestowed,” he has now defended them in a Preface of some length; not with the foolish hope of reasoning his readers into the approbation of these particular Poems, but as a necessary justification of the species of poetry to which they belong. This Preface, though written in some parts with a degree of metaphysical obscurity, conveys much penetrating and judicious observation, important at all times, but especially when, as it is well observed, “the invaluable works of our elder writers are driven into neglect by frantic novels, sickly and stupid German tragedies, and deluges of idle and extravagant stories in verse.” Perhaps it would be expecting too much from any one but Shakspeare, were we to demand that he should be the Poet of human nature. It would be no mean, it would indeed be a very lofty praise, to assert of a writer, that he is able to pour into other bosoms powerful feelings of a particular class, or belonging to a particular order of men. To this praise, Mr. Wordsworth lays a well-supported claim. He declares himself the Poet chiefly of low and rustic life (some specimens of ability he has given in other lines, but this is evidently his excellence) and he pours it, not under its disgusting forms, for in situations affording, as he thinks, the best soil of the essential passions of the heart, incorporated with an elementary and durable state of manners, and with the beautiful and permanent forms of nature.\*

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\* Mr. Wordsworth seems to peculiarly well situated for the subjects of such a study. The vicinity of the Lakes in Cumberland and Westmoreland (the scene of most of his Poems) is chiefly inhabited by an order of men nearly extinct in other parts of England. These are small farmers, called in that part of the country *Statesmen*, who, cultivating their own little property, are raised above the immediate pressure of want, with very few opportunities of acquiring wealth. They are a mild, hospitable people, with some turn for reading; and their personal appearance is, for the most part, interesting. [Stoddart's note]

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(1789–91; See Appendices F and G, pp. 496–98 and 515–17), and John Sargent, author of the popular poem *The Mine: A Dramatic Poem* (1785). In the later 1790s, *The British Critic* compiled a long and wide-ranging list of “Bards of Insipidity” that included the English Della Cruscan and German writers like Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, August von Kotzebue, and Friedrich Schiller.

Each separate Poem has, as its distinct *purpose*, the development of a feeling, which gives importance to the action and situation, and not the action or situation to the feeling. Whether the particular purpose is, in every case, *worthy* of a Poet, will perhaps admit of some doubt. We have no hesitation in saying, that it is generally interesting, often invaluable; but on these points the author shall speak for himself.

[Stoddart quotes the passage from the Preface that begins, "This object I have endeavoured," p. 176.]

Of the judicious degree of simplicity in language which the author attained in his first volume, we formerly expressed our approbation. The second is written with equal felicity, being alike grounded upon an accurate and attentive observation of those modes of speech, which are prompted by the natural flow of passion. Where the subjects are supplied by rustic life, the language of rustics, purified only from accidental associations of disgust, is also adopted, and for this simple and weighty reason; because:

[Stoddart quotes the passage from the Preface that begins, "Such a language arising out of repeated experience ... of their own creation", pp. 174-75.]

The author has argued with great ingenuity, and at some length, on the absurdity of the distinction frequently made between the appropriate language of prose, and that of metrical composition. He has shown, that the two species of writing may be wholly similar in every thing but metre; and that neither of them can be dignified by any other means than energy and loftiness of thought. A great part of this argument would appear useless, had we not unhappily witnessed, in some striking instances, how much the public taste may be misled by affected pomp and false glitter of language. We cannot too often repeat, that the frippery and fustian of the Darwinian phraseology, is no more compatible with a just classical taste, than the heterogeneous mixture of science and fancy is allowable in a poetical subject. The faults of this kind, in the second volume, are so very few, as to deserve no notice, in comparison with the general purity of the style. As to the subjects, it must be owned that their worth does not always appear at first sight; but, judging from our own feelings, we must assert, that it generally grows upon the reader by subsequent perusal. The following remarks may, perhaps, illustrate the cause of this improving interest.

1. It is not requisite that the poetic feeling should be strictly

referable to any of those known and powerful classes, called the sublime, the terrible, the pathetic, &c. It may sometimes consist in a gentle agitation of the contending emotions, from which a preponderance of pleasure is ultimately produced, as from the melancholy recollections of a cheerful old man, in the *Two April Mornings*, and the *Fountain*; sometimes it may arise from the mixture of lively imagery with various feelings, as with exultation and pity, in the two parts of *Hartleap Well*; sometimes it may be founded on the soft, and almost insensible affections which we receive from natural scenery, aided, perhaps, by some accidental association in our own minds. Of this kind are the different Poems on the *Naming of Places*, *Lines written with a Slate Pencil*, &c. *Rural Architecture*, and some others.

2. Even where the feeling intended to be called forth is of a rich and noble character, such as we may recur to, and feed upon, it may yet be wrought up so gradually, including so many preparatory circumstances of appropriate manners, of local description, of actual events, &c. that the subtle uniting thread will be lost, without a persevering effort toward attention on the part of the reader. Who, that has studied Shakspeare, must not be conscious of how often the connection of minute and trifling incidents with the main story has eluded his observation, until after repeated perusals? Something of this kind will probably occur to the readers of the *Brothers*, the *Cumberland Beggar*, and more particularly of the Poem, entitled *Michael*; yet these three are of the highest order of Poems in the volume. The interest, especially of the first, is so dramatically wrought up, the minute touches are so accurately studied, the general effect is so insensibly produced, and appeals so forcibly to the heart, as to rank its author far beyond the reach of common-place praise or censure.

3. There is a third class of Poems possessing a strong effect, which results equally from the power of imagination and of feeling; in these, the prominent features of the story are all along attended with a concurring splendour of poetic ornament, and the combined influence of these agents pervades every part of the composition. This is greatly the case in the Poem of *Ruth*, and in that of *Ellen Irwin*, of which the latter is merely narrative; the former intermixes much of deep and interesting speculation: to this class also may be referred *Lucy Gray* and *Poor Susan*, with several beautiful specimens in the second volume.

4. Other small pieces have different characteristics. The *Fragment* of the Danish Boy is a mere creation of fancy; the *Pet Lamb*

presents a portraiture of infantine simplicity; and the lines in pages 50 and 53,<sup>1</sup> are masterly sketches of those “strange fits of passion,” which sometimes unaccountably flash across a poetical mind.

[Stoddart then quotes from “The Poet’s Epitaph,” “Joanna,” “Strange fits of passion,” and “She dwelt among the untrodden ways,” praising each.]

When the art of poetry has been long cultivated among polished people, and brought to a state of great refinement, the natural operation of an ill-judged ambition, to excel even those who have most successfully adorned the language, leads writers either to employ an affected and over-laboured style, or, at least, to keep always upon the high stilts of elegance, to the exclusion of Nature and Simplicity. In such a state of the poetic art, that man may be considered as a public benefactor, who, with talents equal to the task, which is arduous, recalls attention to the more natural style, and shows what may be effected by simple language, expressive of human passions, and genuine, not artificial feelings. In this character, Mr. Wordsworth appears; and appears with a success, to which we could by no means refuse our approbation. We will not deny that sometimes he goes so far in his pursuit of simplicity, as to become flat or weak; but, in general, he sets an example which the full-dressed poet of affectation might wish, but wish in vain, to follow.\* He would correct Mr. W. as the dancing master of Hogarth would correct the attitude of Antinous.<sup>2</sup>

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\* The title of the Poems is, in some degree, objectionable; for what Ballads are not Lyrical? Besides, there are many compositions in blank verse, not at all Lyrical.

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1 *the lines in pages 50 and 53*] Stoddart refers to “Strange fits of passion I have known” and “A slumber did my spirit seal” in volume two of the 1800 edition, pp. 316–17 and 318.

2 *dancing-master of Hogarth ... attitude of Antinous*] Stoddart likely refers to *An Analysis of Beauty* (1751) by English painter William Hogarth: “I once heard an eminent dancing-master say, that the minuet had been the study of his whole life, and that he had been indefatigable in the pursuit of its beauties, yet at last he could only say with Socrates, he *knew nothing*” (146–47). Antinoüs (ca. 110–30), the favorite of the Roman Emperor Hadrian, was deified after his death as an exemplar of beauty.

2. *Monthly Mirror*<sup>1</sup> 11 (June 1801): 389–92.

Though the new school of philosophy, to which we are utterly averse, has introduced a new school of poetry, which we do not altogether admire; yet, from Mr. Wordsworth, who may be regarded as the senior professor in this Parnassian college, we wish not to withhold our warm eulogium. Energy of thought, pathos of sentiment, and exquisite discrimination in selecting whatever is picturesque in imagery, or interesting in nature, are the distinguishing characteristics of these poems; yet an obscurity too often arises, from a romantic search after simplicity, and there is a studied abruptness in the commencement and termination of several pieces, which makes them assume an appearance of mere fragments. Where we meet with a complete poem, like that entitled “The Brothers,” our gratification is proportionably complete. We regret, however, that these volumes are marked by a querulous monotony of woe, which we cannot applaud: for a wayward spirit of discontent has lately been let loose upon the world, and seems calculated to diffuse the seeds of general dissatisfaction, by libelling all mankind. These well-told tales are mostly tales of sorrow, and this sorrow takes its root from the hollow-heartedness of human beings, or the calamities incident to human life. The vista is dreary, and the objects which present themselves at its extremity are involved “in gloomiest shade.”<sup>2</sup>

From the somber colouring spread over several pieces in this collection, against which the social principle has led us to complain, we are zealous to except the following sweetly-simple dialogue; and to let our readers partake in the tearful delight we have experienced from its perusal. It is designed to shew the perplexity and obscurity which, in childhood, attend our notion of death, or rather our utter inability to admit that notion.

[The reviewer quotes “We Are Seven” in its entirety.]

Mr. Wordsworth is not unaware that, in some instances, sensations even of the ludicrous may be given to his readers by expressions which appeared to himself tender and pathetic. We are apprehensive that certain phrases and epithets in the preceding stanzas will be liable to this unfortunate perversion, with those

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- 1 The *Monthly Mirror* (1795–1811) was founded by a group of London wits that included Thomas Bellamy and Thomas Hill; the journal foregrounded drama and poetry aimed at a sophisticated audience.
- 2 “in gloomiest shade”] Quoting Book X, line 716 of John Milton’s *Paradise Lost* (1667).

whose mental associations may carry them back to the nursery, who cherish fancy more than feeling, and prefer a witless parody to a composition that meliorates the heart.

The following reflections, which occur in "A Description of the old Cumberland Beggar," are admirable, as are many others in this most fascinating publication.

[The reviewer quotes lines 73–97.]

There is all the moral pith and nervous force of Cowper<sup>1</sup> in this paragraph, without any semblance of imitation; and if Mr. W. should proceed to poetic flights of equal altitude, and should soar as long upon the wing, we doubt not that he will obtain a niche near the author of the *Task*, in the temple of "aye-enduring Fame."<sup>2</sup>

3. *Portfolio*<sup>3</sup> 1:24 (13 June 1801): 191.

We have had frequent occasion in the course of our literary selections, to express the warmest admiration of the genius, spirit and simplicity of "Lyrical Ballads," a volume which contains more genuine poetry than is to be found, except in the volumes of SHAKESPEARE and CHATTERTON<sup>4</sup>—the "LITERARY" article, borrowed from the *British Critic*, and inserted in our front pages, corroborates the partiality of the editor for the talents of Mr. Wordsworth. The second volume of these "Ballads" has been ordered from England, and when the editor shall have received a copy, it will be in his power to adorn his pages with *gems* of a soft and permanent lustre.

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1 William Cowper (1731–1800), author of *The Task* (1785), widely considered at the end of the eighteenth century to be the most important long poem by a contemporary writer. See Appendix G, pp. 509–11.

2 "aye-enduring Fame"] Quoting line 60 of Anna Seward's "Llangollen Vale" (1796).

3 The *Portfolio* was a Philadelphia periodical edited by Joseph Dennie (1768–1812).

4 CHATTERTON] Thomas Chatterton (1752–70), English journalist and poet best known for his "Rowley poems," which he passed off as fifteenth-century manuscripts. Unable to procure a patron, he committed suicide in 1770 at the age of seventeen. Coleridge eulogized him in "Monody on the Death of Chatterton" (1796), and Wordsworth memorialized him as "the marvellous Boy" in "Resolution and Independence" (1807).

4. *Portfolio* 1:51 (19 December 1801): 407–08.

Mr. James Humphreys,<sup>1</sup> of this city, will shortly publish a very neat, convenient, and cheap edition of the delightful ballads of WORDSWORTH, of which some exquisite specimens may be found in the poetical department of the Port Folio. If these little poems, simple, natural, and pathetic, be generally read, with the same delights, which they afforded the writer of this article, the sale would be a mine to the bookseller [...]

WILLIAM WORDSWORTH [is] a genuine poet, who judiciously employs the language of simplicity and NATURE, to express the tones of passion; who has forsaken the necromantic realms of German extravagance, and the torrid zone of Della Cruscan<sup>2</sup> ardour, and has recalled erring readers “from sounds to things, from fancy to the heart.”<sup>3</sup>

5. *American Review and Literary Journal*<sup>4</sup> 2 (January 1802): 118–19.

“Lyrical Ballads,” with other Poems, by *W. Wordsworth*, have been reprinted by *James Humphreys*, of Philadelphia, two volumes 12mo<sup>5</sup> in one. This edition contains a long, but ingenious and well written preface, by the author, in which he examines the properties of prose and verse, and which should be read by all who wish to enter into the spirit of these ballads. Mr. W. endeavours to maintain, that between poetry and prose there neither is nor can be any essential difference; that some of the most interesting parts of the best poems will be found to be strictly the language of prose when

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- 1 *Mr. James Humphreys*] Philadelphia publisher active between 1772 and 1810.
  - 2 *Della Cruscan*] Referring to a group of poets important in Florentine and London literary circles between 1785 and 1800 known for their highly ornate and sentimental verse.
  - 3 *from ... heart*] Quoted from line 380 of Epistle IV of Alexander Pope’s *Essay on Man* (1733–34).
  - 4 *The American Review and Literary Journal* was a Philadelphia periodical edited by Charles Brockden Brown (1771–1810), novelist and journalist best known for his gothic novels, *Wieland; or The Transformation* (1798) and *Edgar Huntley, or Memoirs of a Sleep-walker* (1799).
  - 5 *12mo*] “Duodecimo,” a very small book created by folding sheets of paper twelve times.

prose is well-written; and he incidentally remarks, that much confusion has been introduced into criticism by contra-distinguishing poetry and prose instead of poetry and science, for that the strict antithesis is prose and metre. He considers the music of verse, arising from a certain artificial arrangement of words, and coincidence of sounds, as the only quality necessary to form the contrast and antithesis of prose. To prove the truth of this theory by his own practice, the author excludes from his poetry all personification of abstract ideas, as not making any regular or natural part of the language of men, and for the same reason he employs very little of what is called *poetic diction*, consisting of phrases and figures of speech, which, he observes; “from father to son have been regarded as the common inheritance of poets.” This is indeed stripping poetry at once of half her plumage, and condemning her to skim along the vale, without daring to soar into the sublime regions of fancy. The laws prescribed by Mr. W. may suit a particular species of poetry like his own, but we apprehend that their authority will not be acknowledged by the lovers of poetry in general.

As the author has drawn his subjects from the incidents of common life, for the purpose of tracing in them without ostentation the primary laws of our nature, he has chosen a style imitative of the language of ordinary conversation in the middle classes of society. On this plan we think he has made some successful experiments. As the poems are almost entirely free from intricacy of thought or expression, they may be read by the simplest swain without difficulty. Some of them appear to us too humble both in style and sentiment to be generally interesting. Many of the pieces display a lively sensibility to the beauties of rural scenery; but they are particularly distinguished for the delicate and affecting manner of portraying the sensations of the mind, when agitated, as the author expresses it, by the great and simple affections of our nature;—of nature, however, as she appears in the walks of low and rustic life.

6. *Monthly Review*<sup>1</sup> 38 (June 1802): 209.

In our xxixth Vol. N. S.<sup>2</sup> we gave an account of the first part of these *Lyrical Ballads*; which appeared without the Poet's name. As

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1 The *Monthly Review* (1749–1845) was founded by Ralph Griffiths, who edited the review until his death in 1803. The *Monthly* was the most prestigious and respectable of the literary reviews before the founding the *Edinburgh Review* in 1802.

2 xxixth Vol. N. S.] the twenty-ninth volume, new series.



we then paid particular attention to the style and manner of the unknown writer, we think it unnecessary to enlarge with critical discrimination on the character and merits of the poems now before us. Suffice it, therefore, to observe that we deem the present publication not inferior to its precursor; and to express our hope that this will not prove the last time of our meeting with this natural, easy, sentimental Bard, in his pensive rambles through the wilds and groves of his truly poetic, though somewhat peculiar, imagination.

7. [Francis Jeffrey.]<sup>1</sup> Review of Robert Southey,<sup>2</sup> *Thalaba, the Destroyer*. *Edinburgh Review*<sup>3</sup> 1 (October 1802): 63–83.

Poetry has this much, at least, in common with religion, that its standards were fixed long ago, by certain inspired writers, whose authority it is no longer lawful to call in question; and that many profess to be entirely devoted to it, who have no *good works* to produce in support of their pretensions. The catholic poetical church, too, has worked but few miracles since the first ages of its establishment; and has been more prolific, for a long time, of Doctors, than of Saints: it has had its corruptions and reformation also, and has given birth to an infinite variety of heresies and errors, the followers of which have hated and persecuted each other as cordially as other bigots.

The author who is now before us, belongs to a *sect* of poets, that has established itself in this country within these ten or twelve years, and is looked upon, we believe, as one of its chief champions and apostles. The peculiar doctrines of this sect, it would not, perhaps, be very easy to explain; but, that they are *dis-*

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- 1 *Francis Jeffrey* (1773–1850), Scottish literary critic, judge, and editor of the *Edinburgh Review* from 1802 to 1829. In addition to reviews, Jeffrey contributed essays on biography, politics, and ethics; under his editorship, the periodical became one of the most widely read of the period. Jeffrey's review was anonymous.
- 2 *Robert Southey* (1774–1843), English poet, Poet Laureate (1813–43), and close friend of Coleridge and Wordsworth; at the time of the publication of the second edition of *Lyrical Ballads*, Southey was best known for his *Joan of Arc* (1796) and *Poems* (1797, 1799).
- 3 *Edinburgh Review*] (1802–1929), founded by Francis Jeffrey; the first of the quarterly reviews, it transformed literary journalism and criticism in Great Britain.

senters from the established systems in poetry and criticism, is admitted, and proved indeed, by the whole tenor of their compositions. Though they lay claim, we believe, to a creed and a revelation of their own, there can be little doubt, that their doctrines are of *German* origin, and have been derived from some of the great modern reformers in that country. Some of their leading principles, indeed are probably of an earlier date, and seem to have been borrowed from the great apostle of Geneva.<sup>1</sup> As Mr. Southey is the first author, of this persuasion, that has yet been brought before us for judgment, we cannot discharge our inquisitorial office conscientiously, without premising a few words upon the nature and tendency of the tenets he has helped to promulgate.

The disciples of this school boast much of its originality, and seem to value themselves very highly, for having broken loose from the bondage of ancient authority, and re-asserted the independence of genius. Originality, however, we are persuaded, is rarer than mere alteration; and a man may change a good master for a bad one, without finding himself at all nearer to independence. That our new poets have abandoned the old models, may certainly be admitted; but we have not been able to discover that they have yet created any models of their own; and are very much inclined to call in question the worthiness of those to which they have transferred their admiration. The productions of this school, we conceive, are so far from being entitled to the praise of originality, that they cannot be better characterised, than by an enumeration of the sources from which their materials have been derived. The greater part of them, we apprehend, will be found to composed of the following elements: 1. The antisocial principles, and distempered sensibility of Rousseau—his discontent with the present constitution of society—his paradoxical morality, and his perpetual hankerings after some unattainable state of voluptuous virtue and perfection. 2. The simplicity and energy (*horresco ref-*

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1 *apostle of Geneva*] Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712–78), French Enlightenment novelist, philosopher, and political theorist whose treatises inspired the leaders of the American and French Revolutions. Rousseau is best known for his *Discours sur l'origine de l'inégalité* (1755; *Discourse on the Origin of Inequality*), his novels of education, *Julie; ou, la nouvelle Héloïse* (1761; *Julie; or, The New Eloise*) and *Émile* (1762), his political treatise *Du Contrat social* (1762; *The Social Contract*), and his *Confessions* (1781–88).

erens)<sup>1</sup> of Kotzebue<sup>2</sup> and Schiller.<sup>3</sup> 3. The homeliness and harshness of some of Cowper's language and versification, interchanged occasionally with the *innocence* of Ambrose Philips,<sup>4</sup> or the quaintness of Quarles<sup>5</sup> and Dr. Donne.<sup>6</sup> From the diligent study of these few originals, we have no doubt that an entire art of poetry may be collected, by the assistance of which, the very *gentlest* of our readers may soon be qualified to compose a poem as correctly versified as Thalaba, and to deal out sentiment and description, with all the sweetness of Lambe,<sup>7</sup> and all the magnificence of Coleridge.

The authors, of whom we are now speaking, have, among them, unquestionably, a very considerable portion of poetical talent, and have, consequently, been enabled to seduce many into an admiration of false taste (as it appears to us) in which most of their productions are composed. They constitute, at present, the most formidable conspiracy that has lately been formed against sound judgment in matters poetical; and are entitled to a larger share of our censorial notice, than could be spared for an individual delinquent. We shall hope for the indulgence of our readers, therefore, in taking this opportunity to inquire a little more particularly into their merits, and to make a few remarks upon those peculiarities which seem to be regarded by their admirers as the surest proofs of their excellence.

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- 1 *horresco referens*] I shudder to tell the story.
  - 2 *Kotzebue*] August von Kotzebue (1761–1819), German civil servant and prolific playwright known for his popular sentimentalism.
  - 3 *Schiller*] Friedrich von Schiller (1759–1805), German dramatist, poet, and literary theorist. Coleridge translated his *Wallenstein* in 1800.
  - 4 *Ambrose Philips*] (1675–1749), English poet celebrated by his contemporaries for the simplicity of his style. His *Pastorals* opened the sixth volume of Tonson's *Miscellanies* (1709), which also contained pastorals by Alexander Pope.
  - 5 *Quarles*] Francis Quarles (1592–1644), popular English poet and author of *Emblemes* (1635) and *Hieroglyphikes of the Life of Man* (1638) that feature grotesque engravings and a paraphrases of Scripture in ornate and metaphysical language.
  - 6 *Donne*] John Donne (1572–1631), English poet and Anglican divine; Dean of Saint Paul's Cathedral (1621–31).
  - 7 *Lambe*] Charles Lamb (1775–1834), English essayist, dramatist, and poet, best known for his *Tales from Shakespeare* (1807), written with his sister Mary Lamb, and *Essays of Elia* (1823, 1833). A friend of Coleridge and Wordsworth, he contributed several poems to the second edition of Coleridge's *Poems* (1797).

Their most distinguishing symbol, is undoubtedly an affectation of great simplicity and familiarity of language. They disdain to make use of the common poetical phraseology, or to ennoble their diction by a selection of fine or dignified expressions. There would be too much *art* in this, for that great love of nature with which they are all of them inspired; and their sentiments, they are determined shall be indebted, for their effect, to nothing but their intrinsic tenderness or elevation. There is something very noble and conscientious, we will confess in this plan of composition; but the misfortune is, that there are passages in all poems, that can neither be pathetic nor sublime; and that, on these occasions, a neglect of the embellishments of language is very apt to produce absolute meanness and insipidity. The language of passion, indeed, can scarcely be deficient in elevation; and when an author is wanting in that particular, he may commonly be presumed to have failed in the truth, as well as in the dignity of his expression. The case, however, is extremely different with the subordinate parts of a composition; with the narrative and description, that are necessary to preserve its connection; and the explanation, that must frequently prepare us for the great scenes and splendid passages. In these, all the requisite ideas may be conveyed, with sufficient clearness, by the meanest and most negligent expressions; and if magnificence or beauty is ever to be observed in them, it must have been introduced from some other motive than that of adapting the style to the subject. It is in such passages, accordingly, that we are most frequently offended with low and inelegant expressions; and that the language, which was intended to be simple and natural, is found oftenest to degenerate into mere slovenliness and vulgarity. It is in vain, too, to expect that the meanness of those parts may be redeemed by the excellence of others. A poet, who aims at all at sublimity or pathos, is like an actor in a high tragic character, and must sustain his dignity throughout, or become altogether ridiculous. We are apt enough to laugh at the mock-majesty of those whom we know to be but common mortals in private; and cannot permit Hamlet to make use of a single provincial intonation, although it should only be in his conversation with the gravediggers.

The followers of simplicity are, therefore, at all times in danger of occasional degradation; but the simplicity of this new school seems intended to ensure it. *Their* simplicity does not consist, by any means, in the rejection of glaring or superfluous ornament,—in the substitution of elegance to splendour, or in that refinement

of art which seeks concealment in its own perfection. It consists, on the contrary, in a very great degree, in the positive and *bona fide* rejection of art altogether, and in the bold use of those rude and negligent expressions, which would be banished by a little discrimination. One of their own authors, indeed, has very ingeniously set forth, (in a kind of manifesto that preceded one of their most flagrant acts of hostility), that it was their capital object “to adapt to the uses of poetry, the ordinary language of conversation among the middling and lower orders of the people.”<sup>1</sup> What advantages are to be gained by the success of this project, we confess ourselves unable to conjecture. The language of the higher and more cultivated orders may fairly be presumed to be better than that of their inferiors: at any rate, it has all those associations in its favour, my means of which, a style can never appear beautiful or exalted, and is adapted to the purposes of poetry, by having been long consecrated to its use. The language of the vulgar, on the other hand, has all the opposite associations to contend with; and must seem unfit for poetry, (if there were no other reason), merely because it has scarcely ever been employed in it. A great genius may indeed overcome these disadvantages; but we can scarcely conceive that he should court them. We may excuse a certain homeliness of language in the productions of a ploughman or a milkwoman;<sup>2</sup> but we cannot bring ourselves to admire it in an author, who has had occasion to indite odes to his college bell, and inscribe hymns to the Penates.<sup>3</sup>

But the mischief of this new system is not confined to the depuration of language only; it extends to the sentiments and emotions, and leads to the debasement of all those feelings which poetry is designed to communicate. It is absurd to suppose, that an author should make use of the language of the vulgar, to express the sentiments of the refined. His professed object, in employing that language, is to bring his compositions nearer to the true standard of nature; and his intention to copy the sentiments of the lower orders, is implied in his resolution to make each of them a distinct character, as well as a separate idiom; and the names of the various passions to which they are subject

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1 “to adapt ... the people”] Misquoted from the Preface, p. 174.

2 *ploughman or a milkwoman*] Jeffrey likely refers to English working class poets Robert Bloomfield (1766–1823) and Anne Yearsley (1752–1806).

3 *Penates*] Household gods of the Romans and other Latin peoples. Jeffrey here means that he cannot admire homeliness of language in a university-educated poet.

respectively, have a signification that varies essentially according to the condition of the persons to whom they are applied. The love, or grief, or indignation of an enlightened and refined character, is not only expressed in a different language, but is in itself a different emotion from the love, or grief, or anger, of a clown, a tradesman, or a market-wench. The things themselves are radically and obviously distinct; and the representation of them is calculated to convey a very different train of sympathies and sensations to the mind. The question, therefore, comes simply to be—which of them is the most proper object for poetical imitation? It is needless for us to answer a question, which the practice of all the world has long ago decided irrevocably. The poor and vulgar may interest us, in poetry, by their *situation*; but never, we apprehend, by any sentiments that are peculiar to their condition, and still less by any language that is characteristic of it. The truth is, that it is impossible to copy their diction or their sentiments correctly, in a serious composition; and this, not merely because poverty makes men ridiculous, but because just taste and refined sentiment are rarely to be met with among the uncultivated part of mankind; and a language, fitted for their expression, can still more rarely form any part of their “ordinary conversation.”

The low-bred heroes, and interesting rustics of poetry, have no sort of affinity to the real vulgar of this world; they are imaginary beings, whose characters and language are in contrast with their situation; and please those who can be pleased with them, by the marvellous, and not by the nature of such a combination. In serious poetry, a man of the middling or lower order *must necessarily* lay aside a great deal of his ordinary language; he must avoid errors in grammar and orthography; and steer clear of the cant of particular professions, and of every impropriety that is ludicrous or disgusting: nay, he must speak in good verse, and observe all the graces in prosody and collocation.<sup>1</sup> After all this, it may not be very easy to say how we are to find him out to be a low man, or what marks can remain of the ordinary language of conversation in the inferior orders of society. If there be any phrases that are not used in good society, they will appear as blemishes in the composition, no less palpably, than errors in syntax or quantity; and, if there be no such phrases, the style cannot be characteristic of that condition of life, the language of which it professes to have adopted. All approximation to that lan-

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1 *prosody and collocation*] Attention to, respectively, the forms of metrical composition and the arrangement of words in relation to each other.

guage, in the same manner, implies a deviation from that purity and precision, which no one, we believe, ever violated spontaneously.

It has been argued, indeed, (for men will argue in support of what they do not venture to practise), that as the middling and lower orders of society constitute by far the greater part of mankind, so, their feelings and expressions should interest more extensively, and may be taken, more fairly than any other, for the standards of what is natural and true. To this, it seems obvious to answer, that the arts that aim at exciting admiration and delight, do not take their models from what is ordinary, but from what is excellent; and that our interest in the representation of any event, does not depend upon our familiarity with the original, but on its intrinsic importance, and the celebrity of the parties it concerns. The sculptor employs his art in delineating the graces of Antinous or Apollo,<sup>1</sup> and not in the representation of those ordinary forms that belong to the crowd of his admirers. When a chieftain perishes in battle, his followers mourn more for him, than for thousands of their equals that may have fallen around him.

After all, it must be admitted, that there is a class of persons (we are afraid they cannot be called *readers*), to whom the representation of vulgar manners, in vulgar language, will afford much entertainment. We are afraid, however, that the ingenious writers who supply the hawkers and ballad-singers, have very nearly monopolized that department, and are probably better qualified to hit the taste of their customers, than Mr. Southey, or any of his brethren, can yet pretend to be. To fit them for the higher task of original composition, it would not be amiss if they were to undertake a translation of Pope or Milton into the vulgar tongue, for the benefit of those children of nature.

[Jeffrey then criticizes Southey and Wordsworth for their unevenness of tone, singling out “Goody Blake and Harry Gill,” “Simon Lee,” and “Expostulation and Reply” for censure before quoting a passage from Southey’s *Thalaba*.]

The qualities of style and imagery, however, form but a small part of the characteristics by which a literary faction is to be distinguished. The subject and object of their compositions, and the principles and opinions they are calculated to support, constitute a far more important criterion, and one to which it is usually altogether as easy to refer. Some poets are sufficiently described as the flatterers of greatness and power, and others as the cham-

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1 *Apollo*] Greek and Roman god of the sun, music, and poetry.

pions of independence. One set of writers is known by its antipathy to decency and religion; another, by its methodistical cant and intolerance. Our new school of poetry has a moral character also; though it may not be possible, perhaps, to delineate it quite so concisely.

A splenetic and idle discontent with the existing institutions of society, seems to be at the bottom of all their serious and peculiar sentiments. Instead of contemplating the wonders and the pleasures which civilization has created for mankind, they are perpetually brooding over the disorders by which its progress has been attended. They are filled with horror and compassion at the sight of poor men spending their blood in the quarrels of princes, and brutifying their sublime capacities in the drudgery of unremitting labour. For all sorts of vice and profligacy in the lower orders of society, they have the same virtuous horror, and the same tender compassion. While the existence of these offences overpowers them with grief and confusion, they never permit themselves to feel the smallest indignation or dislike towards the offenders. The present vicious constitution of society alone is responsible for all these enormities: the poor sinners are but the helpless victims or instruments of its disorders, and could not possibly have avoided the errors into which they have been betrayed. Though they can bear with crimes, therefore, they cannot reconcile themselves to punishments; and have an unconquerable antipathy to prisons, gibbets, and houses of correction, as engines of oppression, and instruments of atrocious injustice. While the plea of moral necessity is thus artfully brought forward to convert all the excesses of the poor into innocent misfortunes, no sort of indulgence is shown to the offences of the powerful and rich. Their oppressions, and seductions, and debaucheries, are the theme of many an angry verse; and the indignation and abhorrence of the reader is relentlessly conjured up against those perturbators of society, and scourges of mankind.

It is not easy to say, whether the fundamental absurdity of this doctrine, or the partiality of its application, be entitled to the severest reprehension. If men are driven to commit crimes, through a certain moral necessity; other men are compelled, by a similar necessity, to hate and despise them for their commission. The indignation of the sufferer is at least as natural as the guilt of him who makes him suffer; and the good order of society would probably be as well preserved, if our sympathies were sometimes called forth in behalf of the former. At all events, the same apology ought certainly to be admitted for the wealthy, as for the



needy offender. They are subject alike to the overruling influence of necessity, and equally affected by the miserable condition of society. If it be natural for a poor man to murder and rob, in order to make himself comfortable, it is no less natural for a rich man to gormandize and domineer, in order to have the full use of his riches. Wealth is just as valid an excuse for the one class of vices, as indigence is for the other. There are many other peculiarities of false sentiment in the productions of this class of writers, that are sufficiently deserving of commemoration; but we have already exceeded our limits in giving these general indications of their character, and must now hasten back to the consideration of the singular performance which has give occasion to all this discussion.

[Jeffrey then proceeds to review *Thalaba, the Destroyer* at length.]

8. T.N., "On the Corruptions of Literature." *Edinburgh Magazine*<sup>1</sup> 22 (July 1803): 26–27.

The miscellaneous poetry of the present day, with some exceptions, to the readers of Shakespeare and Milton, is puerile and conceited. The querelous woe-begone strains of Southey, Coleridge, Wordsworth, Lloyd, and Co.,<sup>2</sup> exclusive of their sceptical character, tend to excite the restless and uneasy feelings of the mind, and render it discontented with the allotments of Providence. Sometimes the tales of the nursery, of the blue-beards

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- 1 The *Edinburgh Magazine* (1785–1803) was published by J. Sibbald; in 1803 it merged with the *Scots Magazine*.
- 2 *Southey, Coleridge, Wordsworth, Lloyd, and Co.*] A probable echo of line 336 ("C—IDGE and S—TH-Y, L—D, and L—BE and Co.") of "The New Morality," a satirical poem attacking radical and liberal writers published on 9 July 1798 in the final number of *The Anti-Jacobin; or, Weekly Examiner*. Here, Wordsworth has replaced Charles Lamb, and Southey and Coleridge have changed places, suggesting the impact both of Francis Jeffrey's *Edinburgh* review of Southey's *Thalaba* and of Wordsworth's name appearing on the 1800 *Lyrical Ballads*. *Lloyd*] Charles Lloyd (1775–1839), Birmingham Quaker and early friend of both Coleridge and Charles Lamb; Lloyd also contributed to Coleridge's *Poems* (1797). His uncomplimentary characterization of Coleridge in his novel, *Edmund Oliver* (1798), marked the end of their friendship.

and hobgoblins of German, dressed up in baby language, are thrown upon the world in expectation of praise and patronage. Some of their effusions are distinguished for the most unbounded benevolence. Mr Coleridge, who has attained great celebrity among modern poets, has written an ode to the young foal of an ass,<sup>1</sup> and in his pathetic address to this meek child of nature, he exclaims, “spite of the fool’s scorn, I hail thee brother.”

It is a melancholy thought, that men can be found who so strenuously endeavour to lessen that small portion of good which is allotted to this life, that they should employ those means which are eminently calculated to refine, instruct, and elevate the mind, to effect its gradation and corruption. Yet, it is too well known, that, for the attainment of these objects, they have laboured with a perseverance unwearied as the wing of time, and with an appetite keen as the grave. They have explored every avenue of the human mind, and availed themselves of its weaknesses, its passions, and its prejudices. They have adapted themselves to the capacities of every class of men, to extend their influence and increase the number of their proselytes. Their principles have been diffused through the whole mass of human science, from sober treatises on morals and philosophy, down to penny sheets and ballads for the information of children [...]

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1 *ode ... ass*] Referring to Coleridge’s “To a Young Ass,” published in *Poems* (1797).

# *Appendix A: Additions to the 1802 Edition of Lyrical Ballads*

[In response to the reception of the 1800 edition of *Lyrical Ballads*, Wordsworth made extensive revisions to the Preface for the third edition of 1802. We include here the most substantive of these: (i) the eight paragraphs<sup>1</sup> that radically expanded the concept of the “language of men” and its relation to the identity of the poet and the nature of poetry; and (ii) the separate essay Wordsworth appended to the end of Volume 2 entitled “By what is usually called Poetic Diction.”]

## **1. William Wordsworth, Preface to *Lyrical Ballads with Pastoral and other Poems*. 3rd ed. London: Longman and Rees, 1802. I:xxv–xliii**

[...] If it be affirmed that rhyme and metrical arrangement of themselves constitute a distinction which overturns what I have been saying on the strict affinity of metrical language with that of prose, and paves the way for other artificial distinctions which the mind voluntarily admits, I answer that the language of such Poetry as I am recommending is, as far as is possible, a selection of the language really spoken by men; that this selection, wherever it is made with true taste and feeling, will of itself form a distinction far greater than would at first be imagined, and will entirely separate the composition from the vulgarity and meanness of ordinary life; and, if metre be superadded thereto, I believe that a dissimilitude will be produced altogether sufficient for the gratification of a rational mind. What other distinction would we have? Whence is it to come? And where is it to exist? Not, surely, where the Poet speaks through the mouths of his characters: it cannot be necessary here, either for elevation of style, or any of its supposed ornaments: for, if the Poet’s subject be judiciously chosen, it will naturally, and upon fit occasion, lead him to passions the language of which, if selected truly and judiciously, must necessarily be dignified and variegated, and alive with metaphors and figures. I forbear to speak of an incongruity which would shock the intelligent Reader, should the Poet interweave any foreign splendour of his own with that which the passion naturally suggests: it is sufficient to say that such addition is unnecessary. And, surely, it is more probable that those passages, which with propriety

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1 *paragraphs*] To see where Wordsworth inserted these paragraphs in 1802, see p. 180, note 3.

abound with metaphors and figures, will have their due effect, if, upon other occasions where the passions are of a milder character, the style also be subdued and temperate.

But, as the pleasure which I hope to give by the Poems I now present to the Reader must depend entirely on just notions upon this subject, and, as it is in itself of the highest importance to our taste and moral feelings, I cannot content myself with these detached remarks. And if, in what I am about to say, it shall appear to some that my labour is unnecessary, and that I am like a man fighting a battle without enemies, I would remind such persons, that, whatever may be the language outwardly holden by men, a practical faith in the opinions which I am wishing to establish is almost unknown. If my conclusions are admitted, and carried as far as they must be carried if admitted at all, our judgments concerning the works of the greatest Poets both ancient and modern will be far different from what they are at present, both when we praise, and when we censure: and our moral feelings influencing, and influenced by these judgments will, I believe, be corrected and purified.

Taking up the subject, then, upon general grounds, I ask what is meant by the word Poet? What is a Poet? To whom does he address himself? And what language is to be expected from him? He is a man speaking to men: a man, it is true, endued with more lively sensibility, more enthusiasm and tenderness, who has a greater knowledge of human nature, and a more comprehensive soul, than are supposed to be common among mankind; a man pleased with his own passions and volitions, and who rejoices more than other men in the spirit of life that is in him; delighting to contemplate similar volitions and passions as manifested in the goings-on of the Universe, and habitually impelled to create them where he does not find them. To these qualities he has added a disposition to be affected more than other men by absent things as if they were present; an ability of conjuring up in himself passions, which are indeed far from being the same as those produced by real events, yet (especially in those parts of the general sympathy which are pleasing and delightful) do more nearly resemble the passions produced by real events, than any thing which, from the motions of their own minds merely, other men are accustomed to feel in themselves; whence, and from practice, he has acquired a greater readiness and power in expressing what he thinks and feels, and especially those thoughts and feelings which, by his own choice, or from the structure of his own mind, arise in him without immediate external excitement.

But, whatever portion of this faculty we may suppose even the greatest Poet to possess, there cannot be a doubt but that the language which it will suggest to him, must, in liveliness and truth, fall far short of that which is uttered by men in real life, under the actual pressure of those passions, certain shadows of which the Poet thus

produces, or feels to be produced, in himself. However exalted a notion we would wish to cherish of the character of a Poet, it is obvious, that, while he describes and imitates passions, his situation is altogether slavish and mechanical, compared with the freedom and power of real and substantial action and suffering. So that it will be the wish of the Poet to bring his feelings near to those of the persons whose feelings he describes, nay, for short spaces of time perhaps, to let himself slip into an entire delusion, and even confound and identify his own feelings with theirs; modifying only the language which is thus suggested to him, by a consideration that he describes for a particular purpose, that of giving pleasure. Here, then, he will apply the principle on which I have so much insisted, namely, that of selection; on this he will depend for removing what would otherwise be painful or disgusting in the passion; he will feel that there is no necessity to trick out or to elevate nature: and, the more industriously he applies this principle, the deeper will be his faith that no words, which his fancy or imagination can suggest, will be to be compared with those which are the emanations of reality and truth.

But it may be said by those who do not object to the general spirit of these remarks, that, as it is impossible for the Poet to produce upon all occasions language as exquisitely fitted for the passion as that which the real passion itself suggests, it is proper that he should consider himself as in the situation of a translator, who deems himself justified when he substitutes excellences of another kind for those which are unattainable by him; and endeavours occasionally to surpass his original, in order to make some amends for the general inferiority to which he feels that he must submit. But this would be to encourage idleness and unmanly despair. Further, it is the language of men who speak of what they do not understand; who talk of Poetry as of a matter of amusement and idle pleasure; who will converse with us as gravely about a *taste* for Poetry, as they express it, as if it were a thing as indifferent as a taste for Rope-dancing, or Frontinac<sup>1</sup> or Sherry. Aristotle, I have been told, hath said, that Poetry is the most philosophic of all writing;<sup>2</sup> it is so: its object is truth, not individual and

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1 *Frontinac*] A sweet muscat wine produced in Frontignan, France.

2 *Aristotle ... writing*] Referring to Aristotle's *Poetics* 5.5, on universality: "The historian and the poet are not distinguished by their use of verse or prose; it would be possible to turn the works of Herodotus into verse, and it would be a history in verse just as much as in prose. The distinction is this: the one says what has happened, the other the kind of thing that would happen. For this reason poetry is more philosophical and more serious than history. Poetry tends to express universals, and history particulars." See *Poetics*, trans. Malcolm Heath (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1996), 16.

local, but general, and operative; not standing upon external testimony, but carried alive into the heart by passion; truth which is its own testimony, which gives strength and divinity to the tribunal to which it appeals, and receives them from the same tribunal. Poetry is the image of man and nature. The obstacles which stand in the way of the fidelity of the Biographer and Historian, and of their consequent utility, are incalculably greater than those which are to be encountered by the Poet, who has an adequate notion of the dignity of his art. The Poet writes under one restriction only, namely, that of the necessity of giving immediate pleasure to a human Being possessed of that information which may be expected from him, not as a lawyer, a physician, a mariner, an astronomer or a natural philosopher, but as a Man. Except this one restriction, there is no object standing between the Poet and the image of things; between this, and the Biographer and Historian there are a thousand.

Nor let this necessity of producing immediate pleasure be considered as a degradation of the Poet's art. It is far otherwise. It is an acknowledgment of the beauty of the universe, an acknowledgment the more sincere because it is not formal, but indirect; it is a task light and easy to him who looks at the world in the spirit of love: further, it is a homage paid to the native and naked dignity of man, to the grand elementary principle of pleasure, by which he knows, and feels, and lives, and moves. We have no sympathy but what is propagated by pleasure: I would not be misunderstood; but wherever we sympathize with pain it will be found that the sympathy is produced and carried on by subtle combinations with pleasure. We have no knowledge, that is, no general principles drawn from the contemplation of particular facts, but what has been built up by pleasure, and exists in us by pleasure alone. The Man of Science, the Chemist and Mathematician, whatever difficulties and disgusts they may have had to struggle with, know and feel this. However painful may be the objects with which the Anatomist's knowledge is connected, he feels that his knowledge is pleasure; and where he has no pleasure he has no knowledge. What then does the Poet? He considers man and the objects that surround him as acting and re-acting upon each other, so as to produce an infinite complexity of pain and pleasure; he considers man in his own nature and in his ordinary life as contemplating this with a certain quantity of immediate knowledge, with certain convictions, intuitions, and deductions which by habit become of the nature of intuitions; he considers him as looking upon this complex scene of ideas and sensations, and finding every where objects that immediately excite in him sympathies which, from the necessities of his nature, are accompanied by an overbalance of enjoyment.

To this knowledge which all men carry about with them, and to

these sympathies in which without any other discipline than that of our daily life we are fitted to take delight, the Poet principally directs his attention. He considers man and nature as essentially adapted to each other, and the mind of man as naturally the mirror of the fairest and most interesting qualities of nature. And thus the Poet, prompted by this feeling of pleasure which accompanies him through the whole course of his studies, converses with general nature with affections akin to those, which, through labour and length of time, the Man of Science has raised up in himself, by conversing with those particular parts of nature which are the objects of his studies. The knowledge both of the Poet and the Man of Science is pleasure; but the knowledge of the one cleaves to us as a necessary part of our existence, our natural and unalienable inheritance; the other is a personal and individual acquisition, slow to come to us, and by no habitual and direct sympathy connecting us with our fellow-beings. The Man of Science seeks truth as a remote and unknown benefactor; he cherishes and loves it in his solitude: the Poet, singing a song in which all human beings join with him, rejoices in the presence of truth as our visible friend and hourly companion. Poetry is the breath and finer spirit of all knowledge; it is the impassioned expression which is in the countenance of all Science. Emphatically may it be said of the Poet, as Shakespeare hath said of man, "that he looks before and after."<sup>1</sup> He is the rock of defence of human nature; an upholder and preserver, carrying every where with him relationship and love. In spite of difference of soil and climate, of language and manners, of laws and customs, in spite of things silently gone out of mind and things violently destroyed, the Poet binds together by passion and knowledge the vast empire of human society, as it is spread over the whole earth, and over all time. The objects of the Poet's thoughts are every where; though the eyes and senses of man are, it is true, his favorite guides, yet he will follow wheresoever he can find an atmosphere of sensation in which to move his wings. Poetry is the first and last of all knowledge—it is as immortal as the heart of man. If the labours of men of Science should ever create any material revolution, direct or indirect, in our condition, and in the impressions which we habitually receive, the Poet will sleep then no more than at present, but he will be ready to follow the steps of the man of Science, not only in those general indirect effects, but he will be at his side, carrying sensation into the midst of the objects of the Science itself. The remotest discoveries of the Chemist, the Botanist, or Mineralogist, will be as proper objects of the Poet's art as any upon which it can be employed, if the time should ever come when these things

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1 *that ... after*] Quoted from Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, IV.iv.

shall be familiar to us, and the relations under which they are contemplated by the followers of these respective Sciences shall be manifestly and palpably material to us as enjoying and suffering beings. If the time should ever come when what is now called Science, thus familiarized to men, shall be ready to put on, as it were, a form of flesh and blood, the Poet will lend his divine spirit to aid the transfiguration, and will welcome the Being thus produced, as a dear and genuine inmate of the household of man. It is not, then, to be supposed that any one, who holds that sublime notion of Poetry which I have attempted to convey, will break in upon the sanctity and truth of his pictures by transitory and accidental ornaments, and endeavour to excite admiration of himself by arts, the necessity of which must manifestly depend upon the assumed meanness of his subject.

What I have thus far said applies to Poetry in general; but especially to those parts of composition where the Poet speaks through the mouths of his characters; and upon this point it appears to have such weight that I will conclude, there are few persons, of good sense, who would not allow that the dramatic parts of composition are defective, in proportion as they deviate from the real language of nature, and are coloured by a diction of the Poet's own, either peculiar to him as an individual Poet, or belonging simply to Poets in general, to a body of men who, from the circumstance of their compositions being in metre, it is expected will employ a particular language.

It is not, then, in the dramatic parts of composition that we look for this distinction of language; but still it may be proper and necessary where the Poet speaks to us in his own person and character. To this I answer: by referring my Reader to the description which I have before given of a Poet. Among the qualities which I have enumerated as principally conducting to form a Poet, is implied nothing differing in kind from other men, but only in degree. The sum of what I have there said is, that the Poet is chiefly distinguished from other men by a greater promptness to think and feel without immediate external excitement, and a greater power in expressing such thoughts and feelings as are produced in him in that manner. But these passions and thoughts and feelings are the general passions and thoughts and feelings of men. And with what are they connected? Undoubtedly with our moral sentiments and animal sensations, and with the causes which excite these; with the operations of the elements and the appearances of the visible universe; with storm and sun-shine, with the revolutions of the seasons, with cold and heat, with loss of friends and kindred, with injuries and resentments, gratitude and hope, with fear and sorrow. These, and the like, are the sensations and objects which the Poet describes, as they are the sen-



sations of other men, and the objects which interest them. The Poet thinks and feels in the spirit of the passions of men. How, then, can his language differ in any material degree from that of all other men who feel vividly and see clearly? It might be *proved* that it is impossible. But supposing that this were not the case, the Poet might then be allowed to use a peculiar language, when expressing his feelings for his own gratification, or that of men like himself. But Poets do not write for Poets alone, but for men. Unless therefore we are advocates for that admiration which depends upon ignorance, and that pleasure which arises from hearing what we do not understand, the Poet must descend from this supposed height, and, in order to excite rational sympathy, he must express himself as other men express themselves. To this it may be added, that while he is only selecting from the real language of men, or, which amounts to the same thing, composing accurately in the spirit of such selection, he is treading upon safe ground, and we know what we are to expect from him. Our feelings are the same with respect to metre; for, as it may be proper to remind the Reader, the distinction of metre is regular and uniform, and not like that which is produced by what is usually 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, whereas, in the other, the metre obeys certain laws, to which the Poet and Reader both willingly submit because they are certain, and because no interference is made by them with the passion but such as the concurring testimony of ages has shewn to heighten and improve the pleasure which coexists with it.

**2. William Wordsworth, "Appendix:—by what is usually called Poetic Diction." *Lyrical Ballads with Pastoral and other Poems*. 3rd ed. London: Longman and Rees, 1802. II:237–47**

As perhaps I have no right to expect from a Reader of an introduction to a volume of Poems that attentive perusal without which it is impossible, imperfectly as I have been compelled to express my meaning, that what I have said in the Preface should throughout be fully understood, I am the more anxious to give an exact notion of the sense in which I use the phrase *poetic diction*; and for this purpose I will here add a few words concerning the origin of the phraseology which I have condemned under that name.—The earliest Poets of all nations generally wrote from passion excited by real events; they wrote naturally, and as men: feeling powerfully as they did, their language was daring and figurative. In succeeding times, Poets, and

men ambitious of the fame of Poets, perceiving the influence of such language, and desirous of producing the same effect, without having the same animating passion, set themselves to a mechanical adoption of those figures of speech, and made use of them, sometimes with propriety, but much more frequently applied them to feelings and ideas with which they had no natural connection whatsoever. A language was thus insensibly produced, differing materially from the real language of men in *any situation*. The Reader or Hearer of this distorted language found himself in a perturbed and unusual state of mind: when affected by the genuine language of passion he had been in a perturbed and unusual state of mind also: in both cases he was willing that his common judgment and understanding should be laid asleep, and he had no instinctive and infallible perception of the true to make him reject the false; the one served as a passport for the other. The agitation and confusion of mind were in both cases delightful, and no wonder if he confounded the one with the other, and believed them both to be produced by the same, or similar causes. Besides, the Poet spoke to him in the character of a man to be looked up to, a man of genius and authority. Thus, and from a variety of other causes, this distorted language was received with admiration; and Poets, it is probable, who had before contented themselves for the most part with misapplying only expressions which at first had been dictated by real passion, carried the abuse still further, and introduced phrases composed apparently in the spirit of the original figurative language of passion, yet altogether of their own invention, and distinguished by various degrees of wanton deviation from good sense and nature.

It is indeed true that the language of the earliest Poets was felt to differ materially from ordinary language, because it was the language of extraordinary occasions; but it was really spoken by men, language which the Poet himself had uttered when he had been affected by the events which he described, or which he had heard uttered by those around him. To this language it is probable that metre of some sort or other was early superadded. This separated the genuine language of Poetry still further from common life, so that whoever read or heard the poems of these earliest Poets felt himself moved in a way in which he had not been accustomed to be moved in real life, and by causes manifestly different from those which acted upon him in real life. This was the great temptation to all the corruptions which have followed: under the protection of this feeling succeeding Poets constructed a phraseology which had one thing, it is true, in common with the genuine language of poetry, namely, that it was not heard in ordinary conversation; that it was unusual. But the first Poets, as I have said, spoke a language which though unusual, was still the language of men. This circum-

stance, however, was disregarded by their successors; they found that they could please by easier means: they became proud of a language which they themselves had invented, and which was uttered only by themselves; and, with the spirit of a fraternity, they arrogated it to themselves as their own. In process of time metre became a symbol or promise of this unusual language, and whoever took upon him to write in metre, according as he possessed more or less of true poetic genius, introduced less or more of this adulterated phraseology into his compositions, and the true and the false became so inseparably interwoven that the taste of men was gradually perverted; and this language was received as a natural language; and, at length, by the influence of books upon men, did to a certain degree really become so. Abuses of this kind were imported from one nation to another, and with the progress of refinement this diction became daily more and more corrupt, thrusting out of sight the plain humanities of nature by a motley masquerade of tricks, quaintnesses, hieroglyphics, and enigmas.

It would be highly interesting to point out the causes of the pleasure given by this extravagant and absurd language; but this is not the place; it depends upon a great variety of causes, but upon none perhaps more than its influence in impressing a notion of the peculiarity and exaltation of the Poet's character, and in flattering the Reader's self-love by bringing him nearer to a sympathy with that character; an effect which is accomplished by unsettling ordinary habits of thinking, and thus assisting the Reader to approach to that perturbed and dizzy state of mind in which if he does not find himself, he imagines that he is *balked* of a peculiar enjoyment which poetry can, and ought to bestow.

The sonnet which I have quoted from Gray, in the Preface, except the lines printed in Italics, consists of little else but this diction, though not of the worst kind; and indeed, if I may be permitted to say so, it is far too common in the best writers, both antient and modern. Perhaps I can in no way, by positive example, more easily give my Reader a notion of what I mean by the phrase *poetic diction* than by referring him to a comparison between the metrical paraphrases which we have of passages in the old and new Testament, and those passages as they exist in our common Translation. See Pope's "Messiah"<sup>1</sup> throughout, Prior's "Did sweeter sounds adorn my flowing tongue,"<sup>2</sup> &c. &c. "Though I speak with

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1 *Pope's Messiah*] Alexander Pope (1688–1744) published "Messiah, A Sacred Eclogue" in *Poems* (1717), 35–44.

2 "Did ... tongue,"] Quoted from line 1 of Matthew Prior, "Charity: A Paraphrase on the Thirteenth Chapter of the First Epistle to the Corinthians," first published in *Poems on Several Occasions* (1718).

the tongues of men and of angels,” &c. &c. See 1st Corinthians, Chapter 13th. By way of immediate example, take the following of Dr. Johnson.

“Turn on the prudent Ant thy heedless eyes,  
Observe her labours, Sluggard, and be wise;  
No stern command, no monitory voice,  
Prescribes her duties, or directs her choice;  
Yet timely provident she hastes away,  
To snatch the blessings of a plenteous day;  
When fruitful Summer loads the teeming plain,  
She crops the harvest and she stores the grain.  
How long, shall sloth usurp thy useless hours,  
Unnerve thy vigour, and enchain thy powers?  
While artful shades thy downy couch enclose,  
And soft solicitation courts repose,  
Amidst the drowsy charms of dull delight,  
Year chases year with unremitted flight,  
Till want now following, fraudulent and slow,  
Shall spring to seize thee, like an ambushed foe.”<sup>1</sup>

From this hubbub of words pass to the original, “Go to the Ant, thou Sluggard, consider her ways, and be wise: which having no guide, overseer, or ruler, provideth her meat in the summer, and gathereth her food in the harvest. How long wilt thou sleep, O Sluggard? when wilt thou arise out of thy sleep? Yet a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep. So shall thy poverty come as one that travaileth, and thy want as an armed man.” Proverbs, chap. 6th.

One more quotation and I have done. It is from Cowper’s verses supposed to be written by Alexander Selkirk.<sup>2</sup>

“Religion! what treasure untold  
Resides in that heavenly word!  
More precious than silver and gold,  
Or all that this earth can afford.

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1 *Johnson ... foe.*] Quoted from Samuel Johnson, “Paraphrase of Proverbs, Chapter VI, Verses 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11” first published in *The Poetical Works* (1789).

2 *Cowper ... Selkirk*] Quoted from lines 25–40 of William Cowper (1731–1800), “Verses, supposed to be written by Alexander Selkirk, during his solitary Abode in the Island of Juan Fernandez,” first published in *Poems* (1782). The Scottish sailor Alexander Selkirk (1676–1721) was the prototype for Daniel Defoe’s *Robinson Crusoe* (1719).

But the sound of the church-going bell  
These valleys and rocks never heard  
Ne'er sigh'd at the sound of a knell,  
Or smil'd when a sabbath appear'd.

Ye winds, that have made me your sport,  
Convey to this desolate shore  
Some cordial endearing report  
Of a land I must visit no more.  
My Friends, do they now and then send  
A wish or a thought after me?  
O tell me I yet have a friend  
Though a friend I am never to see."

I have quoted this passage as an instance of three different styles of composition. The first four lines are poorly expressed; some Critics would call the language prosaic; the fact is, it would be bad prose, so bad, that it is scarcely worse in metre. The epithet "church-going" applied to a bell, and that by so chaste a writer as Cowper, is an instance of the strange abuses which Poets have introduced into their language till they and their Readers take them as matters of course, if they do not single them out expressly as objects of admiration. The two lines "Ne'er sigh'd at the sound," &c. are, in my opinion, an instance of the language of passion wrested from its proper use, and, from the mere circumstance of the composition being in metre, applied upon an occasion that does not justify such violent expressions, and I should condemn the passage, though perhaps few Readers will agree with me, as vicious poetic diction. The last stanza is throughout admirably expressed: it would be equally good whether in prose or verse, except that the Reader has an exquisite pleasure in seeing such natural language so naturally connected with metre. The beauty of this stanza tempts me here to add a sentiment which ought to be the pervading spirit of a system, detached parts of which have been imperfectly explained in the Preface, namely, that in proportion as ideas and feelings are valuable, whether the composition be in prose or in verse, they require and exact one and the same language.

## Appendix B: Poems by Coleridge Originally Intended for Lyrical Ballads

[Coleridge's contributions to *Lyrical Ballads* differed somewhat from what had been originally planned. Appendix B therefore includes the two poems that were intended for, but not published in, the collection: "Lewti, or the Circassian Love-Chant" and "Christabel." We have also included the introductory and concluding stanzas of an earlier version of "Love," originally published in the *Morning Post* under the title "Introduction to the Tale of the Dark Ladie."

In "Lewti," Coleridge reworked a schoolboy poem of Wordsworth's entitled "Beauty and Moonlight, an Ode, Fragment." The poem was published pseudonymously in the *Morning Post* on 13 April 1798 under the name "Nicias Erythroeus," the same name Coleridge had used when he published "The Old Man of the Alps" in the *Morning Post* in March 1798. It was then published as "Lewti" in the first printed copies of *Lyrical Ballads*; five copies containing the poem have survived. Coleridge likely canceled the poem and replaced it with "The Nightingale" to preserve the anonymity of the *Lyrical Ballads* volume, although the poem may have been pulled for literary reasons as well.<sup>1</sup>

The reasons for the exclusion of "Christabel" from the 1800 edition of *Lyrical Ballads* are more ambiguous. Coleridge and Wordsworth originally had planned it to close the second volume, and Wordsworth had waited much of the summer for Coleridge to complete it. Suffering from writers' block, Coleridge finally completed Part Two on 4 October 1800. He then walked thirteen miles that same night from Keswick to Grasmere to read it to the Wordsworths. Dorothy's diary records her "increasing pleasure" on hearing the poem read a second time the following morning, and the same day William began composing a paragraph on "Christabel" for the Preface. The next day, however, the diary records a sudden reversal: "Determined not to print Christabel with the L.B." Over the next weeks, Wordsworth hurriedly composed "Michael" to take the place of "Christabel," and each poet attempted, with some embarrassment, to explain the decision to friends. While Coleridge in his correspondence stressed Wordsworth's scruples at publishing so significant a work under his own name, Wordsworth was characteristically more blunt, explaining to his publishers Longman and

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1 See *STCW* I:457.

Rees that “upon mature deliberation I found that the Style of this Poem was so discordant from my own that it could not be printed along with my poems with any propriety” (*WL*, I:309).

“Lewti” was subsequently published in the second volume of Robert Southey’s *Annual Anthology* (1800) and in Coleridge’s own *Sibylline Leaves* (1817). “Christabel” circulated in manuscript from 1800 onward but remained unpublished until 1816, when it was published in a small volume entitled *Christabel; Kubla Khan, a Vision; the Pains of the Sleep* (London: Murray, 1816). Our text of “Christabel” comes from this first edition; our text of “Lewti” comes from Robert Southey’s copy of *Lyrical Ballads* (1798) in which “Lewti” appears as the fourth poem in the collection (British Library, call number C.58.c.12).]

**1. Samuel Coleridge, “Lewti, or the Circassian Love-Chant.” *Lyrical Ballads, With a Few Other Poems*. Bristol: Biggs and Cottle, for Longman, 1798. 63–67**

At midnight, by the stream I rov’d  
To forget the form I lov’d.  
Image of LEWTI! from my mind  
Depart; for LEWTI is not kind.  
The Moon was high, the moonlight gleam,  
    And the shadow of a star  
Heav’d upon Tamaha’s stream;  
    But the rock shone brighter far.  
The rock half-sheltered from my view,  
By pendant boughs of tressy yew.— 10  
So shines my LEWTI’S forehead fair,  
Gleaning thro’ her sable hair.  
Image of LEWTI! from my mind  
Depart; for LEWTI is not kind.

I saw a cloud of palest hue,  
    Onward to the moon it pass’d.  
Still brighter and more bright it grew,  
With floating colours not a few,  
    Till it reach’d the moon at last. 20  
Then the cloud was wholly bright,  
With a rich and amber light;  
And so with many a hope I seek,  
    And with such joy I find my LEWTI;  
And even so my pale wan cheek  
    Drinks in as deep a flush of beauty!  
Nay, treach’rous image! leave my mind,  
If LEWTI never will be kind.

The little cloud—it floats away,  
     Away it goes—away so soon!  
 Alas! it has no pow'r to stay: 30  
 Its hues are dim, its hues are grey—  
     Away it passes from the moon.  
 How mournfully it seems to fly,  
     Ever fading more and more,  
 To joyless regions of the sky—  
     And now 'tis whiter than before,  
 As white as my poor cheek will be,  
     When, LEWTI! on my couch I lie,  
 A dying man, for love of thee.  
 Nay, treach'rous image! leave my mind— 40  
 And yet thou didst not look unkind!  
     I saw a vapour in the sky,  
     Thin and white and very high.  
 I ne'er beheld so thin a cloud—  
     Perhaps the breezes that can fly  
     Now below, and now above,  
 Have snatch'd aloft the lawny shroud  
     Of lady fair, that died for love:  
     For Maids, as well as Youths, have perish'd  
     From fruitless love, too fondly cherish'd! 50  
     Nay, treach'rous image! leave my mind—  
     For LEWTI never will be kind.

Hush! my heedless feet from under  
     Slip the crumbling banks for ever;  
 Like echoes to a distant thunder,  
     They plunge into the gentle river:  
 The river-swans have heard my tread,  
 And startle from their reedy bed.  
 O beauteous birds! methinks ye measure  
     Your movements to some heav'nly tune! 60  
 O beauteous birds! 'tis such a pleasure  
     To see you move beneath the moon;  
 I would, it were your true delight  
 To sleep by day and wake all night.  
 I know the place where LEWTI lies,  
 When silent night has clos'd her eyes—  
 It is a breezy jasmin bow'r,  
     The Nightingale sings o'er her head;  
 Had I the enviable pow'r  
     To creep unseen with noiseless tread, 70  
 Then should I view her bosom white,





And now once more a tale of woe, 121  
A woeful tale of love I sing;  
For thee, my Genevieve! it sighs,  
And trembles on the string.

When last I sang the cruel scorn  
That craz'd this bold and lonely Knight,  
And how he roam'd the mountain woods,  
Nor rested day or night;

I promis'd thee a sister tale  
Of Man's perfidious cruelty; 130  
Come, then, and hear what cruel wrong  
Befel the Dark Ladie.

**3. Samuel Coleridge, "Christabel." *Christabel; Kubla Khan, a Vision; the Pains of the Sleep*. London: Murray, 1816. v-vii, 1-54**

PREFACE

The first part of the following poem was written in the year one thousand seven hundred and ninety-seven, at Stowey in the country of Somerset. The second part, after my return from Germany, in the year one thousand eight hundred, at Keswick, Cumberland. Since the later date, my poetic powers have been, till very lately, in a state of suspended animation. But as, in my very first conception of the tale, I had the whole present to my mind, with the wholeness, no less than the liveliness of a vision; I trust that I shall be able to embody in verse the three parts yet to come, in the course of the present year.

It is probable, that if the poem had been finished at either of the former periods, or if even the first and second part had been published in the year 1800, the impression of its originality would have been much greater than I dare at present expect. But for this, I have only my own indolence to blame. The dates are mentioned for the exclusive purpose of precluding charges of plagiarism or servile imitation from myself. For there is amongst us a set of critics, who seem to hold, that every possible thought and image is traditional; who have no notion that there are such things as fountains in the world, small as well as great; and who would therefore charitably derive every rill they behold flowing, from a perforation made in some other man's tank. I am confident however, that as far as the

present poem is concerned, the celebrated poets whose writings I might be suspected of having imitated, either in particular passages, or in the tone and the spirit of the whole, would be among the first to vindicate me from the charge,<sup>1</sup> and who, on any striking coincidence, would permit me to address them in this doggerel version of two monkish Latin hexameters:

'Tis mine and it is likewise yours;  
But an if this will not do;  
Let it be mine, good friend! for I  
Am the poorer of the two.

I have only to add that the metre of *Christabel* is not, properly speaking, irregular, though it may seem so from its being founded on a new principle: namely, that of counting in each line the accents, not the syllables. Though the latter may vary from seven to twelve, yet in each line the accents will be found to be only four. Nevertheless this occasional variation in number of syllables is not introduced wantonly, or for the mere ends of convenience, but in correspondence with some transition in the nature of the imagery or passion.

## PART I

'Tis the middle of night by the castle clock,  
And the owls have awakened the crowing cock;  
Tu—whit!—Tu—whoo!  
And hark, again! the crowing cock,  
How drowsily it crew.

Sir Leoline, the Baron rich,  
Hath a toothless mastiff bitch;  
From her kennel beneath the rock  
She makes answer to the clock,  
Four for the quarters, and twelve for the hour;                    10  
Ever and aye, moonshine or shower,  
Sixteen short howls, not over loud;  
Some say, she sees my lady's shroud.

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1 *celebrated ... charge*] In a note to stanza XIX of the *Siege of Corinth* (1816), Lord Byron acknowledged an "unintentional ... resemblance" between twelve lines of his poem and "an unpublished poem of Mr. Coleridge's" (56).

Is the night chilly and dark?  
The night is chilly, but not dark.  
The thin gray cloud is spread on high,  
It covers but not hides the sky.  
The moon is behind, and at the full;  
And yet she looks both small and dull.  
The night is chill, the cloud is gray: 20  
'Tis a month before the month of May,  
And the Spring comes slowly up this way.

The lovely lady, Christabel,  
Whom her father loves so well,  
What makes her in the wood so late,  
A furlong from the castle gate?  
She had dreams all yesternight  
Of her own betrothéd knight;  
Dreams, that made her moan and leap, 30  
As on her bed she lay in sleep;  
And she in the midnight wood will pray  
For the weal of her lover that's far away.

She stole along, she nothing spoke,  
The breezes they were still also;  
And naught was green upon the oak,  
But moss and rarest misletoe:  
She kneels beneath the huge oak tree,  
And in silence prayeth she.

The lady leaps up suddenly,  
The lovely lady, Christabel! 40  
It moan'd as near, as near can be,  
But what it is she cannot tell.—  
On the other side it seems to be,  
Of the huge, broad-breasted, old oak tree.

The night is chill; the forest bare;  
Is it the wind that moaneth bleak?  
There is not wind enough in the air  
To move away the ringlet curl  
From the lovely lady's cheek—  
There is not wind enough to twirl 50  
The one red leaf, the last of its clan,  
That dances as often as dance it can,  
Hanging so light, and hanging so high,  
On the topmost twig that looks up at the sky.

Hush, beating heart of Christabel!  
Jesu, Maria, shield her well!  
She folded her arms beneath her cloak,  
And stole to the other side of the oak.  
    What sees she there?

There she sees a damsel bright, 60  
Drest in a silken robe of white,  
Her neck, her feet, her arms were bare,  
And the jewels disorder'd in her hair.  
I guess, 'twas frightful there to see  
A lady so richly clad as she—  
Beautiful exceedingly!

“Mary mother, save me now!”  
(Said Christabel,) “And who art thou?”

The lady strange made answer meet, 70  
And her voice was faint and sweet:—  
“Have pity on my sore distress,  
I scarce can speak for weariness.”  
“Stretch forth thy hand, and have no fear,”  
Said Christabel, “How cam'st thou here?”  
And the lady, whose voice was faint and sweet,  
Did thus pursue her answer meet:—

“My sire is of a noble line,  
And my name is Geraldine.  
Five warriors seized me yesternorn,  
Me, even me, a maid forlorn: 80  
They chok'd my cries with force and fright,  
And tied me on a palfrey white.  
The palfrey was as fleet as wind,  
And they rode furiously behind.  
They spurr'd amain, their steeds were white:  
And once we cross'd the shade of night.  
As sure as Heaven shall rescue me,  
I have no thought what men they be;  
Nor do I know how long it is  
(For I have lain in fits, I wis<sup>1</sup>) 90  
Since one, the tallest of the five,  
Took me from the palfrey's back,

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1 *wis*] Believe.

A weary woman, scarce alive.  
Some mutter'd words his comrades spoke:  
He plac'd me underneath this oak;  
He swore they would return with haste;  
Whither they went I cannot tell—  
I thought I heard, some minutes past,  
Sounds as of a castle bell.  
Stretch forth thy hand (thus ended she),  
And help a wretched maid to flee.”

100

Then Christabel stretch'd forth her hand  
And comforted fair Geraldine,  
Saying that she should command  
The service of Sir Leoline;  
And straight be convoy'd, free from thrall  
Back to her noble father's hall.

So up she rose, and forth they pass'd  
With hurrying steps, yet nothing fast  
Her lucky stars the lady blest  
And Christabel she sweetly said—  
“All our household are at rest,  
Each one sleeping in his bed;  
Sir Leoline is weak in health,  
And may not well awaken'd be,  
So to my room we'll creep in stealth,  
And you to-night must sleep with me.”

110

They cross'd the moat, and Christabel  
Took the key that fitted well;  
A little door she opened straight,  
All in the middle of the gate;  
The gate that was iron'd within and without,  
Where an army in battle array had march'd out.  
The lady sank, belike thro' pain,  
And Christabel with might and main  
Lifted her up, a weary weight,  
Over the threshold of the gate:  
Then the lady rose again,  
And mov'd, as she were not in pain.

120

So free from danger, free from fear,  
They cross'd the court: right glad they were.  
And Christabel devoutly cried,  
To the lady by her side,

130

“Praise we the Virgin all divine  
Who hath rescued thee from thy distress!”  
“Alas, alas!” said Geraldine,  
“I cannot speak for weariness.”  
So free from danger, free from fear,  
They cross’d the court: right glad they were.

Outside her kennel, the mastiff old 140  
Lay fast asleep, in moonshine cold.  
The mastiff old did not awake,  
Yet she an angry moan did make!  
And what can ail the mastiff bitch?  
Never till now she utter’d yell  
Beneath the eye of Christabel.  
Perhaps it is the owlet’s scritch:  
For what can ail the mastiff bitch?

They passed the hall, that echoes still,  
Pass as lightly as you will! 150  
The brands were flat, the brands were dying,  
Amid their own white ashes lying;  
But when the lady pass’d, there came  
A tongue of light, a fit of flame;  
And Christabel saw the lady’s eye,  
And nothing else saw she thereby,  
Save the boss of the shield of Sir Leoline tall,  
Which hung in a murky old nitch in the wall.  
“O softly tread,” said Christabel,  
“My father seldom sleepeth well.” 160

Sweet Christabel her feet she bares,  
And they are creeping up the stairs;  
Now in glimmer, and now in gloom.  
And now they pass the Baron’s room,  
As still as death with stifled breath!  
And now have reach’d her chamber door;  
And now with eager feet press down  
The rushes of her chamber floor.

The moon shines dim in the open air,  
And not a moonbeam enters here. 170  
But they without its light can see  
The chamber carv’d so curiously,  
Carv’d with figures strange and sweet,  
All made out of the carver’s brain,

For a lady's chamber meet:  
The lamp with twofold silver chain  
Is fasten'd to an angel's feet.

The silver lamp burns dead and dim;  
But Christabel the lamp will trim.  
She trimm'd the lamp, and made it bright, 180  
And left it swinging to and fro,  
While Geraldine, in wretched plight,  
Sank down upon the floor below.

"O weary lady, Geraldine,  
I pray you, drink this cordial wine!  
It is a wine of virtuous powers;  
My mother made it of wild flowers."

"And will your mother pity me,  
Who am a maiden most forlorn?"  
Christabel answer'd—"Woe is me! 190  
She died the hour that I was born.  
I have heard the gray-hair'd friar tell  
How on her death-bed she did say,  
That she should hear the castle bell  
Strike twelve upon my wedding day.  
O mother dear! that thou wert here!"  
"I would," said Geraldine, "she were!"

But soon with alter'd voice, said she—  
"Off, wandering mother! Peak and pine!  
I have power to bid thee flee." 200  
Alas! what ails poor Geraldine?  
Why stares she with unsettled eye?  
Can she the bodiless dead espy?  
And why with hollow voice cries she,  
"Off, woman, off! this hour is mine—  
Though thou her guardian spirit be,  
Off, woman, off! 'tis given to me."

Then Christabel knelt by the lady's side,  
And raised to heaven her eyes so blue—  
"Alas!" said she, "this ghastly ride— 210  
Dear lady! it hath wilder'd you!"  
The lady wip'd her moist cold brow,  
And faintly said, "'Tis over now!"



Again the wild-flower wine she drank:  
Her fair large eyes 'gan glitter bright,  
And from the floor whereon she sank,  
The lofty lady stood upright:  
She was most beautiful to see,  
Like a lady of a far countrée.

And thus the lofty lady spake— 220  
“All they who live in the upper sky,  
Do love you, holy Christabell!  
And you love them, and for their sake  
And for the good which me befel,  
Even I in my degree will try,  
Fair maiden, to requite you well.  
But now unrobe yourself; for I  
Must pray, ere yet in bed I lie.”

Quoth Christabel, “So let it be!” 230  
And as the lady bade, did she.  
Her gentle limbs did she undress  
And lay down in her loveliness.

But thro' her brain of weal and woe,  
So many thoughts mov'd to and fro,  
That vain it were her lids to close;  
So half-way from the bed she rose,  
And on her elbow did recline  
To look at the lady Geraldine.

Beneath the lamp the lady bow'd,  
And slowly roll'd her eyes around; 240  
Then drawing in her breath aloud,  
Like one that shudder'd, she unbound  
The cincture from beneath her breast:  
Her silken robe, and inner vest,  
Dropt to her feet, and full in view,  
Behold! her bosom, and half her side——  
A sight to dream of, not to tell!  
And she is to sleep by Christabel.

She took two paces, and a stride 250  
And lay down by the maiden's side:  
And in her arms the maid she took,  
Ah wel-a-day!

And with low voice and doleful look  
 These words did say:  
 "In the touch of this bosom there worketh a spell,  
 Which is lord of thy utterance, Christabel!  
 Thou knowest to-night, and wilt know to-morrow  
 This mark of my shame, this seal of my sorrow;  
     But vainly thou warrest,  
     For this is alone in 260  
     Thy power to declare,  
     That in the dim forest  
     Thou heard'st a low moaning,  
 And found'st a bright lady, surpassingly fair:  
 And didst bring her home with thee in love and in charity,  
 To shield her and shelter her from the damp air."

#### THE CONCLUSION TO PART I

It was a lovely sight to see  
 The lady Christabel, when she  
 Was praying at the old oak tree.  
     Amid the jagged shadows 270  
     Of mossy leafless boughs,  
     Kneeling in the moonlight,  
     To make her gentle vows;  
 Her slender palms together prest,  
 Heaving sometimes on her breast;  
 Her face resign'd to bliss or bale—  
 Her face, oh call it fair not pale,  
 And both blue eyes more bright than clear,  
 Each about to have a tear.

With open eyes (ah woe is me!) 280  
 Asleep, and dreaming fearfully,  
 Fearfully dreaming, yet I wis,  
 Dreaming that alone, which is—  
 O sorrow and shame! Can this be she,  
 The lady, who knelt at the old oak tree?  
 And lo! the worker of these harms,  
 That holds the maiden in her arms,  
 Seems to slumber still and mild,  
 As a mother with her child.

A star hath set, a star hath risen, 290  
 O Geraldine! since arms of thine  
 Have been the lovely lady's prison.

O Geraldine! one hour was thine—  
Thou'st had thy will! By tairn and rill,<sup>1</sup>  
The night-birds all that hour were still.  
But now they are jubilant anew,  
From cliff and tower, tu—whoo! tu—whoo!  
Tu—whoo! tu—whoo! from wood and fell!

And see! the lady Christabel  
Gathers herself from out her trance; 300  
Her limbs relax, her countenance  
Grows sad and soft; the smooth thin lids  
Close o'er her eyes; and tears she sheds—  
Large tears that leave the lashes bright!  
And oft the while she seems to smile  
As infants at a sudden light!

Yea, she doth smile, and she doth weep,  
Like a youthful hermitess,  
Beauteous in a wilderness,  
Who, praying always, prays in sleep. 310  
And, if she move unquietly,  
Perchance, 'tis but the blood so free,  
Comes back and tingles in her feet.  
No doubt, she hath a vision sweet.  
What if her guardian spirit 'twere,  
What if she knew her mother near?  
But this she knows, in joys and woes,  
That saints will aid if men will call:  
For the blue sky bends over all!

## PART II

Each matin bell, the Baron saith, 320  
Knells us back to a world of death.  
These words Sir Leoline first said,  
When he rose and found his lady dead:  
These words Sir Leoline will say,  
Many a morn to his dying day.

And hence the custom and law began,  
That still at dawn the sacristan,  
Who duly pulls the heavy bell,

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1 *tairn and rill*] A *tairn* (or “tarn”) is a small mountain lake; a *rill* is a small stream.

Five and forty beads must tell  
Between each stroke—a warning knell, 330  
Which not a soul can choose but hear  
From Bratha Head to Wyn'dermere.

Saith Bracy the bard, “So let it knell!  
And let the drowsy sacristan  
Still count as slowly as he can!  
There is no lack of such, I ween,  
As well fill up the space between.  
In Langdale Pike and Witch’s Lair,  
And Dungeon-ghyll so foully rent,  
With ropes of rock and bells of air 340  
Three sinful sextons’ ghosts are pent,  
Who all give back, one after t’other,  
The death-note to their living brother;  
And oft too, by the knell offended,  
Just as their one! two! three! is ended,  
The devil mocks the doleful tale  
With a merry peal from Borrowdale.”

The air is still! thro’ mist and cloud  
That merry peal comes ringing loud;  
And Geraldine shakes off her dread, 350  
And rises lightly from the bed;  
Puts on her silken vestments white,  
And tricks her hair in lovely plight,  
And nothing doubting of her spell  
Awakens the lady Christabel.  
“Sleep you, sweet lady Christabel?  
I trust that you have rested well.”

And Christabel awoke and spied  
The same who lay down by her side—  
O rather say, the same whom she 360  
Rais’d up beneath the old oak tree!  
Nay, fairer yet! and yet more fair!  
For she belike hath drunken deep  
Of all the blessedness of sleep!  
And while she spake, her looks, her air  
Such gentle thankfulness declare,  
That (so it seem’d) her girded vests  
Grew tight beneath her heaving breasts.  
“Sure I have sinn’d!” said Christabel,  
“Now heaven be praised if all be well!” 370

And in low faltering tones, yet sweet,  
Did she the lofty lady greet  
With such perplexity of mind  
As dreams too lively leave behind.

So quickly she rose, and quickly array'd  
Her maiden limbs, and having pray'd  
That He, who on the cross did groan,  
Might wash away her sins unknown,  
She forthwith led fair Geraldine  
To meet her sire, Sir Leoline.

380

The lovely maid and the lady tall  
Are pacing both into the hall,  
And pacing on through page and groom  
Enter the Baron's presence room.

The Baron rose, and while he prest  
His gentle daughter to his breast,  
With cheerful wonder in his eyes  
The lady Geraldine espies,  
And gave such welcome to the same,  
As might beseem so bright a dame!

390

But when he heard the lady's tale,  
And when she told her father's name,  
Why wax'd Sir Leoline so pale,  
Murmuring o'er the name again,  
Lord Roland de Vaux of Tryermaine?

Alas! they had been friends in youth;  
But whispering tongues can poison truth;  
And constancy lives in realms above;  
And life is thorny; and youth is vain;  
And to be wroth with one we love,  
Doth work like madness in the brain.

400

And thus it chanc'd, as I divine,  
With Roland and Sir Leoline.  
Each spake words of high disdain  
And insult to his heart's best brother:  
They parted—ne'er to meet again!  
But never either found another  
To free the hollow heart from paining—  
They stood aloof, the scars remaining,  
Like cliffs which had been rent asunder;

410

A dreary sea now flows between,  
But neither heat, nor frost, nor thunder,  
Shall wholly do away, I ween,  
The marks of that which once hath been.

Sir Leoline, a moment's space,  
Stood gazing on the damsel's face;  
And the youthful Lord of Tryermaine  
Came back upon his heart again.

O then the Baron forgot his age,  
His noble heart swell'd high with rage; 420  
He swore by the wounds in Jesu's side,  
He would proclaim it far and wide  
With trump and solemn heraldry,  
That they, who thus had wronged the dame,  
Were base as spotted infamy!  
"And if they dare deny the same,  
My herald shall appoint a week,  
And let the recreant traitors seek  
My tourney court—that there and then  
I may dislodge their reptile souls 430  
From the bodies and forms of men!"  
He spake: his eye in lightning rolls!  
For the lady was ruthlessly seiz'd; and he kenn'd  
In the beautiful lady the child of his friend!

And now the tears were on his face,  
And fondly in his arms he took  
Fair Geraldine, who met th' embrace,  
Prolonging it with joyous look.  
Which when she view'd, a vision fell  
Upon the soul of Christabel, 440  
The vision of fear, the touch and pain!  
She shrunk and shuddered, and saw again  
(Ah, woe is me! Was it for thee,  
Thou gentle maid! such sights to see?)

Again she saw that bosom old,  
Again she felt that bosom cold,  
And drew in her breath with a hissing sound:  
Whereat the Knight turn'd wildly round,  
And nothing saw, but his own sweet maid  
With eyes uprais'd, as one that pray'd. 450

The touch, the sight, had passed away,  
And in its stead that vision blest,  
Which comforted her after-rest,  
While in the lady's arms she lay,  
Had put a rapture in her breast,  
And on her lips and o'er her eyes  
Spread smiles like light!

With new surprise,  
"What ails then my beloved child?"  
The Baron said—His daughter mild  
Made answer, "All will yet be well!" 460  
I ween, she had no power to tell  
Aught else: so mighty was the spell.

Yet he, who saw this Geraldine,  
Had deem'd her sure a thing divine,  
Such sorrow with such grace she blended,  
As if she fear'd, she had offended  
Sweet Christabel, that gentle maid!  
And with such lowly tones she pray'd,  
She might be sent without delay  
Home to her father's mansion.

"Nay! 470  
Nay, by my soul!" said Leoline.  
"Ho! Bracy the bard, the charge be thine!  
Go thou, with music sweet and loud,  
And take two steeds with trappings proud,  
And take the youth whom thou lov'st best  
To bear thy harp, and learn thy song,  
And clothe you both in solemn vest,  
And over the mountains haste along,  
Lest wand'ring folk, that are abroad,  
Detain you on the valley road. 480

And when he has cross'd the Irthing flood,  
My merry bard! he hastes, he hastes  
Up Knorren Moor, thro' Halegarth Wood,  
And reaches soon that castle good  
Which stands and threatens Scotland's wastes.

Bard Bracy! bard Bracy! your horses are fleet,  
Ye must ride up the hall, your music so sweet,

More loud than your horses' echoing feet!  
 And loud and loud to Lord Roland call,  
 Thy daughter is safe in Langdale hall! 490  
 Thy beautiful daughter is safe and free—  
 Sir Leoline greets thee thus thro' me.  
 He bids thee come without delay  
 With all thy numerous array;  
 And take thy lovely daughter home,  
 And he will meet thee on the way  
 With all his numerous array  
 White with their panting palfreys' foam,  
 And, by mine honour! I will say,  
 That I repent me of the day 500  
 When I spake words of fierce disdain  
 To Roland de Vaux of Tryermaine!—  
 —For since that evil hour hath flown,  
 Many a summer's sun hath shone;  
 Yet ne'er found I a friend again  
 Like Roland de Vaux of Tryermaine.”

The lady fell, and clasped his knees,  
 Her face uprais'd, her eyes o'erflowing;  
 And Bracy replied, with faltering voice,  
 His gracious hail on all bestowing!— 510  
 “Thy words, thou sire of Christabel,  
 Are sweeter than my harp can tell;  
 Yet might I gain a boon of thee,  
 This day my journey should not be:  
 So strange a dream hath come to me,  
 That I had vow'd with music loud  
 To clear yon wood from thing unblest,  
 Warn'd by a vision in my rest!  
 For in my sleep I saw that dove,  
 That gentle bird, whom thou dost love, 520  
 And call'st by thy own daughter's name—  
 Sir Leoline! I saw the same  
 Fluttering, and uttering fearful moan,  
 Among the green herbs in the forest alone.  
 Which when I saw and when I heard,  
 I wonder'd what might ail the bird:  
 For nothing near it could I see,  
 Save the grass and herbs underneath the old tree.

And in my dream, methought, I went  
 To search out what might there be found; 530



And what the sweet bird's trouble meant,  
That thus lay fluttering on the ground.  
I went and peered, and could descry  
No cause for her distressful cry;  
But yet for her dear lady's sake  
I stoop'd, methought, the dove to take,  
When lo! I saw a bright green snake  
Coil'd around its wings and neck.  
Green as the herbs on which it couch'd,  
Close by the dove's its head it crouch'd; 540  
And with the dove it heaves and stirs,  
Swelling its neck as she swell'd hers!  
I woke; it was the midnight hour,  
The clock was echoing in the tower;  
But tho' my slumber was gone by,  
This dream it would not pass away—  
It seems to live upon my eye!  
And thence I vow'd this self-same day,  
With music strong and saintly song  
To wander thro' the forest bare, 550  
Lest aught unholy loiter there.”

Thus Bracy said: the Baron, the while,  
Half-listening heard him with a smile;  
Then turn'd to Lady Geraldine,  
His eyes made up of wonder and love;  
And said in courtly accents fine,  
“Sweet maid, Lord Roland's beauteous dove,  
With arms more strong than harp or song,  
Thy sire and I will crush the snake!”  
He kissed her forehead as he spake, 560  
And Geraldine in maiden wise,  
Casting down her large bright eyes,  
With blushing cheek and courtesy fine  
She turned her from Sir Leoline;  
Softly gathering up her train,  
That o'er her right arm fell again;  
And folded her arms across her chest,  
And couch'd her head upon her breast,  
And look'd askance at Christabel——  
Jesu, Maria, shield her well! 570

A snake's small eye blinks dull and shy;  
And the lady's eyes they shrunk in her head,  
Each shrunk up to a serpent's eye,

And with somewhat of malice, and more of dread,  
At Christabel she look'd askance!—  
One moment—and the sight was fled!  
But Christabel in dizzy trance,  
Stumbling on the unsteady ground—  
Shudder'd aloud, with a hissing sound;  
And Geraldine again turn'd round, 580  
And like a thing, that sought relief,  
Full of wonder and full of grief,  
She rolled her large bright eyes divine  
Wildly on Sir Leoline.

The maid, alas! her thoughts are gone,  
She nothing sees—no sight but one!  
The maid, devoid of guile and sin,  
I know not how, in fearful wise,  
So deeply had she drunken in  
That look, those shrunken serpent eyes, 590  
That all her features were resign'd  
To this sole image in her mind:  
And passively did imitate  
That look of dull and treacherous hate.  
And thus she stood, in dizzy trance,  
Still picturing that look askance  
With forc'd unconscious sympathy  
Full before her father's view—  
As far as such a look could be  
In eyes so innocent and blue! 600

And when the trance was o'er, the maid  
Paus'd awhile, but inly pray'd:  
Then falling at her father's feet,  
“By my mother's soul do I entreat  
That thou this woman send away!”  
She said: and more she could not say,  
For what she knew she could not tell,  
O'er-mastered by the mighty spell.

Why is thy cheek so wan and wild,  
Sir Leoline? Thy only child 610  
Lies at thy feet, thy joy, thy pride,  
So fair, so innocent, so mild;  
The same, for whom thy lady died!  
O by the pangs of her dear mother  
Think thou no evil of thy child!



To dally with wrong that does no harm.  
Perhaps 'tis tender too and pretty  
At each wild word to feel within  
A sweet recoil of love and pity.  
And what, if in a world of sin  
(O sorrow and shame should this be true!)  
Such giddiness of heart and brain  
Comes seldom save from rage and pain,  
So talks as it's most used to do.

660

# Appendix C: Correspondence about Lyrical Ballads

[In Appendix C we include letters written during the composition and reception of *Lyrical Ballads*,<sup>1</sup> first published in the following sources:

- CLL*: *Letters of Charles Lamb*, ed. Alfred Ainger, 2 vols. (London: Macmillan, 1897).
- CMLL*: *Letters of Charles and Mary Anne Lamb*, ed. Edwin Marrs, 3 vols. (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1975).
- JCL*: Butler, James, "Wordsworth, Cottle, and the *Lyrical Ballads*: Five Letters, 1797–1800," *Journal of English and German Philology* 75 (1976): 139–53.
- JCR*: Joseph Cottle, *Reminiscences of Samuel Coleridge and Robert Southey* (London: Houlston & Stoneman, 1847).
- JDC*: James Dykes Campbell, *Samuel Taylor Coleridge: A Narrative of the Events of His Life* (London: Macmillan, 1894).
- JWR*: John Robberds, *A Memoir of the Life and Writings of the Late William Taylor of Norwich*, 2 vols. (London: John Murray, 1843).
- RSL*: *Life and Correspondence of Robert Southey*, ed. C.C. Southey, 6 vols. (London: Longman, 1849–50).
- STCL*: *Collected Letters of Samuel Coleridge*, ed. Earl Leslie Griggs, 6 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon, 1956–71).
- STCL2*: *Letters of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, ed. Ernest Hartley Coleridge, 2 vols. (London: Heinemann, 1895).
- WWL*: *Letters of the Wordsworth Family from 1787–1855*, ed. William Knight, 3 vols. (Boston and London: Ginn, 1907).
- WWM*: Christopher Wordsworth, *Memoirs of William Wordsworth, Poet-Laureate*, 2 vols. (London: Moxon, 1851).
- WWP*: *Prose Works of William Wordsworth*, ed. Alexander B. Grosart (London: Moxon, 1876).]

## 1. Samuel Coleridge to Joseph Cottle, 8 June 1797. *STCL2* I:220

[...] I am sojourning for a few days at Racedown, the mansion of our friend Wordsworth [...] Wordsworth admires my Tragedy—which gives me great hopes. Wordsworth has written a Tragedy

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1 Where possible, we have checked the published texts of these letters against their originals and corrected accordingly.

himself. I speak with heart-felt sincerity and (I think) unblinded judgement, when I tell you, that I feel myself a *little man by his side*; & yet do not think myself the less man, than I formerly thought myself.—His Drama is absolutely wonderful. You know, I do not commonly speak in such abrupt & unmingled phrases—& therefore will the more readily believe me.—There are in the piece those *profound* touches of the human heart, which I find three or four times in “The Robbers” of Schiller,<sup>1</sup> and often in Shakespere—but in Wordsworth there are no *inequalities*. T. Poole’s opinion of Wordsworth is—that he is the greatest Man, he ever knew—I coincide. [...]

## 2. Samuel Coleridge to Joseph Cottle, ca. 3 July 1797. JDC 77

[...] Wordsworth & his exquisite Sister are with me—She is a woman indeed!—in mind, I mean, & heart—for her person is such, that if you expected to see a pretty woman, you would think her ordinary—if you expected to find an ordinary woman, you would think her pretty!—But her manners are simple, ardent, impressive—.

In every motion her most innocent soul  
Outbeams so brightly, that who saw would say,  
Guilt was a thing impossible in her.—<sup>2</sup>

Her information various—her eye watchful in minutest observation of nature—and her taste a perfect electrometer—it bends, protrudes, and draws in, at subtlest beauties & most recondite faults. [...]

## 3. Dorothy Wordsworth to Mary Hutchinson,<sup>3</sup> ca. June 1797. WWL I:109

[...] You had a great loss in not seeing Coleridge. He is a wonderful man. His conversation teems with soul, mind, and spirit. Then he is so benevolent, so good-tempered and cheerful, and, like William, interests himself so much about every little trifle. At first I thought him very plain, that is, for about three minutes: he is pale

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- 1 “*The Robbers*” of Schiller] Friedrich von Schiller (1759–1805), German dramatist, poet and essayist, published *Die Räuber* [*The Robbers*] in 1781. It was first translated into English by Alexander F. Tytler in 1792.
  - 2 *In every ... her*] Quoted from lines 173–75 of Coleridge’s “The Destiny of Nations: A Vision,” first published in *Sibylline Leaves* (1817), 281–303.
  - 3 *Mary Hutchinson*] (1770–1859), childhood friend of Dorothy and William Wordsworth; she married William in 1802.

and thin, has a wide mouth, thick lips, and not very good teeth, longish loose-growing half-curling rough black hair. But if you hear him speak for five minutes you think no more of them. His eye is large and full, not dark but grey; such an eye as would receive from a heavy soul the dullest expression; but it speaks every emotion of his animated mind; it has more of the “poet’s eye in a fine frenzy rolling”<sup>1</sup> than I ever witnessed. He has fine dark eye-brows, and an overhanging forehead. [...]

**4. Samuel Coleridge to Joseph Cottle, 13 March 1798. JCR I:166–67**

[...] I am requested by Wordsworth to put the following questions—What *could* you conveniently & *prudently*, and what *would* you, give for

1. Our two Tragedies—with small prefaces containing an analysis of our principal characters. Exclusive of the prefaces, the Tragedies are together 5000 lines—which *in the printing* from the dialogue form & directions respecting actors & scenery is at least equal to 6000.—To be delivered to you within a week of the date of your answer to this letter—and the money, which you offer, to be payed to us at the end of four months from the same date—none to be payed before—all to be payed then.—
2. Wordsworth’s *Salisbury Plain & Tale of a Woman*<sup>2</sup> which two poems with a few others which he will add & the notes will make a volume [...] This to be delivered to you within 3 weeks of the date of your answer—and the money to be payed, as before, at the end of four months from the same date.—

Do not, my dearest Cottle! harrass yourself about the imagined great merit of the compositions—or be reluctant to offer what you can *prudently* offer, from an idea that the poems are worth more— / But calculate what you *can* do with reference, simply to yourself— & answer as speedily as you can—and believe me your sincere, grateful, & affectionate Friend & Brother

S.T. Coleridge

N.B. The Tragedies to be published in one volume.—

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1 *poet’s eye ... rolling*] Quoted from Shakespeare’s *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, V.i.  
2 *Tale of a Woman*] The lines that became known as “The Ruined Cottage,” and eventually became part of Book I of *The Excursion* (1814).

5. Samuel Coleridge and William Wordsworth to Joseph Cottle, ca. 28 May 1798. *JCR* I:179–80

My dear Cottle

You know what I think of a letter—how impossible it is to *argue* in it. You must therefore take simple statements, & in a week or two I shall see you & endeavour to *reason* with you.

Wordsworth and I have *maturely weigh'd* your proposal, & this is our answer—W. would not object to the publishing of *Peter Bell* or the *Salisbury Plain*,<sup>1</sup> singly; but to the publishing of *his poems* in two volumes he is decisively repugnant and oppugnant—He deems that they would want variety &c &c—if this apply in his case, it applies with tenfold force to mine.—We deem that the volumes offered to you are to a certain degree *one work*, in *kind tho' not in degree*, as an Ode is one work—& that our different poems are as stanzas, good relatively rather than absolutely.—Mark you, I say *in kind tho' not in degree*.—The extract from my Tragedy will have no sort of reference to my Tragedy, but is a Tale in itself, as the *Ancient Mariner*.—The Tragedy will not be mentioned—[...] As to anonymous Publications, depend on it, you are deceived.—Wordsworth's name is nothing—to a large number of persons mine *stinks*—The *Essay on Man*, Darwin's *Botanic Garden*, the *Pleasures of memory*,<sup>2</sup> & many other most popular works were published anonymously.—However, I waive all *reasoning*; & simply state it as an unaltered opinion, that you should proceed as before, with the *ancient Mariner*.—

The picture<sup>3</sup> shall be sent. For your love-gifts & book-loans accept our hearty love—The *Joan of Arc*<sup>4</sup> is a divine book.—It opens lovelily—I hope that you will *take off* some half dozen of our poems in great paper, even as the *Joan of Arc*.—Cottle, my dear Cottle, I meant to have written you an *Essay on the Metaphysics of Typography*; but I have not time.—Take a few hints without the abstruse reasons for them which I mean to favor you—18 lines a page, the lines closely printed, certainly, *more closely* than

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1 *Peter Bell ... Salisbury Plain*] Two manuscript poems by Wordsworth, published respectively as *Peter Bell: A Tale in Verse* (1819) and as “Guilt and Sorrow” in *Poems, Chiefly of Early and Late Years* (1842).

2 *The Essay ... memory*] Referring to poems by Alexander Pope, Erasmus Darwin, and Samuel Rogers, published respectively in 1733, 1789–90, and 1792.

3 *picture*] Referring to the portrait of Wordsworth by W. Shuter.

4 *Joan of Arc*] Robert Southey's epic poem, published by Cottle and others in 1796.



those of the Joan—(Oh by all means closer! W. Wordsworth<sup>1</sup>) *equal ink*; & *large margins*. That is *beauty*—it may even under your immediate care mingle the sublime!—

And now, my dear Cottle! may God love you & me who am ever with most unauthorish feelings your true friend

S.T. Coleridge

I walked to Linton the day after you left us, & returned on Saturday.—I walked in one day & returned in one—

**6. William Wordsworth to Joseph Cottle, 2 June 1799. WWL III:362–63**

My dear Cottle,

Owing to your letter not having the exact address I did not receive it till yesterday. I perceive that it would have been impossible for you to comply with my request respecting the *Lyrical Ballads*, as you had entered into a treaty with Arch. I still, however, regret it upon the same grounds as before, namely, that I have lost a good opportunity of connecting myself with Johnson<sup>2</sup>; that I think the poems are not so likely to have a quick sale as if they were in his hands; and also that they must necessarily be separated from any thing which I may hereafter publish. You ought not to have mentioned in your letter to Johnson, that the poems were *sold* to you, as I had told you that I had not acquainted him with that circumstance. Can you tell me whether the poems are likely to sell? How is the copy right to be disposed of when you quit the Book-sellers business?

We sincerely hope that you will be rich enough, and very happy after you have left the cares and confinement of shopkeeping. Does Robert<sup>3</sup> succeed to you?

According to my calculations you owe me *twenty one pounds, ten shillings*. I think you paid me 10 pounds, and I was to receive thirty *guineas*, but I owe you for paper which I purchased from you long ago; this debt you will be so good as to deduct from what you owe me, and remit the remainder to me as soon as you can. I should wish very much to know what number of the poems have been sold, and also (as, if the edition should sell, I shall probably add

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1 This sentence in parentheses is in Wordsworth's handwriting.

2 *Arch ... Johnson*] See the Introduction to this edition, p. 16.

3 *Robert*] Robert Cottle (ca. 1780–1858), Bristol printer and brother to Joseph Cottle.

some others in Lieu of the Ancyent Marinere) what we are to do with the Copy Right. I repeat this that it may not be overlooked when you write to me [...]

**7. Dorothy Wordsworth to Mrs. John Marshall,<sup>1</sup> 10 and 12 September 1800. WWL I:124–28**

[...] We are daily more delighted with Grasmere, and its neighbourhood; our walks are perpetually varied, and we are more fond of the mountains as our acquaintance with them encreases. We have a boat upon the lake and a small orchard and a smaller *garden* which as it is the work of our own hands we regard with pride and partiality. This garden we enclosed from the road and pulled down a fence which formerly divided it from the orchard. The orchard is very small, but then it is a delightful one from its retirement, and the excessive beauty of the prospect from it. Our cottage is quite large enough for us though very small, and we have made it neat and comfortable within doors and it looks very nice on the outside, for though the roses and honeysuckles which we have planted against it are only of this year's growth yet it is covered all over with green leaves and scarlet flowers, for we have trained scarlet beans upon threads, which are not only exceedingly beautiful, but very useful, as their produce is immense. The only objection we have to our house is that it is rather too near the road, and from its smallness and the manner in which it is built noises pass from one part of the house to the other, so that if we had any visitors a sick person could not be in quietness [...] My Brother John has been with us 8 months during which time we have had a good deal of company, for instance Mary Hutchinson for 5 weeks, Coleridge a month, and Mr [and] Mrs C and their little boy nearly a month [...]

My Brother William is going to publish a second Edition of the Lyrical Ballads with a second volume. He intends to give them the title of "Poems by W. Wordsworth" as Mrs. Robinson has claimed the title and is publishing a volume of *Lyrical Tales*.<sup>2</sup> This is a great objection to the former title, particularly as they are both printed at the same press and Longman is the publisher of both the works. The first volume sold much better than we expected, and was liked by a much greater number of people, not that we had ever much doubt of its finally making its way, but we knew that poems so different from what have in general become popular immediately after their publication were not likely to be admired all at once. The first

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1 *Mrs. John Marshall*] Born Jane Pollard (1771–1847), longtime friend of Dorothy Wordsworth.

2 *Lyrical Tales*] Referring to Mary Robinson's *Lyrical Tales* (1800).

volume I have no doubt has prepared a number of purchasers for the second, and independent of that, I think the second is much more likely to please the generality of readers [...]

**8. Samuel Coleridge to Humphry Davy, 9 October 1800.**  
**STCL2 I:336**

[...] The *Christabel* was running up to 1300 lines<sup>1</sup>—and was so much admired by Wordsworth, that he thought it indelicate to print two Volumes with *his name* in which so much of another man's was included—& which was of more consequence—the poem was in direct opposition to the very purpose for which the *Lyrical Ballads* were published—viz—an experiment to see how far those passions, which alone give any value to extraordinary Incidents, were capable of interesting, in & for themselves, in the incidents of common Life—We mean to publish the *Christabel* therefore with a long Blank Verse Poem of Wordsworth's entitled the *Pedlar*—I assure you, I think very differently of *CHRISTABEL*.—I would rather have written *Ruth*, and *Nature's Lady*<sup>2</sup> than a million such poems / but why do I calumniate my own spirit by saying, *I would rather*—God knows—it is as delightful to me that they *are* written. [...]

**9. William Wordsworth to Charles James Fox,<sup>3</sup> 14 January 1801. WWL I.135–39**

Sir,

It is not without much difficulty, that I have summoned the courage to request your acceptance of these Volumes. Should I express my real feelings, I am sure that I should seem to make a parade of diffidence and humility.

Several of the poems contained in these Volumes are written upon subjects, which are the common property of all Poets, and which, at some period of your life, must have been interesting to a man of your sensibility, and perhaps may still continue to be so [...] [A]t present it is solely on account of two poems in the second

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1 *1300 lines*] As the first two parts of *Christabel* total 665 lines, the remaining 600 remained either unwritten in Coleridge's head or were subsequently lost.

2 *Nature's Lady*] "Three years she grew in sun and shower."

3 *Charles James Fox*] (1749–1806), British statesman and leader of the Whig Party. This letter was one of several sent to "persons of eminence" by Wordsworth, at Coleridge's suggestion, to promote *Lyrical Ballads*.

volume, the one entitled "The Brothers," and the other "Michael," that I have been emboldened to take this liberty.

It appears to me that a most calamitous effect, which has followed the measures which have lately been pursued in this country, is a rapid decay of the domestic affections among the lower orders of society. This effect the present Rulers of this country are not conscious of, or they disregard it. For many years past, the tendency of society amongst all the nations of Europe has been to produce it. But recently by the spreading of manufactures through every part of the country, by the heavy taxes upon postage, by workhouses, Houses of Industry, and the invention of Soup-shops &c. &c. superadded to the encreasing disproportion between the price of labour and that of the necessities of life, the bonds of domestic feeling among the poor, as far as the influence of these things has extended, have been weakened, and in innumerable instances entirely destroyed. The evil would be less to be regretted, if these institutions were regarded only as palliatives to a disease; but the vanity and pride of their promoters are so subtly interwoven with them, that they are deemed great discoveries and blessings to humanity. In the mean time parents are separated from their children, and children from their parents; the wife no longer prepares with her own hands a meal for her husband, the produce of his labour; there is little doing in his house in which his affections can be interested, and but little left in it which he can love. I have two neighbours, a man and his wife, both upwards of eighty years of age; they live alone; the husband has been confined to his bed many months and has never had, nor till within these few weeks has ever needed, any body to attend to him but his wife. She has recently been seized with a lameness which has often prevented her from being able to carry him his food to his bed; the neighbours fetch water for her from the well, and do other kind offices for them both, but her infirmities encrease. She told my Servant two days ago that she was afraid they must both be boarded out among some other Poor of the parish (they have long been supported by the parish) but she said, it was hard, having kept house together so long, to come to this, and she was sure that "it would burst her heart." I mention this fact to shew how deeply the spirit of independence is, even yet, rooted in some parts of the country. These people could not express themselves in this way without an almost sublime conviction of the blessings of independent domestic life. If it is true, as I believe, that this spirit is rapidly disappearing, no greater curse can befall a land.

I earnestly entreat your pardon for having detained you so long. In the two Poems, "The Brothers" and "Michael" I have attempted to draw a picture of the domestic affections as I know they exist

amongst a class of men who are now almost confined to the North of England. They are small independent *proprietors* of land here called statesmen, men of respectable education who daily labour on their own little properties. The domestic affections will always be strong amongst men who live in a country not crowded with population, if these men are placed above poverty. But if they are proprietors of small estates, which have descended to them from their ancestors, the power which these affections will acquire amongst such men is inconceivable by those who have only had an opportunity of observing hired labourers, farmers, and the manufacturing Poor. Their little tract of land serves as a kind of permanent rallying point for their domestic feelings, as a tablet upon which they are written which makes them objects of memory in a thousand instances when they would otherwise be forgotten. It is a fountain fitted to the nature of social man from which supplies of affection, as pure as his heart was intended for, are daily drawn. This class of men is rapidly disappearing. You, Sir, have a consciousness, upon which every good man will congratulate you, that the whole of your public conduct has in some way or other been directed to the preservation of this class of men, and those who hold similar situations. You have felt that the most sacred of all property is the property of the Poor. The two poems which I have mentioned were written with a view to shew that men who do not wear fine cloaths can feel deeply. “*Pectus enim est quod disertos facit, et vis mentis. Ideoque imperitis quoque, si modo sint aliquo affectu concitati, verba non desunt.*”<sup>1</sup> [...]

I remain, With the highest respect and admiration,

Your most obedient and humble Servt

W Wordsworth

**10. Charles Lamb to William Wordsworth, 30 January 1801.**  
**CLL I:179–81**

[...] Thanks for your Letter and Present.—I had already borrowed your second volume—. What most please me are, the Song of Lucy

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1 *Pectus ... desunt*] From Quintilian, *Instituto Oratoria*, X.vii.15: “*Pectus enim id est quod disertos facit, & vis mentis; ideoque imperitis quoque*” [“It is the heart and power of imagination that makes us eloquent. For this reason even the uneducated have no difficulty expressing their meaning, if only they are stirred by strong emotion”]. Wordsworth added this passage as an epigraph to the 1802 edition of *Lyrical Ballads*, placing it on an inserted half-title page just after the Preface.

[...] *Simon's sickly daughter* in the Sexton made me cry.—Next to these are the description of the continuous Echoes in the story of Joanna's laugh, where the mountains and all the scenery absolutely seem alive—and that fine Shakesperian character of the Happy Man, in the Brothers [...] I will mention one more: the delicate and curious feeling in the wish for the Cumberland Beggar, that he may have about him the melody of Birds, altho' he hear them not.—Here the mind knowingly passes a fiction upon herself, first substituting her own feelings for the Beggar's, and, in the same breath detecting the fallacy, will not part with the wish.—The Poet's Epitaph is disfigured, to my taste by the vulgar satire upon parsons and lawyers in the beginning, and the coarse epithet of pin point in the 6th stanza. All the rest is eminently good, and your own. I will just add that it appears to me a fault in the Beggar, that the instructions conveyed in it are too direct and like a lecture: they don't slide into the mind of the reader, while he is imagining no such matter. An intelligent reader finds a sort of insult in being told, I will teach you how to think upon this subject. This fault, if I am right, is in a ten-thousandth worse degree to be found in Sterne and many many novelists & modern poets, who continually put a sign post up to shew where you are to feel. They set out with assuming their readers to be stupid. Very different from Robinson Crusoe, the Vicar of Wakefield, Roderick Random,<sup>1</sup> and other beautiful bare narratives.—There is implied an unwritten compact between Author and reader; I will tell you a story, and I suppose you will understand it [...]—I am sorry that Coleridge has christened his Ancient Mariner “a poet's Reverie”<sup>2</sup>—it is as bad as Bottom the Weaver's declaration that he is not a Lion but only the scenical representation of a Lion.<sup>2</sup> What new idea is gained by this title, but one subversive of all credit, which the tale should force upon us, of its truth?—For me, I was never so affected with any human tale. After first reading it, I was totally possessed with it for many days.—I dislike all the miraculous part of it, but the feelings of the man under the operation of such scenery dragged me along like Tom Piper's magic whistle.—I totally differ from your idea that the Marinere should have had a character and profession.—This is a beauty in Gulliver's Travels,<sup>3</sup> where the mind is kept in a placid state of little wonderments; but the Ancient Marinere undergoes

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1 *Robinson ... Random*] Referring to novels by Daniel Defoe, Oliver Goldsmith, and Tobias Smollett, published respectively in 1719, 1766, and 1748.

2 *Bottom ... Lion*] Referring to Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, III.i.

3 *Gulliver's Travels*] By Jonathan Swift, published in 1726.

such Trials as overwhelm and bury all individuality or memory of what he was.—Like the state of a man in a Bad dream, one terrible peculiarity of which is, that all consciousness of personality is gone.—Your other observation is I think as well a little unfounded: the *Marinere* from being conversant in supernatural events *has* acquired a supernatural and strange cast of phrase, eye, appearance, etc., which frighten the wedding guest.—You will excuse my remarks, because I am hurt and vexed that you should think it necessary, with a prose apology, to open the eyes of dead men that cannot see—To sum up a general opinion of the second vol.—I do not feel any one poem in it so forcibly as *The Ancient Marinere*, the *Mad Mother*, and the *Lines at Tintern Abbey*, in the first.—I could, too, have wished *The Critical* preface had appeared in a separate treatise.—All its dogmas are true and just and most of them new, *as* criticism.—But they associate a *diminishing* idea with the Poems which follow, as having been written for Experiments on the public taste, more than having sprung (as they must have done) from living and daily circumstances.— [...]

**11. Charles Lamb to Thomas Manning,<sup>1</sup> 15 February 1801.  
CMLL I:272–75. Selection**

[...] I had need be cautious henceforward what opinion I give of the *Lyrical Ballads*.—All the North of England are in a turmoil. Cumberland and Westmoreland have already declared a state of war.—I lately received from Wordsw. a copy of the second volume, accompanied by an acknowledgment of having received from me many months since a copy of a certain Tragedy,<sup>2</sup> with excuses for not having made any acknowledgement sooner, it being owing to an “almost insurmountable aversion from Letter-writing.”—This letter I answered in due form and time, and enumerated several of the p[ass]ages which had most affected me, adding, unfortunately, that no single piece had moved me so forcibly as the *Ancient Mariner*, the *Mad Mother*, or the *Lines at Tintern Abbey*. The Post did not sleep a moment. I received almost instantaneously a long letter of four sweating pages from my reluctant Letterwriter, the purport of which was, that he was sorry his 2d vol. had not given me more pleasure (Devil a hint did I give that it had *not pleased me*), and “was compelled to wish that my range of Sensibility was more

1 *Thomas Manning*] Mathematician and private tutor to Coleridge’s friend Charles Lloyd, Manning (1772–1840) later traveled to China and studied there.

2 *a certain Tragedy*] Possibly Lamb’s *John Woodvil*, published in 1802.

extended, being obliged to believe that I should receive large influxes of happiness and happy Thoughts” (I suppose from the L.B.) — With a deal of stuff about a certain “Union of Tenderness and Imagination, which in the sense he used Imag. was not the characteristic of Shakspeare, but which Milton possessed in a degree far exceeding other Poets: which Union, as the highest species of Poetry, and chiefly deserving that name, He was most proud to aspire to”; then illustrating the said Union by two quotations from his own 2d vol. (which I had been so unfortunate as to miss) [...]

Writing to *you*, I may say that the 2d vol. has no such pieces as the 3 I enumerated.—It is full of original thinking and an observing mind, but it does not often make you laugh or cry. It too artfully aims at simplicity of expression. And you sometimes doubt if simplicity be not a cover for Poverty. [...]

**12. William Wordsworth to Samuel Coleridge, inscribed in a letter from Dorothy Wordsworth to Sara Hutchinson, early March 1801. WWM I:174**

[...] For Coleridge’s entertainment I send the following harmonies of criticism—

Nutting Mr. C. Wordsworth worth its weight in gold	Nutting Mr Stoddart can make neither head nor tail of it.
Joanna Mr John Wordsworth the finest poem of its length you have written	Joanna Mr Stoddart takes the description of the echoes as a thing regularly and permanently believed of course can make nothing of the poem.
Poet’s Epitaph Mr. Charles Lamb the latter part eminently good and your own.	Poet’s Epitaph Mr Stoddart The latter part I dont like, it is very ill written.
Cumberland Beggar Mr John Wordsworth Indeed every body seems delighted with Cumberland beggar.	Cumberland Beggar Mr Charles Lamb The instructions too direct. You seem to presume your readers are stupid &c. &c.



Idiot Boy  
Mr John Wordsworth  
To a Lady a friend of mine I  
gave the 2[nd] vol: they were  
2 vol: they were both new to her.  
The Idiot Boy of all the poems  
her delight; could talk of no  
thing else.

Idiot Boy  
Mr Stoddart  
Thrown into a *fit* almost with  
disgust, cannot *possibly* read it.

But here comes the Waggon!

**13. Charles James Fox to William Wordsworth, 25 May  
1801. WWP II:205–06**

Sir, I owe you many apologies for having so long deferred thanking you for your Poems and your obliging letter accompanying them, which I received early in March. —The Poems have given me the greatest pleasure and if I were obliged to choose out of them, I do not know whether I should not say that Harry Gill, We are Seven, the Mad Mother, and the Idiot, are my favourites. I read with particular attention the two you pointed out, but whether it be from my early prepossessions, or whatever other cause, I am no great friend to blank verse for subjects which are to be treated of with simplicity. You will excuse my stating to you my opinion so freely, which I should not do if I did not really admire many of the Poems in the Collection, and many parts even of these in blank Verse. Of the Poems which you state not to be yours, that entitled *Love* appears to me the best, and I do not know who is the Author. The Nightingale I understand to be Mr. Coleridge's, who combats I think very successfully the mistaken prejudice of the nightingale's note being melancholy. I am with great truth, Sir, Your most obedient servant.

**14. Robert Southey to Grosvenor Bedford,<sup>1</sup> 19 August  
1801. RSL II:160**

[...] If you have not seen the second volume of Wordsworth's Lyrical Ballads, I counsel you to buy them, and read *aloud* the poems entitled The Brothers, and Michael; which, especially the first, are, to my taste, excellent. I have never been so much affected, and so *well*, as by some passages there. [...]

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1 *Grosvenor Bedford* (1773–1839), friend of Southey who held a post in the Treasury.

15. Samuel Coleridge to William Sotheby,<sup>1</sup> 13 July 1802.  
STCL2 I:369

[...] [I must] set you right with regard to my perfect coin[cidence with Wordsworth's] poetic Creed. It is most certain, that the P[reface arose from] the heads of our mutual Conversations &c— & the f[irst pass]ages were indeed partly taken from notes of mine / for it was at first intended, that the Preface should be written by me—and it is likewise true, that I warmly accord with W. in his abhorrence of these poetic Licences, as they are called, which are indeed mere tricks of Convenience & Laziness [...] In my opinion every phrase, every metaphor, every personification, should have its justifying cause in some *passion* either of the Poet's mind, or of the Characters described by the poet—But *metre itself* implies a *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. In my opinion, Poetry justifies, as *Poetry* independent of any other Passion, some new combinations of Language, & *commands* the omission of many others allowable in other compositions / Now Wordsworth, *me saltem iudice*,<sup>2</sup> has in his system not sufficiently admitted the former, & in his practice has too frequently sinned against the latter.—Indeed, we have had lately some little controversy on the subject—& we begin to suspect, that there is, somewhere or other, a *radical* Difference [in our] opinions [...]

16. Samuel Coleridge to Robert Southey, July 1802. STCL  
II:449

[...] But I will apprise you of one thing, that altho' Wordsworth's Preface is half a child of my own Brain / & so arose out of Conversations, so frequent, that with few exceptions we could scarcely either of us perhaps positively say, which first started any particular Thought—I am speaking of the Preface as it stood in the second Volume<sup>3</sup>—yet I am far from going all lengths with Wordsworth / He has written lately a number of Poems (32 in all) some of them of considerable Length / (the longest 160 Lines) the greater number of these to my feelings very excellent Compositions / but here &

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- 1 *William Sotheby*] Poet and translator (1757–1833), best known for his 1798 translation of Wieland's *Oberon*.
  - 2 *me saltem iudice*] “According to my judgment.”
  - 3 *Volume*] Coleridge likely means “Edition,” i.e., the Preface as it stood in 1800.

there a daring Humbleness of Language & prolixity, that startled me / his alterations likewise in Ruth perplexed me / and I have thought & thought again / & have not had my doubts solved by Wordsworth / On the contrary, I rather suspect that some where or other there is a radical Difference in our theoretical opinions respecting Poetry—/ this I shall endeavour to go to the Bottom of—and acting the arbitrator between the old School & the New School hope to lay down some plain, & perspicuous, tho' not superficial, Canons of Criticism respecting Poetry [...]

**17. Samuel Coleridge to Thomas Poole, 14 October 1803.**

**STCL II:1011-17**

[...] I now see very little of Wordsworth: my own Health makes it inconvenient & unfit for me to go thither one third as often, as I used to do—and Wordsworth's Indolence, &c keeps him at home. Indeed, were I an irritable man, and an unthinking one, I should probably have considered myself as having been very unkindly used by him in this respect—for I was at one time confined for two months, & he never came in to see me / me, who had ever payed such unremitting attentions to him. But we must take the good & the ill together; & by seriously & habitually reflecting on our own faults & endeavouring to amend them we shall then find little difficulty in confining our attention as far as it acts on our Friends' characters, to their good Qualities.—Indeed, I owe it to Truth & Justice as well as to myself to say, that the concern, which I have felt in this instance, and one or two other more *crying* instances, of Self-involution in Wordsworth, has been almost wholly a Feeling of friendly Regret, & disinterested Apprehension—I saw him more & more benetted in hypochondriacal Fancies, living wholly among *Devotees*—having even the minutest Thing, almost his very Eating & Drinking, done for him by his Sister, or Wife—and I trembled, lest a Film should rise, and thicken on his moral Eye.—The habit of writing such a multitude of small Poems was in this instance hurtful to him [...] I rejoice therefore with a deep & true Joy, that he has at length yielded to my urgent & repeated—almost unremitting—requests & remonstrances—and will go on with the Recluse exclusively.—A Great Work, in which he will sail; on an open Ocean, & a steady wind; unfretted by short tacks, reefing, & hawling & disentangling the ropes [...] It is what Food is to Famine. I have seen enough, positively to give me feelings of hostility towards the plan of several of the Poems in the L. Ballads: & I really consider it as a misfortune, that Wordsworth ever deserted his former mountain Track to wander in Lanes & allies; tho' in the event it may prove to have been a great Benefit to him. He will

steer, I trust, the middle course.—But he found himself to be, or rather to be called, the Head & founder of a *Sect* in Poetry; & assuredly he has written—& published in the M[orning] Post, as W. L. D. & sometimes with no signature—poems written with a *sectarian* spirit, & in a sort of Bravado.—I know, my dear Poole, that you are in the habit of keeping my Letters; but I must request to you, & do *rely* on it, that you will be so good as to destroy this Letter. [...]

# Appendix D: Commentary on Lyrical Ballads

[Beyond the many reviews and ample correspondence it provoked, *Lyrical Ballads* also figured in essays and literary criticism, particularly after Coleridge published his *Biographia Literaria* (1817), which contained a defense of Wordsworth's poetry and an explanation of the theories supposedly promulgated by it. We include below an extract from the *Biographia* as well as a selection from William Hazlitt's recollections of Coleridge and Wordsworth in 1798, entitled "On My First Acquaintance with Poets" and published in *The Liberal* in 1823. We close this appendix with Wordsworth's own commentaries on selected poems, which he dictated in the form of notes to his friend Isabella Fenwick<sup>1</sup> in 1843.]

**1. From Samuel Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria; or Biographical Sketches of My Literary Life and Opinions*. 2 vols. London: Fenner, 1817. II:1–5, 34–38, 42–44, 47–50, 53–54**

Chapter XIV: *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.*<sup>2</sup>

During the first year that Mr. Wordsworth and I were neighbours, 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 moonlight 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

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- 1 *Isabella Fenwick*] (1783–1856), daughter of Nicholas Fenwick and Dorothy Forster of Lemmington Hall, near Alnwick in Northumberland. The commentaries Wordsworth dictated to her are often referred to as the Fenwick Notes. They were published in 1857.
- 2 *scholia*] Explanatory notes.

the interesting of the affections by the dramatic truth of such emotions as would naturally 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 from 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.

With this view I wrote the "Ancient Mariner," and was preparing among other poems, the "Dark Ladie,"<sup>1</sup> and the "Christabel," in which I should have more nearly realized my ideal, than I had done in my first attempt. 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 pleasurable 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

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1 *Dark Ladie*] Coleridge's "Ballad of the Dark Ladie," a selection of which was published as "Love" in the 1800 *Lyrical Ballads*. See pp. 253–55 and Appendix B, pp. 433–34

of 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 ability 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 authorize, 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<sup>1</sup> has, I find, degraded this prefatory disquisition to the end of his second volume, to be read or not at the reader's choice. But he has not, as 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 honoured 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. [...]

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1 *recent collection*] Wordsworth's 1815 *Poems*. See Appendix E, pp. 487–92, for the table of contents.

Chapter XVII: *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 clowns and 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 stripped 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 by which this change was effected, and the resemblances between that state into which the reader's mind is thrown by the pleasurable 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. [...]

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. [...] The poet informs his reader, that he had generally chosen *low and rustic life*;<sup>1</sup> 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

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1 *The poet ... life*] Quoted from the Preface, p. 174.



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*. 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 co-exist 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."<sup>1</sup>

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."<sup>2</sup> 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. [...]

The characters of the vicar and the shepherd-mariner in the poem of the "BROTHERS," and that of the shepherd of Greenhead Ghyll in the "MICHAEL," have all the verisimilitude and representative quality, that the purposes of poetry can require.

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1 "because ... nature"] Quoted from the Preface, p. 174.

2 "their occupations and abode"] Quoted from line 26 of "Michael," p. 386.

They are persons of a known and abiding class, and their manners and sentiments the natural product of circumstances common to the class.

[Coleridge quotes "Michael," lines 42–79]

On the other hand, in the poems which are pitched in a lower key, as the "HARRY GILL," and "THE IDIOT BOY," 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, without the necessity of ascribing a sentimental perception of their beauty to the persons of his drama. [...]

If then I am compelled to doubt the theory, by which the choice of *characters* was to be directed, [...] 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 appear 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 unelaborated expressions."<sup>1</sup> 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 development 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 [...]

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

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1 "The language ... expressions"] Quoted from the Preface, p. 174.

Hooker,<sup>1</sup> Bacon,<sup>2</sup> Bishop Taylor,<sup>3</sup> and Burke<sup>4</sup> 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 Sidney<sup>5</sup> 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 nor 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. [...]

## 2. From William Hazlitt,<sup>6</sup> "My First Acquaintance with Poets." *The Liberal* 3 (1823): 23–46

[...] *I was to visit Coleridge in the spring.* This circumstance was never absent from my thoughts, and mingled with all my feelings. I wrote to him at the time proposed, and received an answer postponing my intended visit for a week or two, but very cordially urging me to complete my promise then. This delay did not damp, but rather increased, my ardour. In the meantime, I went to Llangollen Vale,<sup>7</sup>

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- 1 *Hooker*] Richard Hooker (1554–1600), Anglican divine known for his masterful prose; Coleridge quotes Hooker in chapter four of the *Biographia Literaria* to defend his own dense language.
  - 2 *Bacon*] Francis Bacon (1561–1626), essayist, philosopher, Lord Chancellor of England (1618–21).
  - 3 *Bishop Taylor*] Jeremy Taylor (1613–67), Anglican clergyman and author of *The Rule and Exercises of Holy Living* (1650) and *The Rule and Exercises of Holy Dying* (1651).
  - 4 *Burke*] Edmund Burke (1729–97), Irish author, orator, and member of British Parliament known for his treatises on aesthetics and politics.
  - 5 *Algernon Sidney*] (1622–83), Whig politician executed for allegedly plotting to overthrow Charles II. Coleridge refers to Sydney's *Discourses Concerning Government* (1698), used as proof of his support of revolution during his trial for treason.
  - 6 *William Hazlitt*] (1778–1830), English critic, essayist, and journalist.
  - 7 *Llangollen Vale*] Located in northern Wales; home of the ladies of Llangollen, Lady Eleanor Butler (1739–1829) and Miss Sarah Ponsonby (1755–1831), Irish aristocrats whose literary tastes drew authors and politicians to their secluded retreat.

by way of initiating myself in the mysteries of natural scenery; and I must say I was enchanted with it. I had been reading Coleridge's description of England in his fine "Ode on the Departing Year," and I applied it, *con amore*, to the objects before me. That valley was to me (in a manner) the cradle of a new existence: in the river that winds through it, my spirit was baptized in the waters of Helicon!<sup>1</sup> [...]

—I was still two days before the time fixed for my arrival, for I had taken care to set out early enough. I stopped these two days at Bridgewater; and when I was tired of sauntering on the banks of its muddy river, returned to the inn and read *Camilla*.<sup>2</sup> So have I loitered my life away, reading books, looking at pictures, going to plays, hearing, thinking, writing on what pleased me best. I have wanted only one thing to make me happy; but wanting that have wanted everything!

I arrived, and was well received. The country about Nether Stowey is beautiful, green and hilly, and near the sea-shore. I saw it but the other day, after an interval of twenty years, from a hill near Taunton. How was the map of my life spread out before me, as the map of the country lay at my feet! In the afternoon, Coleridge took me over to All-Foxden, a romantic old family mansion of the St. Aubins, where Wordsworth lived. It was then in the possession of a friend of the poet's, who gave him the free use of it. Somehow that period (the time just after the French Revolution) was not a time when *nothing was given for nothing*. The mind opened and a softness might be perceived coming over the heart of individuals, beneath "the scales that fence"<sup>3</sup> our self-interest. Wordsworth himself was from home, but his sister kept house, and set before us a frugal repast; and we had free access to her brother's poems, the *Lyrical Ballads*, which were still in manuscript, or in the form of *Sybilline Leaves*. I dipped into a few of these with great satisfaction, and with the faith of a novice. I slept that night in an old room with blue hangings, and covered with the round-faced family portraits of the age of George I and II and from the wooded declivity of the adjoining park that overlooked my window, at the dawn of day, could

——"hear the loud stag speak."<sup>4</sup>[...]

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- 1 *Helicon*] Mountain in Greece; along with Parnassus, home to the muses in Greek mythology.
  - 2 *Camilla*] A novel by Fanny Burney (1752–1840), published in 1796.
  - 3 "the scales that fence"] Untraced.
  - 4 "hear ... speak"] Quoted from III:22 of Ben Jonson's *The Forest* (1616).

That morning, as soon as breakfast was over, we strolled out into the park, and seating ourselves on the trunk of an old ash-tree that stretched along the ground, Coleridge read aloud with a sonorous and musical voice the ballad of *Betty Foy*. I was not critically or sceptically inclined. I saw touches of truth and nature, and took the rest for granted. But in the *Thorn*, the *Mad Mother*, and the *Complaint of a Poor Indian Woman*, I felt that deeper power and pathos which have been since acknowledged,

“In spite of pride, in erring reason’s spite,”<sup>1</sup>

as the characteristics of this author; and the sense of a new style and a new spirit in poetry came over me. It had to me something of the effect that arises from the turning up of the fresh soil, or of the first welcome breath of Spring,

“While yet the trembling year is unconfirmed.”<sup>2</sup>

Coleridge and myself walked back to Stowey that evening, and his voice sounded high

“Of Providence, foreknowledge, will, and fate,  
Fix’d fate, free-will, foreknowledg absolute,”<sup>3</sup>

as we passed through echoing grove, by fairy stream or waterfall, gleaming in the summer moonlight! He lamented that Wordsworth was not prone enough to believe in the traditional superstitions of the place, and that there was a something corporeal, a *matter-of-factness*, a clinging to the palpable, or often to the petty, in his poetry, in consequence. His genius was not a spirit that descended to him through the air; it sprung out of the ground like a flower, or unfolded itself from a green spray, on which the gold-finch sang. He said, however (if I remember right) that this objection must be confined to his descriptive pieces, that his philosophic poetry had a grand and comprehensive spirit in it, so that his soul seemed to inhabit the universe like a palace, and to discover truth by intuition, rather than by deduction. The next day Wordsworth arrived from Bristol at Coleridge’s cottage. I think I see him now. He answered in some

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- 1 “*In spite ... spite,*” Quoted from I:293 of Alexander Pope’s *Essay on Man* (1733–34).
  - 2 “*While ... unconfirmed.*” Quoted from line 18 of James Thomson’s *Spring* (1728), also published as part of *The Seasons* (1730).
  - 3 “*Of Providence ... absolute,*” Quoted from II:559–60 of John Milton’s *Paradise Lost* (1667).

degree to his friend's description of him, but was more gaunt and Don Quixote-like. He was quaintly dressed (according to the *costume* of that unconstrained period) in a brown fustian jacket and striped pantaloons. There was something of a roll, a lounge in his gait, not unlike his own Peter Bell. There was a severe, worn pressure of thought about his temples, a fire in his eye (as if he saw something in objects more than the outward appearance), an intense, high, narrow forehead, a Roman nose, cheeks furrowed by strong purpose and feeling, and a convulsive inclination to laughter about the mouth, a good deal at variance with the solemn, stately expression of the rest of his face. Chantrey's bust<sup>1</sup> wants the marking traits; but he was teased into making it regular and heavy: Haydon's head of him,<sup>2</sup> introduced into the *Entrance of Christ into Jerusalem*, is the most like his drooping weight of thought and expression. He sat down and talked very naturally and freely, with a mixture of clear gushing accents in his voice, a deep guttural intonation, and a strong tincture of the northern *burr*, like the crust on wine. He instantly began to make havoc of the half of a Cheshire cheese on the table, and said triumphantly that "his marriage with experience had not been so productive as Mr. Southey's in teaching him a knowledge of the good things of this life." He had been to see the *Castle Spectre* by Monk Lewis,<sup>3</sup> while at Bristol, and described it very well. He said "it fitted the taste of the audience like a glove." This *ad captandum*<sup>4</sup> merit was however by no means a recommendation of it, according to the severe principles of the new school, which reject rather than court popular effect. Wordsworth, looking out of the low, latticed window, said, "How beautifully the sun sets on that yellow bank!" I thought within myself, "With what eyes these poets see nature!" and ever after, when I saw the sun-set stream upon the objects facing it, conceived I had made a discovery, or thanked Mr. Wordsworth for having made one for me! We went over to All-Foxden again the day following, and Wordsworth read us the story of Peter Bell in the open air; and the comment upon it by his face and voice was very different from that of some later critics! Whatever might be thought of the

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1 *Chantrey's bust*] Made in 1820 by Sir Francis Legatt Chantrey (1781–1841).

2 *Haydon's head of him*] English painter Benjamin Robert Haydon (1786–1846) made a life-mask of Wordsworth in 1815; his *Entrance of Christ into Jerusalem* also included the heads of Wordsworth and John Keats among the crowd of onlookers.

3 *Monk Lewis*] Matthew Lewis (1775–1818), English gothic author best known for his novel, *The Monk* (1796), and his musical drama, *The Castle Spectre* (1798).

4 *ad captandum*] attempting to win public favor with false showiness.

poem, “his face was as a book where men might read strange matters,”<sup>1</sup> and he announced the fate of his hero in prophetic tones. There is a *chaunt* in the recitation both of Coleridge and Wordsworth, which acts as a spell upon the hearer, and disarms the judgment. Perhaps they have deceived themselves by making habitual use of this ambiguous accompaniment. Coleridge’s manner is more full, animated, and varied; Wordsworth’s more equable, sustained, and internal. The one might be termed more *dramatic*, the other more *lyrical*. Coleridge has told me that he himself liked to compose in walking over uneven ground, or breaking through the straggling branches of a copsewood; whereas Wordsworth always wrote (if he could) walking up and down a straight gravel walk, or in some spot where the continuity of his verse met with no collateral interruption. [...]

It was agreed, among other things, that we should make a jaunt down the Bristol-Channel, as far as Linton. We set off together on foot, [... and in] the morning of the second day, we breakfasted luxuriously in an old fashioned parlour on tea, toast, eggs, and honey, in the very sight of the bee-hives from which it had been taken, and a garden full of thyme and wild flowers that had produced it. On this occasion Coleridge spoke of Virgil’s *Georgics*, but not well. I do not think he had much feeling for the classical or elegant. It was in this room that we found a little worn-out copy of the *Seasons*,<sup>2</sup> lying in a window-seat, on which Coleridge exclaimed, “*That is true fame!*” He said Thomson was a great poet, rather than a good one; his style was as meretricious as his thoughts were natural. He spoke of Cowper<sup>3</sup> as the best modern poet. He said the *Lyrical Ballads* were an experiment about to be tried by him and Wordsworth, to see how far the public taste would endure poetry written in a more natural and simple style than had hitherto been attempted; totally discarding the artifices of poetical diction, and making use only of such words as had probably been common in the most ordinary language since the days of Henry II. Some comparison was introduced between Shakespeare and Milton. He said “he hardly knew which to prefer. Shakespeare appeared to him a mere stripling in the art; he was as tall and as strong, with infinitely more activity than Milton, but he never appeared to have come to man’s estate; or if he had, he would not have been a man, but a monster.” He

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1 *his face ... matters*] Quoted from I.v of Shakespeare’s *Macbeth*.

2 *Seasons*] James Thomson’s poem, *The Seasons* (1726–30).

3 *Cowper*] William Cowper (1731–1800), English poet best known for *The Task* (1785), widely considered at the end of the eighteenth century to be the most important long poem by a contemporary writer. See Appendix G, pp. 509–11.

spoke with contempt of Gray,<sup>1</sup> and with intolerance of Pope. He did not like the versification of the latter. He observed that “the ears of these couplet writers might be charged with having short memories, that could not retain the harmony of whole passages.” He thought little of Junius<sup>2</sup> as a writer; he had a dislike of Dr. Johnson;<sup>3</sup> and a much higher opinion of Burke as an orator and politician, than of Fox or Pitt.<sup>4</sup> He, however, thought him very inferior in richness of style and imagery to some of our elder prose-writers, particularly Jeremy Taylor. He liked Richardson,<sup>5</sup> but not Fielding;<sup>6</sup> nor could I get him to enter into the merits of *Caleb Williams*.<sup>\*</sup> In short, he was profound and discriminating with respect to those authors whom he liked, and where he gave his judgment fair play; capricious, perverse, and prejudiced in his antipathies and distastes. [...]

I saw no more of him for a year or two, during which period he had been wandering in the Hartz Forest in Germany; and his return was cometary, meteorous, unlike his setting out. It was not till some time after that I knew his friends Lamb and Southey. The last always appears to me (as I first saw him) with a common-place book under his arm, and the first with a *bon-mot* in his mouth. It was at Godwin’s that I met him with Holcroft and Coleridge, where they were disputing fiercely which was the best—*Man as he was, or man as he is to be*. “Give me,” says Lamb, “man as he is *not* to be.” This saying was the beginning of a friendship between us, which I believe still continues. Enough of this for the present.

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\* He had no idea of pictures, of Claude or Raphael, and at this time I had as little as he. He sometimes gives a striking account at present of the Cartoons at Pisa, by Buffamalco and others; of one in particular, where Death is seen in the air brandishing his scyth, and the great and mighty of the earth shudder at his approach, while the beggars and the wretched kneel to him as their deliverer. He would of course understand so broad and fine a moral as this at any time. [Hazlitt’s note. *Caleb Williams* refers to the 1794 novel by William Godwin (1756–1836).]

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- 1 *Gray*] Thomas Gray (1716–1771), English poet best known for his “Elegy written in a Country Church Yard” (1751).
  - 2 *Junius*] Unidentified author of a series of letters attacking George III’s government published in the *Public Advertiser* from 1769–1772.
  - 3 *Dr. Johnson*] Samuel Johnson (1709–84), English essayist, critic, poet, and author of *A Dictionary of the English Language* (1755).
  - 4 *Pitt*] William Pitt the Younger (1759–1806), British Prime Minister (1783–1801, 1804–1806).
  - 5 *Richardson*] Samuel Richardson (1689–1761), English printer and novelist best known for *Pamela* (1740) and *Clarissa* (1747–48).
  - 6 *Fielding*] Henry Fielding (1707–54), English novelist best known for *Joseph Andrews* (1742) and *Tom Jones* (1749).



“But there is matter for another rhyme,  
And I to this may add a second tale.”<sup>1</sup>

**3. From William Wordsworth. Notes Dictated to Isabella Fenwick, first published as Notes in the *Poetical Works*. 6 vols. London: Moxon, 1857.**

*Anecdote for Fathers*. This was suggested in front of Alfoxden. The boy was a son of my friend, Basil Montagu,<sup>2</sup> who had been two or three years under our care. The name of Kilve is from a village on the Bristol Channel, about a mile from Alfoxden; and the name of Liswyn Farm was taken from a beautiful spot on the Wye, where Mr. Coleridge, my sister, and I had been visiting the famous John Thelwall, who had taken refuge from politics, after a trial for high treason,<sup>3</sup> with a view to bring up his family by the profits of agriculture, which proved as unfortunate a speculation as that he had fled from. Coleridge and he had both been public lecturers; Coleridge mingling, with his politics, Theology, from which the other elocutionist abstained, unless it was for the sake of a sneer. This quondam community of public employment induced Thelwall to visit Coleridge at Nether Stowey, where he fell in my way. He really was a man of extraordinary talent, an affectionate husband, and a good father. Though brought up in the city, on a tailor's board, he was truly sensible of the beauty of natural objects. I remember once, when Coleridge, he, and I were seated together upon the turf, on the brink of a stream in the most beautiful part of the most beautiful glen of Alfoxden, Coleridge exclaimed, “This is a place to reconcile one to all the jarrings and conflicts of the wide world.” “Nay,” said Thelwall, “to make one forget them altogether.” The visit of this man to Coleridge was, as I believe Coleridge has related, the occasion of a spy being sent by Government to watch our proceedings; which were, I can say with truth, such as the world at large would have thought ludicrously harmless.<sup>4</sup>

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1 *But ... tale*] Quoted from lines 95–96 of Wordsworth's “Hart-Leap Well,” p. 296.

2 *Basil Montagu*] (1770–1851), author and legal reformer, acknowledged son of John Montagu, fourth Earl of Sandwich (1718–92) and his mistress Martha Ray, murdered in 1779 by James Hackman.

3 *John Thelwall ... treason*] (1764–1834), political reformer, lecturer, and poet. In 1794, with London Corresponding Society members Thomas Hardy (1752–1832) and John Horne Tooke (1736–1812), he was acquitted of the charge of high treason. His *Poems Written Chiefly in Retirement* was published in 1801.

4 *Government ... harmless*] See Introduction, p. 18.

*We Are Seven*. Written at Alfoxden in the spring of 1798, under circumstances somewhat remarkable. The little girl who is the heroine, I met within the area of Goodrich Castle in the year 1793. Having left the Isle of Wight, and crost Salisbury Plain, as mentioned in the preface to *Guilt and Sorrow*, I proceeded by Bristol up the Wye, and so on to N. Wales to the Vale of Clwydd, where I spent my summer under the roof of the father of my friend, Robert Jones.

In reference to this poem, I will here mention one of the most remarkable facts in my own poetic history, and that of Mr. Coleridge. In the spring of the year 1798, he, my sister, and myself, started from Alfoxden pretty late in the afternoon, with a view to visit Linton and the Valley of Stones near it; and as our united funds were very small, we agreed to defray the expense of the tour by writing a poem, to be sent to the *New Monthly Magazine*, set up by Philips, the bookseller, and edited by Dr. Aikin. Accordingly we set off, and proceeded along the Quantock Hills, towards Watchet; and in the course of this walk was planned the poem of *The Ancient Mariner*, founded on a dream, as Mr. Coleridge said, of his friend Mr. Cruikshank. Much the greatest part of the story was Mr. Coleridge's invention; but certain parts I myself suggested: for example, some crime was to be committed which should bring upon the Old Navigator, as Coleridge afterwards delighted to call him, the spectral persecution, as a consequence of that crime, and his own wanderings. I had been reading in Shelvocke's *Voyages*,<sup>1</sup> a day or two before, that, while doubling Cape Horn, they frequently saw albatrosses in that latitude, the largest sort of sea-fowl, some extending their wings twelve or thirteen feet. "Suppose," said I, "you represent him as having killed one of these birds on entering the South Sea, and that the tutelary spirits of these regions take upon them to avenge the crime." The incident was thought fit for the purpose, and adopted accordingly. I also suggested the navigation of the ship by the dead men, but do not recollect that I had anything more to do with the scheme of the poem. The gloss with which it was subsequently accompanied<sup>2</sup> was not thought of by either of us at the time; at least not a hint of it was given to me, and I have no doubt it was a gratuitous after-thought. We began the composition together, on that to me memorable evening: I furnished two or three lines at the beginning of the poem, in particular—

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1 *Shelvocke's Voyages*] George Shelvocke, *A Voyage round the World by Way of the Great South Sea* (1726).

2 *gloss ... accompanied*] Coleridge subsequently revised "The Ancient Mariner" for *Sibylline Leaves* (1817) so that the poem contained short explications of the text (i.e., glosses) in the margins.

And listen'd like a three years' child;  
The Mariner had his will.

These trifling contributions, all but one (which Mr. C. has with unnecessary scrupulosity recorded), slipt out of his mind, as well they might. As we endeavoured to proceed conjointly (I speak of the same evening), our respective manners proved so widely different, that it would have been quite presumptuous in me to do anything but separate from an undertaking upon which I could only have been a clog. We returned after a few days from a delightful tour, of which I have many pleasant, and some of them droll enough, recollections. We returned by Dulverton to Alfoxden. *The Ancient Mariner* grew and grew till it became too important for our first object, which was limited to our expectation of five pounds; and we began to talk of a volume which was to consist, as Mr. Coleridge has told the world, of Poems chiefly on natural subjects taken from common life, but looked at, as much as might be, through an imaginative medium. Accordingly I wrote *The Idiot Boy*, *Her eyes are wild*, etc., *We are Seven*, *The Thorn*, and some others. To return to *We are Seven*, the piece that called forth this note, I composed it while walking in the grove at Alfoxden. My friends will not deem it too trifling to relate, that while walking to and fro I composed the last stanza first, having begun with the last line. When it was all but finished, I came in and recited it to Mr. Coleridge and my sister, and said, "A prefatory stanza must be added, and I should sit down to our little tea-meal with greater pleasure if my task was finished." I mentioned in substance what I wished to be expressed, and Coleridge immediately threw off the stanza, thus;

A little child, dear brother Jem,

I objected to the rhyme, "dear brother Jem," as being ludicrous; but we all enjoyed the joke of hitching in our friend James Tobin's name, who was familiarly called Jem. He was the brother of the dramatist;<sup>1</sup> and this reminds me of an anecdote which it may be worth while here to notice. The said Jem got a sight of the "Lyrical Ballads" as it was going through the press at Bristol, during which

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1 *James Tobin's ... dramatist*] James Tobin (1767–1814), slavery abolitionist and friend of Wordsworth, Coleridge, William Godwin, and Charles Lamb. His brother, John Tobin (1770–1804), achieved success on the stage with *The Honey Moon* (Drury Lane, 1805), *The Curfew* (Drury Lane, 1807), and *The School for Authors* (Covent Garden, 1808) only after his death from tuberculosis.

time I was residing in that city. One evening he came to me with a grave face, and said, "Wordsworth, I have seen the volume that Coleridge and you are about to publish. There is one poem in it which I earnestly entreat you will cancel, for, if published, it will make you everlastingly ridiculous." I answered, that I felt much obliged by the interest he took in my good name as a writer, and begged to know what was the unfortunate piece he alluded to. He said, "It is called *We are Seven*." "Nay," said I, "that shall take its chance however"; and he left me in despair. I have only to add, that in the spring of 1841, I revisited Goodrich Castle, not having seen that part of the Wye since I met the little girl there in 1793. It would have given me greater pleasure to have found in the neighbouring hamlet traces of one who had interested me so much, but that was impossible, as unfortunately I did not even know her name. The ruin, from its position and features, is a most impressive object. I could not but deeply regret that its solemnity was impaired by a fantastic new Castle set up on a projection of the same ridge, as if to show how far modern art can go in surpassing all that could be done by antiquity and nature with their united graces, remembrances, and associations. I could have almost wished for power, so much the contrast vexed me, to blow away Sir — Meyrick's impertinent structure<sup>1</sup> and all the fopperies it contains.

*The Thorn*. Alfoxden, 1798. Arose out of my observing, on the ridge of Quantock Hill, on a stormy day, a thorn, which I had often past in calm and bright weather, without noticing it. I said to myself, "Cannot I by some invention do as much to make this Thorn permanently as an impressive object as the storm has made it to my eyes at this moment?" I began the poem accordingly, and composed it with great rapidity. Sir George Beaumont painted a picture from it, which Wilkie<sup>2</sup> thought his best. He gave it me: though when he saw it several times at Rydal Mount afterwards, he said, "I could make a better, and would like to paint the same subject over again." The sky in this picture is nobly done, but it reminds one too much of Wilson. The only fault, however, of any consequence is the female figure, which is too old and decrepit for one likely to frequent an eminence on such a call.

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- 1 *Meyrick's impertinent structure*] Sir Samuel Rush Meyrick (1783–1848), antiquary and historian of arms and armor. Failing in 1827 to purchase the ruins of Goodrich Castle, Meyrick purchased the hill opposite. Goodrich Course was completed in 1831.
  - 2 *Wilkie*] Sir David Wilkie (1785–1841), Scottish painter of genre, historical subjects, and portraits.

*The Idiot Boy*. Alfoxden, 1798. The last stanza, "The cocks did crow to-whoop, to-whoop, and the sun did shine so cold," was the foundation of the whole. The words were reported to me by my dear friend Thomas Poole; but I have since heard the same repeated of other idiots. Let me add, that this long poem was composed in the groves of Alfoxden, almost extempore; not a word, I believe, being corrected, though one stanza was omitted. I mention this in gratitude to those happy moments, for, in truth, I never wrote anything with so much glee.

*Tintern Abbey*. July 1798. No poem of mine was composed under circumstances more pleasant for me to remember than this: I began it upon leaving Tintern, after crossing the Wye, and concluded it just as I was entering Bristol in the evening, after a ramble of 4 or 5 days, with my sister. Not a line of it was altered, and not any part of written down till I reached Bristol. It was published almost immediately after in the little volume of which so much has been said in these notes (The Lyrical Ballads, as first published at Bristol by Cottle).

*Hart-Leap Well*. Town-End.<sup>1</sup> 1800. The first eight stanzas were composed extempore one winter evening in the cottage; when, after having tired and disgusted myself with labouring at an awkward passage in "The Brothers," I started with a sudden impulse to get rid of the other, and finished it in a day or two. My Sister and I had past the place a few weeks before in our wild winter journey from Sockburn on the banks of the Tees to Grasmere. A peasant whom we met near the spot told us the story so far as concerned the name of the well, and the hart; and pointed out the stones. Both the stones and the well are objects that may easily be missed: the tradition by this time may be extinct in the neighbourhood: the man who related it to us was very old.

*Ellen Irwin or the Braes of Kirtle*. It may be worth while to observe that as there are Scotch Poems on this subject in the simple ballad strain, I thought it would be both presumptuous and superfluous to attempt treating it in the same way; and, accordingly, I chose a construction of stanza quite new in our language; in fact the same as that of Burgher's *Leonora*,<sup>2</sup> except that the first & third line do not, in my stanzas, rhyme. At the outset I threw out a classical image to prepare the reader for the style in which I meant to treat the story, and so to preclude all comparison.

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1 *Town-End*] The Wordsworths frequently called Dove Cottage this name.

2 *Leonora*] For the text of this poem, see Appendix G, pp. 517–25.

*Lucy Gray*. Written at Goslar in Germany in 1799. It was founded on a circumstance told me by my Sister, of a little girl, who not far from Halifax in Yorkshire was bewildered in a snow-storm. Her footsteps were traced by her parents to the middle of the lock of a canal, and no other vestige of her backward or forward, could be traced. The body however was found in the canal. The way in which the incident was treated & the spiritualising of the character might furnish hints for contrasting the imaginative influences which I have endeavoured to throw over common life with Crabbe's matter of fact style<sup>1</sup> of treating subjects of the same kind. This is not spoken to his disparagement; far from it; but to direct the attention of thoughtful readers into whose hands these notes may fall to a comparison that may both enlarge the circle of their sensibilities and tend to produce in them a catholic judgement.

*The Old Cumberland Beggar*. Observed & with great benefit to my own heart when I was a child—written at Race Down & Alfoxden in my 23d<sup>2</sup> year. The political economists were about that time beginning their war upon mendacity in all its forms & by implication, if not directly, on Alms-giving also. This heartless process has been carried as far as it can go by the AMENDED poor-law bill,<sup>3</sup> tho' the inhumanity that prevails in this measure is somewhat disguised by the profession that one of its objects is to throw the poor upon the voluntary donations of their neighbours, that is, if rightly interpreted, to force them into a condition between relief in the union poor House & Alms robbed of their Christian grace & spirit, as being *forced* rather from the benevolent than given by them, while the avaricious & selfish, & all in fact but the humane & charitable, are at liberty to keep all they possess from their distressed brethren.

*Michael*. Town-End, 1801. Written about the same time as "The Brothers." The Sheepfold, on which so much of the poem turns, remains, or rather the ruins of it. The character & circumstances of Luke were taken from a family to whom had belonged, many years before, the house we lived in at Town-End, along with some fields and woodlands on the eastern shore of Grasmere. The name of the Evening Star was not in fact given to this house but to another on the same side of the valley more to the north.

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1 *Crabbe's ... style*] See Appendix G, pp. 506–09.

2 23d] This is an error; Wordsworth would have been twenty-six or twenty-seven years old.

3 *AMENDED poor-law bill*] Likely the 1834 new Poor Law, which was based on a harsher philosophy that regarded pauperism among able-bodied workers as a moral failing.

## *Appendix E: The Dispersal of Lyrical Ballads into the Collected Works of Coleridge and Wordsworth*

[The edition of 1805 marked the last time *Lyrical Ballads* was printed as a separate collection during the lifetimes of Coleridge and Wordsworth. After this date the poems were instead included in their respective collected poems, beginning with Wordsworth's *Poems: Including Lyrical Ballads, and the Miscellaneous Pieces of the Author; With Additional Poems, a New Preface, and a Supplementary Essay* (London: Longman, 1815) and Coleridge's *Sibylline Leaves: A Collection of Poems* (London: Rest Fenner, 1817).

Wordsworth arranged and classified his poems under different headings: some psychological and aesthetic (such as "The Affections," "Fancy," "Imagination," and "Sentiment and Reflection"); some generic (such as "Poems on the Naming of Places," "Inscriptions," "Epitaphs," and "Sonnets"); and some referring to specific moments of life (such as "Childhood," "Juvenile Pieces," and "Old Age"). As Wordsworth continued to write, his organizational system grew more complex and heterogeneous.

Coleridge's Preface in *Sibylline Leaves* claimed a simpler organization: poems previously published in books; "Poems published at very different periods, in various obscure or perishable journals"; and "Poems which have hitherto remained in manuscript" (ii). On examining the volume, however, readers would have found the poems organized into more complex categories and not following the order claimed by Coleridge's Preface. A revised version of "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner," with added explanatory glosses, led the volume, followed by "The Foster-Mother's Tale," thereby restoring the places these two poems had occupied in the 1798 *Lyrical Ballads*. No poem from *Lyrical Ballads* appeared in the next section, entitled "Poems Occasioned by Political Events or Feelings Connected with Them." The poems "Love" and "Lewti" appeared in the next section, entitled "Love-Poems," while "The Nightingale" appeared under the subsequent heading, "Meditative Poems in Blank Verse." Coleridge chose not to reprint "The Dungeon" in *Sibylline Leaves*, most likely because those lines comprised the opening of Act V, scene I of *Remorse*, which ran successfully for twenty nights on the Drury-Lane stage and was published in 1813.

To show how the remaining poems of *Lyrical Ballads* were reclassified and dispersed in later years, we include below the table of contents for Wordsworth's *Poems: Including Lyrical Ballads, and*

*the Miscellaneous Pieces of the Author; With Additional Poems, a New Preface, and a Supplementary Essay* (London: Longman, 1815). Those poems originally in *Lyrical Ballads* appear in boldface type. In consideration of space, we have not included the contents for Wordsworth's "Sonnets, Dedicated to Liberty" and his "Miscellaneous Sonnets," since neither section includes poems from *Lyrical Ballads*.]

### Contents of Volume I

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#### POEMS REFERRING TO THE PERIOD OF CHILDHOOD

Page		Composed	Published
3	My heart leaps up		1807
4	To a Butterfly		1807
5	Foresight		1807
7	Characteristics of a Child		
8	Address to a Child		
11	The Mother's return		
14	<b>Lucy Gray</b>		1800
18	Alice Fell		1807
22	<b>We are Seven</b>		1798
26	<b>Anecdote for Fathers</b>		1798
30	<b>Rural Architecture</b>		1800
32	<b>The Pet Lamb</b>		1800
37	<b>The Idle Shepherd Boys</b>		1800
42	To H.C.		1807
44	Influence of Natural objects		1810
48	The Blind Highland Boy		1807

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#### JUVENILE PIECES

63	Extract from a Poem on leaving School	1786	
64	—from An Evening Walk		1793
70	—Descriptive Sketches		1793
85	<b>Female Vagrant</b>	1793	1798

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#### POEMS FOUNDED ON THE AFFECTIONS

95	<b>The Brothers</b>		1800
115	The Sparrow's Nest		1807



Page		Composed	Published
116	To a Butterfly		1807
117	Farewell thou little Nook	1802	
121	Written in my Pocket Copy of the Castle of Indolence	1802	
125	<b>Ellen Irwin</b>		1800
128	<b>Strange fits of passion</b>		1800
130	<b>[She dwelt among the untrodden ways]</b>		1800
131	[I travelled among unknown men]		
132	I met Louisa		1807
134	<b>'Tis said that some</b>		1800
137	<b>The Complaint of an Indian</b>		1798
141	<b>The last of the Flock</b>		1798
147	A Complaint		1807
148	<b>Ruth</b>		1800
160	The Cottager to her Infant		
161	The Sailor's Mother		1800
163	<b>The Childless Father</b>		1800
165	The Affliction of—		1807
169	Once in a lonely Hamlet		1807
175	<b>Her eyes are wild</b> [The Mad Mother]		1798
179	<b>The Idiot Boy</b>		1798
203	<b>Michael, a Pastoral Poem</b>		1800
225	Laodamia		

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#### POEMS OF THE FANCY

235	To the Daisy		1807
240	<b>A whirl-blast</b>		1800
242	With how sad steps		1807
243	The Green Linnet		1807
245	To the small Celandine		1807
248	To the same Flower		1807
251	<b>The Waterfall and the Eglantine</b>		1800
255	<b>The Oak and the Broom</b>		1800
261	The Redbreast and the Butterfly		1807
263	To the Daisy		1807
266	To the same Flower		1807
268	To a Sky-lark		1807
270	<b>To a Sexton</b>		1800
272	Who fancied what a pretty sight		1807
273	<b>Song for the Wandering Jew</b>		1800
275	The seven Sisters		1807
279	By their floating Mill		1807

Page	Composed	Published
281	The Kitten and falling Leaves	1807
287	<b>A Fragment</b>	1800
290	Address to my Infant Daughter	1804

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### POEMS OF THE IMAGINATION

297	<b>There was a Boy</b>	1800
299	To the Cuckoo	1807
301	A Night Piece	
303	Yew Trees	
305	View from the Top of Black Comb	
307	<b>Nutting</b>	1800
310	She was a Phantom	1807
312	O Nightingale	1807
313	<b>Three Years she grew</b>	1800
315	<b>A slumber</b>	1800
316	The Horn of Egremont Castle	1807
322	<b>Goody Blake and Harry Gill</b>	1798
328	I wandered lonely	1807
330	<b>Reverie of Poor Susan</b>	1800
331	Power of Music	1807
334	Stepping Westward	1803 1807
336	Glen Almain	1803 1807

### Contents of Volume II

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### POEMS OF THE IMAGINATION CONTINUED

3	To a Highland Girl	1803	1807
7	The Solitary Reaper	1803	1807
9	The Cock is crowing		1807
11	Gipsies		1807
13	Beggars		1807
16	Yarrow Unvisited	1803	1807
20	Yarrow Visited		1814
24	Star Gazers		1807
27	Resolution and Independence		1807
35	<b>The Thorn</b>		1798
47	<b>Hart-Leap well</b>		1800
58	Song at the Feast of Brougham		1807
67	Yes! full surely		1807
69	French Revolution		1810

Page		Composed	Published
72	It is no Spirit		1807
73	<b>Tintern Abbey</b>		1798

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POEMS PROCEEDING FROM SENTIMENT  
AND REFLECTION

81	<b>Lines left upon a Seat, &amp;c.</b>	1795	1798
87	Character of the Happy Warrior		1807
91	Rob Roy's Grave	1803	1807
98	<b>A Poet's Epitaph</b>		1800
102	<b>Expostulation and Reply</b>		1798
104	<b>The Tables Turned</b>		1798
106	To the Sons of Burns	1803	1807
108	To the Spade of a Friend		1807
110	<b>Written in Germany</b>	1798	1800
113	<b>Lines written at a small distance from my House, &amp;c.</b>		1798
116	To a Young Lady, who had been reproached for taking long walks, &c.		1807
117	<b>Lines written in early spring</b>		1798
119	<b>Simon Lee</b>		1798
124	<b>Andrew Jones</b>		1798
126	<b>Lines written on a Tablet in a School</b>		1800
128	<b>The two April mornings</b>		1800
132	<b>The Fountain</b>		1800
136	<b>Lines written in a Boat</b>		1798
137	<b>Remembrance of Collins</b>		1798
139	I am not one of those, &c.		1807
142	Incident characteristic of a favourite Dog	1807	
145	Tribute to the memory of the same Dog		1807
146	The Force of Prayer, or the Founding of Bolton Abbey		1808
150	Fidelity		1807
154	Ode to Duty		1807

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POEMS ON THE NAMING OF PLACES

261	<b>It was an April morning</b>		1800
264	<b>To Joanna</b>		1800
268	<b>There is an Eminence</b>		1800
269	<b>A narrow girdle</b>		1800
273	<b>To M.H.</b>		
275	When from the attractions	1802	

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## INSCRIPTIONS

Page		Composed	Published
283	<b>Lines written upon a stone, &amp;c.</b>		1800
285	Upon a stone on the side of Black Comb		
287	In the Grounds of Coleorton, the Seat of Sir George Beaumont, Bart.		
289	In a Garden of the same		
290	Upon an Urn in the same Grounds		
291	For a Seat in the Groves of Coleorton		
292	<b>Written with a pencil upon the wall of the house on the Island at Grasmere</b>		1800

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## POEMS REFERRING TO THE PERIOD OF OLD AGE

297	<b>The old Cumberland Beggar</b>	1798	1800
306	The Farmer of Tilsbury Vale		
311	The small Celandine		1807
313	<b>Animal Tranquillity</b>	1798	1798
314	<b>The two Thieves</b>		1800
317	The Matron of Jedborough	1803	1807
321	Sonnet		1807
322	Inscription		1807

## Appendix F: Prose Contemporaries

[Throughout *Lyrical Ballads* and its Preface, Coleridge and Wordsworth engaged with a number of contemporary theories of artistic production and reception. From Joshua Reynolds to Mary Wollstonecraft, these late eighteenth-century prose writers explored how nature and art impacted the mind, debated the differences between prose and poetry, and argued for a closer and more complex bond between aesthetic pain and pleasure. We have included here a representative sample of these discussions, as well as two contrasting reflections on the poor to supply a context for Wordsworth's claims about "low and rustic life." As with our collection of Verse Contemporaries (Appendix G), we have arranged these selections chronologically rather than thematically.]

1. **From Joshua Reynolds,<sup>1</sup> *A Discourse, Delivered to the Students of The Royal Academy, on the Distributions of the Prizes, 14 December 1770*. London: Davies, 1771. 6–8, 8–9, 14–15**

[...] It is not easy to define in what this great style consists; nor to describe, by words, the proper means of acquiring it, if the mind of the Student should be at all capable of such an acquisition. Could we teach taste or genius by rules, they would no longer be taste and genius. But though there neither are, nor can be, any precise invariable rules for the exercise, or the acquisition, of these great qualities; yet we may as truly say that they always operate in proportion to our attention in observing the works of nature, to our skill in selecting, and our care in digesting, methodizing, and comparing our observations. There are many beauties in our art, that seem at first, to lie without the reach of precept, and yet may easily be reduced to practical principles. Experience is all in all; but it is not every one who profits by experience; and most people err, not so much from want of capacity to find their object, as from not knowing what object to pursue. This great ideal perfection and beauty are not to be sought in the heavens, but upon the earth. They are about us, and upon every side of us. But the power of discovering what is deformed in nature, or in other words, what is particular and uncommon, can be acquired only by experience; and the whole beauty and grandeur of

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1 *Joshua Reynolds*] (1723–92) English portrait painter and first president of the Royal Academy of Art (1768–90); Reynolds's *Discourses on Art* were among the most influential art criticism of the eighteenth century.

the art consists, in my opinion, in being able to get above all singular forms, local customs, particularities, and details of every kind.

All the objects which are exhibited to our view by nature, upon close examination will be found to have their blemishes and defects. The most beautiful forms have something about them like weakness, minuteness, or imperfection. But it is not every eye that perceives these blemishes; it must be an eye long used to the contemplation and comparison of these forms; and which, by long habit of observing what any set of objects of the same kind have in common, has acquired the power of discerning what each wants in particular. This long laborious comparison should be the first study of the painter, who aims at great style. By this means, he acquires a just Idea of beautiful forms; he corrects nature by herself, her imperfect state by her more perfect. His eye being enabled to distinguish the accidental deficiencies, excrescences and deformities of things from their general figures, he makes out an abstract idea of their forms more perfect than any one original; and what may seem a paradox, he learns to design naturally by drawing his figures unlike to any one object. This idea of the perfect state of nature, which the artist calls the Ideal Beauty, is the great leading principle, by which works of genius are conducted. [...]

Thus it is from a reiterated experience, and a close comparison of the objects in nature, that an artist becomes possessed of the idea of that central form, if I may so express it, from which every deviation is deformity. But the investigation of this form I grant is painful, and I know but of one method of shortening the road; this is, by a careful study of the works of the ancient sculptors; who, being indefatigable in the school of nature, have left models of that perfect form behind them, which an artist would prefer as supremely beautiful, who had spent his whole life in that single contemplation. But if industry carried them thus far, may not you also hope for the same reward from the same labour? We have the same school opened to us, that was opened to them; for nature denies her instructions to none, who desire to become her pupils. [...]

Having gone thus far in our investigation of the great stile in painting; if we now should suppose that the artist has formed the true idea of beauty, which enables him to give his works a correct and perfect design; if we should suppose also that he has acquired a knowledge of the unadulterated habits of nature, which gives him simplicity; the rest of his talk is, perhaps, less than is generally imagined. Beauty and simplicity have so great a share in the composition of a great stile, that he who has acquired them has little else to learn. It must not, indeed, be forgot, that there is a nobleness of conception, which goes beyond any thing in the mere exhibition, even of perfect form; there is an art of animating and digni-

fyng the figures with intellectual grandeur, of impressing the appearance of philosophic wisdom, or heroick virtue. This can only be acquired by him that enlarges the sphere of his understanding by a variety of knowledge, and warms his imagination with the best productions of ancient and modern poetry. [...]

2. From James Beattie,<sup>1</sup> *Essays: On Poetry and Music, as they Affect the Mind*. London: Dilly, 1776. 8, 30–32, 57, 58–59

[...] That one end of Poetry, in its first institution, and in every period of its progress, must have been, TO GIVE PLEASURE, will hardly admit any doubt. If men first employed it to express their adoration of superior and invisible beings, their gratitude to the benefactors of mankind, their admiration of moral, intellectual, or corporeal excellence, or, in general, their love of what was agreeable in their own species, or in other parts of Nature; they must be supposed to have endeavored to make poetry *pleasing*; because, otherwise, it would have been unsuitable to the occasion that gave it birth, and to the sentiments it was intended to enliven. [...]

It is true, that, in contemplating the material universe, they who discern the causes and effects of things must be more rapturously entertained, than those who perceive nothing but shape and size, colour and motion. Yet, in the mere outside of Nature's works, (if I may so express myself), there is a splendor and a magnificence to which even untutored minds cannot attend, without great delight.

Not that all peasants, or all philosophers, are equally susceptible of these charming impressions. It is strange to observe the callousness of some men, before whom all the glories of heaven and earth pass in daily succession, without touching their hearts, elevating their fancy, or leaving any durable remembrance. Even of those who pretend to sensibility, how many are there to whom the lustre of the rising or setting sun; the sparkling concave of the midnight-sky; the mountain-forest tossing and roaring to the storm, or warbling with all the melodies of a summer-evening; the sweet interchange of hill and dale, shade and sunshine, grove, lawn, and water, which an extensive landscape offers to the view; the scenery of the ocean, so lovely, so majestic, and so tremendous, and the many pleasing varieties of the animals and vegetable kingdom, could never afford so much real satisfaction, as the steams and noise of a ball-room, the insipid fiddling and squeaking of an opera, or the vexations and wranglings of a card table!

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1 James Beattie] (1735–1803) Scottish essayist, Aberdeen professor of moral philosophy, and author of *The Minstrel* (1771, 1774), a poem tracing the development of the poet's mind.

But some minds there are of a different make; who, even in the early part of life, receive from the contemplation of Nature a species of delight which they would hardly exchange for any other; and who, as avarice and ambition are not the infirmities of that period, would, with equal sincerity and rapture, exclaim,

I care not, Fortune, what you me deny;  
You cannot rob me of free Nature's grace;  
You cannot shut the windows of the sky,  
Through which Aurora shows her brightening face;  
You cannot bar my constant feet to trace  
The woods and lawns by living stream at eve.\* —

Such minds have always in them the seeds of true taste, and frequently of imitative genius. At least, though their enthusiastic or visionary turn of mind (as the man of the world would call it) should not always incline them to practise poetry or painting, we need not scruple to affirm, that without some portion of enthusiasm, no person ever became a true poet or painter. For he who would imitate the works of Nature, must first accurately observe them; and accurate observation is to be expected from those only who take great pleasure in it. [...]

The true poet, therefore, must not only study nature, and know the reality of things; but must also possess fancy, to invent additional decorations; judgement, to direct him in the choice of such as accord with verisimilitude; and sensibility, to enter with ardent emotions into every part of his subject, so as to transfuse into his work a pathos and energy sufficient to raise corresponding emotions in the reader [...]

But where, it may be said, is this pattern of perfection to be found? Not in real nature; otherwise history, which delineates real nature, would also delineate this pattern of perfection. It is to be found only in the mind of the poet; and it is imagination, regulated by knowledge, that enables him to form it. [...]

**3. From Erasmus Darwin, "Interlude I." *The Botanic Garden, Part II, containing Loves of the Plants, a Poem with Philosophical Notes*. Lichfield: Jackson, 1789. 40–42**

*Bookseller*. Your verses, Mr. Botanist, consist of *pure description*, I hope there is *sense* in the notes.

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\* Castle of Indolence. [Beattie's note. James Thomson's *Castle of Indolence* (1748), II:19–24.]



*Poet.* I am only a flower-painter, or occasionally attempt a landscape; and leave the human figure with the portraits of history to abler artists.

*B.* It is well to know what subjects are within the limits of your pencil; many have failed of success from the want of this self-knowledge. But pray tell me, what is the essential difference between Poetry and Prose? Is it solely melody or measure of the language?

*P.* I think not solely; for some prose has its melody, and even measure. And good verses, well spoken in a language unknown to the hearer, are not easily to be distinguished from good prose.

*B.* Is it the sublimity, beauty, or novelty of the sentiments?

*P.* Not so, for sublime sentiments are often better expressed in prose. Thus when Warwick in one of the plays of Shakespear is left wounded on the field after the loss of the battle, and his friend says to him, "Oh, could you but fly!" what can be more sublime than his answer, "Why then, I would not fly."<sup>1</sup> No measure of verse I imagine could add dignity to this sentiment. And it would be easy to select examples of the beautiful or new from prose writers, which I suppose no measure of verse could improve.

*B.* In what then consists the essential difference between Poetry and Prose?

*P.* Next to the measure of the language, the principal distinction appears to me to consist of this; that Poetry admits of very few words expressive of perfectly abstracted ideas, whereas Prose abounds with them. And as our ideas derived from visible objects are more distinct than those derived from the objects of our other senses, the words expressive of these ideas belonging to vision make up the principal part of poetic language. That is the Poet writes principally to the eye, the Prose-writer uses more abstracted terms. Mr. Pope has written a bad verse in the Windsor Forest.

"And Kennet swift for silver Eels *renown'd*."

The word *renown'd* does not present the idea of a visible object to the mind, and is thence prosaic. But change this line thus,

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1 "Oh could ... fly"] Quoted from V.ii of Shakespear's *Henry VI, Part III*.

“And Kennet swift, where silver Gaylings *play*.”

and it becomes poetry, because the scenery is then brought before the eye. [...]

**4. From George Dyer,<sup>1</sup> Introduction to *Complaints of the Poor People of England*. London: Ridgway and Symonds, 1793. 1–3**

[...] If, through my connection with the poor, I feel a friendship for them, I must, on other accounts, feel compassion. My intimacy with them has led me to an acquaintance with their sufferings. I have seen the rich man pay with cruel reluctance, what has been earned with severe labour; and insult, when he ought to have relieved. I have seen the poor man, after the toil of the day, return at night to behold nothing but want and wretchedness in a numerous family. The poor widow, whose only crime has been, that she lived too long, hath her weekly allowance shortened.\* I have been in many poor-houses. I have heard men plead for keeping slaves in the West-Indies, and treating them like beasts, by asking, Are they not as well off as many poor people in England? I have been witness to the miseries, and, in many instances, the oppressions of men confined in gaol: there are cases, wherein the poor cannot get justice done them, because they cannot afford to pay for it; and poor boys and girls, sometimes, suffer death for crimes, when the laws by which they suffer, are more criminal than they.

But if I love and pity the poor, I also respect them. I am not disposed to deal in general censure, nor to express myself in terms of personal dislike. My friendships will prevent this; nor would it,

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\* I was some years ago employed, in company with another person, by a lady of great benevolence, to visit a very aged woman in the neighbourhood of Newmarket. This extraordinary person (for such she was) assured me she was about 130 years of age. On expressing my surprise that she should be in so wretched a condition as I found her in, she assured me, that her parish allowance had been for many years shortened, because she had lived so long, as to be a burden to the parish. This was a remark, she said, of one of the overseers. [Dyer's note.]

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1 *George Dyer* (1755–1841), English schoolmaster and poet whose circle of Unitarians included Joseph Priestly, Coleridge, and Charles Lamb. While best known for *Complaints*, Dyer also published volumes of poetry in 1792 and 1801.

indeed, be just. Great wealth and extreme poverty are evils in governments, and the effects of public injustice. But the orders of rich and poor, within certain limits, are beneficial; mutual wants produce mutual obligations and mutual advantages. But [...] though riches are too often, I had liked to have said generally, the product of public plunder, of a species indeed, not always perceived by honest men, they are sometimes justly obtained, and innocently enjoyed. At the same time, were I to say, that the rich are the most valuable part of the community, I should not be true to my convictions. The prosperity and the wealth of nations depend on the poor. They dig the ore out of the mine, and the stone out of the quarry. They build our houses, work our vessels, and fight our battles: yet, while the rich enjoy almost all the benefits, the poor undergo all the labour. The rich, in many instances, have little to do, but to give orders, or to sign their names, and sometimes not even that. [...]

I own it is prudent for certain gentlemen in England to insinuate, that the poor cannot understand the affairs of government. I say it is prudent, but it is false. The *common* people, so we call the poor, in America and in France, understand the nature of government:—Why? In those countries government is formed by the people, and made to serve their interest. This was also the case of the States of ancient Greece, particularly of Athens and Argos. Strange too as it may appear, this was the character of almost all the German nations, long before they became overwhelmed by a cruel despotism; their governments were free, their armies a national militia, and each member considered himself a constituent part of the whole; this was even the case of the Spanish states, particularly those called Gothic, if we make some allowances for feudal customs, which left many in a state of servitude. The English government is formed by the rich and great, and to them it is favourable, but it has been said to be highly injurious to the poor. If this be true, it is not surprising that our great men should say, the poor cannot understand government: the rich will take care they shall not understand it. [...]

This essay is not intended merely for the poor. But as they will be the principle persons in my eye, I shall use plainness; and endeavour to shew, first, wherein a good government consists; secondly, some instances, wherein the English government is not good, owing to an imperfect representation of the people in parliament, particularly the poor; thirdly, some remarks on the bad police of this country, most of which would be remedied, if the poor were represented; and lastly, an affectionate address to the friends of Liberty. [...]

**5. From Erasmus Darwin, *Zoönomia; or, The Laws of Organic Life*. London: Joseph Johnson, 1794–96. II: 359**

[...] I received good information of the truth of the following case which was published a few years ago in the newspapers. A young farmer in Warwickshire, finding his hedges broke, and the sticks carried away during a frosty season, determined to watch for the thief. He lay many cold hours under a hay-stack, and at length an old woman, like a witch in a play, approached, and began to pull up the hedge; he waited till she had tied up her bottle of sticks, and was carrying them off, that he might convict her of the theft, and then springing from his concealment, he seized his prey with violent threats. After some altercation, in which her load was left upon the ground, she kneeled upon her bottle of sticks, and raising her arms to heaven beneath the bright moon then at the full, spoke to the farmer already shivering with cold, "Heaven grant, that thou never mayest know again the blessing to be warm." He complained of cold all the next day, and wore an upper coat, and in a few days another, and in a fortnight took to his bed, always saying nothing made him warm, he covered himself with very many blankets, and had a sieve over his face, as he lay; and from this one insane idea he kept his bed over twenty years for fear of the cold air, till at length he died. [...]

**6. From Joanna Baillie,<sup>1</sup> "Introductory Discourse." *A Series of Plays: In which it is attempted to delineate the Stronger Passions of the Mind*. 3 vols. London: Cadell and Davies, 1798–1812. I:2, 18–23**

[...] From that strong sympathy which most creatures, but the human above all, feel for others of their kind, nothing has become so much an object of man's curiosity as man himself. We are all conscious of this within ourselves, and so constantly do we meet with it in others, that like every circumstance of continually repeated occurrence, it thereby escapes observation. Every person, who is not deficient in intellect, is more or less occupied in tracing, amongst the individuals he converses with, the varieties of understanding and temper which constitute the characters of men; and receives great pleasure from every stroke of nature that points out to him those varieties. [...]

Our desire to know what men are in the closet as well as the

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1 *Joanna Baillie*] (1762–1851), Scottish playwright and poet. She added additional volumes to her *Series of Plays* in 1802 and 1812.

field, by the blazing hearth, and at the social board, as well as in the council and the throne, is very imperfectly gratified by real history; romance writers, therefore, stepped boldly forth to supply the deficiency; and tale writers, and novel writers, of many descriptions, followed after. If they have not been very skillful in their delineations of nature; if they have represented men and women speaking and acting as men and women never did speak and act; if they have caricatured both our virtues and our vices; if they have given us such pure and unmixed, or such heterogeneous combinations of character as real life never presented, and yet have pleased and interested us, let it not be imputed to the dullness of man in discerning what is genuinely natural in himself. There are many inclinations belonging to us, besides this great master-propensity of which I am treating. Our love of the grand, the beautiful, the novel, and above all the marvellous, is very strong; and if we are richly fed with what we have a good relish for, we may be weaned to forget our native and favourite aliment. Yet we can never so far forget it, but that we will cling to, and acknowledge it again, whenever it is presented before us. In a work abounding with the marvellous and unnatural, if the author has any how stumbled upon an unsophisticated genuine stroke of nature, we will immediately perceive and be delighted with it, though we are foolish enough to admire at the same time, all the nonsense with which it is surrounded. After all the wonderful incidents, dark mysteries, and secrets revealed, which an eventful novel so liberally presents to us; after the beautiful fairy ground, and even the grand and sublime scenes of nature which a descriptive novel so often enchants us; those works which most strongly characterize human nature in the middling and lower classes of society, where it is to be discovered by stronger and more unequivocal marks, will ever be the most popular. For though great pains have been taken in our higher sentimental novels to interest us in the delicacies, embarrassments, and artificial distresses of the more refined part of society, they have never been able to cope in the public opinion with these. The one is a dressed and beautiful pleasure-ground, in which we are enchanted for a while, amongst the delicate and unknown plants of artful cultivation; the other is a rough forest of our native land; the oak, the elm, the hazle, and the bramble are there; and amidst the endless varieties of its paths we can wander for ever. Into whatever scenes the novelist may conduct us, what objects soever he may present to our view, still is our attention most sensibly awake to every touch faithful to nature; still are we upon the watch for every thing that speaks to us of ourselves.

The fair field of what is properly called poetry, is enriched with so many beauties, that in it we are often tempted to forget what we

really are, and what kind of beings we belong to. Who in the enchanted regions of simile, metaphor, allegory and description, can remember the plain order of things in this every-day world? [...] With admiration, and often with enthusiasm we proceed on our way through the grand and the beautiful images, raised to our imagination by the lofty Epic muse; but what even here are those things that strike upon the heart; that we feel and remember? Neither the descriptions of war, the sound of the trumpet, the clanging of arms, the combat of heroes, nor the death of the mighty, will interest our minds like the fall of the feeble stranger, who simply expresses the anguish of his soul, at the thoughts of that far-distant home which he must never return to again, and closes his eyes amongst the ignoble and forgotten; like the timid stripling goaded by the shame of reproach, who urges his trembling steps to the fight, and falls like a tender flower before the first blast of winter. How often will some simple picture of this kind be all that remains upon our minds of the terrific and magnificent battle, whose description we have read with admiration! [...] The highest pleasures we receive from poetry, as well as from the real objects which surround us in the world, are derived from the sympathetic interest we take in beings like ourselves; and I will even venture to say, that the grandest scenes which can enter into the imagination of man, presented to our view, and all reference to man completely shut out from our thoughts, the objects that composed it would convey to our minds little better than dry ideas of magnitude, colour, and form; and the remembrance of them would rest upon our minds like the measurement and distances of the planets. [...]

**7. From Mary Wollstonecraft,<sup>1</sup> “On Poetry.” *The Posthumous Works of the Author of A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*. 4 vols. London: Johnson, 1798. IV:159–63, 165–66, 167–68, 171–73**

A taste for rural scenes, in the present state of society, appears to be very often an artificial sentiment, rather inspired by poetry and romances, than a real perception of the beauties of nature. But, as it is reckoned a proof of refined taste to praise the calm pleasures which the country affords, the theme is never exhausted. Yet it maybe made a question, whether this romantic kind of declamation, has much effect on the conduct of those, who leave, for a season, the crowded cities in which they are bred. [...]

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1 *Mary Wollstonecraft*] (1759–97), novelist, political writer, journalist and advocate of women’s rights, best known for her *Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792).

Having frequently had occasion to make the same observation, I was led to endeavor, in one of my solitary rambles, to trace the cause, and likewise to enquire why the poetry written in the infancy of society, is the most natural: which, strictly speaking (for *natural* is a very indeterminate expression) is merely to say, that it is the transcript of immediate sensations, in all their native wildness and simplicity, when fancy, awakened by the sight of interesting objects, was most actively at work. At such moments, sensibility quickly furnishes similes, and the sublimated spirits combine images, which rising spontaneously, it is not necessary coldly to ransack the understanding or memory, till the laborious efforts of judgment exclude present sensations, and damp the fire of enthusiasm.

The effusions of a vigorous mind, will ever tell us how far the understanding has been enlarged by thought, and stored with knowledge. The richness of the soil appears on the surface; and the result of profound thinking, often mixing, with playful grace, in the reveries of the poet, smoothly incorporates with the ebullitions of animal spirits, when the finely fashioned nerve vibrates acutely with rapture, or when, relaxed by soft melancholy, a pleasing languor prompts the long drawn sigh, and feeds the slowly falling tear.

The poet, the man of strong feelings, gives us only an image of his mind, when he was actually alone, conversing with himself, and marking the impression which nature had made on his own heart.—If, at this sacred moment, the idea of some departed friend, some tender recollection when the soul was most alive to tenderness, intruded unawares into his thoughts, the sorrow which it produced is artlessly, yet poetically expressed—and who can avoid sympathizing? [...]

The imagery of the ancients seems naturally to have been borrowed from surrounding objects and their mythology. When a hero is to be transported from one place to another, across pathless wastes, is any vehicle so natural, as one of the fleecy clouds on which the poet has often gazed, scarcely conscious that he wished to make it his chariot? Again, when nature seems to present obstacles to his progress at almost every step, when the tangled forest and steep mountain stand as barriers, to pass over which the mind longs for supernatural aid; an interposing deity, who walks on the waves, and rules the storm, severely felt in the first attempts to cultivate a country, will receive from the impassioned fancy “a local habitation and a name.”<sup>1</sup> [...]

In a more advanced state of civilization, a poet is rather the creature of art, than of nature. The books he reads in his youth, become

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1 “a local habitation and a name”] See V.i of Shakespeare’s *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*.

a hot-bed in which artificial fruits are produced, beautiful to the common eye, though they want the true hue and flavor. His images do not arise from sensations; they are copies; and, like the works of the painters who copy ancient statues when they draw men and women of their own times, we acknowledge that the features are fine, and the proportions just; yet they are men of stone; insipid figures, that never convey to the mind the idea of a portrait taken from life, where the soul gives spirit and homogeneity to the whole. The silken wings of fancy are shrivelled by rules; and a desire of attaining elegance of diction, occasions an attention to words, incompatible with sublime, impassioned thoughts. [...]

But, though it should be allowed that books may produce some poets, I fear they will never be the poets who charm our cares to sleep, or exhort admiration. They may diffuse taste, and polish the language; but I am inclined to conclude that they will seldom rouse the passions, or amend the heart.

And, to return to the first subject of discussion, the reason why most people are more interested by a scene described by a poet, than by a view of nature, probably arises from the want of a lively imagination. The poet contracts the prospect, and, selecting the most picturesque part in his *camera*, the judgment is directed, and the whole force of the languid faculty turned toward the objects which excited the most forcible emotions in the poet's heart; the reader consequently feels the enlivened description, though he was not able to receive a first impression from the operations of his own mind.

Besides, it may be further observed, that gross minds are only moved by forcible sensations. To rouse the thoughtless, objects must be presented, calculated to produce tumultuous emotions; the unsubstantial, picturesque forms which a contemplative man gazes on, and often follows with ardour till he is mocked by a glimpse of unattainable excellence, appear to them the light vapours of a dreaming enthusiast, who gives up the substance for the shadow. It is not within that they seek amusement; their eyes are seldom turned on themselves; consequently their emotions, though sometimes fervid, are always transient, and the nicer perceptions which distinguish the man of genuine taste, are not felt, or make such a slight impression as scarcely to excite any pleasurable sensations. [...]

**8. From Edmund Burke, *Thoughts and Details on Scarcity, Originally Presented to the Right Hon. William Pitt in the Month of November, 1795*. London: Rivington, 1800. 2–4**

[...] To provide for us in our necessities is not in the power of Government. It would be a vain presumption in statesmen to think they



can do it. The people maintain them, and not they the people. It is in the power of Government to prevent much evil; it can do very little positive good in this, or perhaps in any thing else. It is not only so of the state and statesman, but of all the classes and descriptions of the Rich—they are the pensioners of the poor, and are maintained by their superfluity. They are under an absolute, hereditary, and indefeasible dependance on those who labour, and are mis-called the Poor.

The labouring people are only poor, because they are numerous. Numbers in their nature imply poverty. In a fair distribution among a vast multitude, none can have much. That class of dependant pensioners called the rich, is so extremely small, that if all their throats were cut, and a distribution made of all they consume in a year, it would not give a bit of bread and cheese for one night's supper to those who labour, and who in reality feed both the pensioners and themselves.

But the throats of the rich ought not to be cut, nor their magazines plundered; because, in their persons they are trustees for those who labour, and their hoards are the banking-houses of these latter. Whether they mean it or not, they do, in effect, execute their trust—some with more, some with less fidelity and judgment. But on the whole, the duty is performed, and every thing returns, deducting some very trifling commission and discount, to the place from whence it arose. When the poor rise to destroy the rich, they act as wisely for their own purposes as when they burn mills, and throw corn into the river, to make bread cheap.

When I say, that we of the people ought to be informed, inclusively I say, we ought not to be flattered: flattery is the reverse of instruction. The *poor* in that case would be rendered as improvident as the rich, which would not be at all good for them.

Nothing can be so base and so wicked as the political canting language, “The Labouring *Poor*.” Let compassion be shewn in action, the more the better, according to every man's ability, but let there be no lamentation of their condition. It is no relief to their miserable circumstances; it is only an insult to their miserable understandings. It arises from a total want of charity, or a total want of thought. Want of one kind was never relieved by want of any other kind. Patience, labour, sobriety, frugality, and religion, should be recommended to them; all the rest is downright *fraud*. It is horrible to call them “The *once happy* labourer.” [...]



Go! if the peaceful cot your praises share,  
Go look within, and ask if peace be there:  
If peace be his—that drooping weary sire,  
Or theirs, that offspring round their feeble fire,  
Or hers, that matron pale, whose trembling hand  
Turns on the wretched hearth th' expiring brand. 180

Nor yet can time itself obtain for these  
Life's latest comforts, due respect and ease;  
For yonder see that hoary swain, whose age  
Can with no cares except its own engage;  
Who, propt on that rude staff, looks up to see  
The bare arms broken from the withering tree,  
On which, a boy, he climb'd the loftiest bough,  
Then his first joy, but his sad emblem now.

He once was chief in all the rustic trade, 190  
His steady hand the straightest furrow made;  
Full many a prize he won, and still is proud  
To find the triumphs of his youth allow'd;  
A transient pleasure sparkles in his eyes,  
He hears and smiles, then thinks again and sighs:  
For now he journeys to his grave in pain;  
The rich disdain him; nay, the poor disdain;  
Alternate masters now their slave command,  
And urge the efforts of his feeble hand;  
Who, when his age attempts its task in vain, 200  
With ruthless taunts of lazy poor complain.

Oft may you see him when he tends the sheep,  
His winter charge, beneath the hillock weep;  
Oft hear him murmur to the winds that blow  
O'er his white locks, and bury them in snow;  
When rous'd by rage and muttering in the morn,  
He mends the broken hedge with icy thorn.

“Why do I live, when I desire to be  
At once from life and life's long labour free?  
Like leaves in spring, the young are blown away, 210  
Without the sorrows of a slow decay;  
I, like yon wither'd leaf, remain behind,  
Nipt by the frost and shivering in the wind;  
There it abides till younger buds come on,  
As I, now all my fellow swains are gone;  
Then, from the rising generation thrust,  
It falls, like me, unnotic'd to the dust.

These fruitful fields, these numerous flocks I see,  
Are others' gain, but killing cares to me;  
To me the children of my youth are lords, 220  
Slow in their gifts but hasty in their words;  
Wants of their own demand their care, and who  
Feels his own want and succours others too?  
A lonely, wretched man, in pain I go,  
None need my help and none relieve my woe;  
Then let my bones beneath the turf be laid,  
And men forget the wretch they would not aid."

Thus groan the old, till by disease opprest,  
They taste a final woe, and then they rest. 230  
Theirs is yon house that holds the parish poor,  
Whose walls of mud scarce bear the broken door;  
There, where the putrid vapours flagging, play,  
And the dull wheel hums doleful through the day;  
There children dwell who know no parents' care,  
Parents, who know no children's love, dwell there;  
Heart-broken matrons on their joyless bed,  
Forsaken wives and mothers never wed;  
Dejected widows with unheeded tears,  
And crippled age with more than childhood-fears;  
The lame, the blind, and, far the happiest they! 240  
The moping idiot and the madman gay.

Here too the sick their final doom receive,  
Here brought amid the scenes of grief, to grieve;  
Where the loud groans from some sad chamber flow,  
Mixt with the clamours of the croud below;  
Here sorrowing, they each kindred sorrow scan,  
And the cold charities of man to man.  
Whose laws indeed for ruin'd age provide,  
And strong compulsion plucks the scrap from pride;  
But still that scrap is bought with many a sigh, 250  
And pride embitters what it can't deny.

Say ye, opprest by some fantastic woes,  
Some jarring nerve that baffles your repose;  
Who press the downy couch, while slaves advance  
With timid eye, to read the distant glance;  
Who with sad prayers the weary doctor tease  
To name the nameless ever-new disease;  
Who with mock patience dire complaints endure,  
Which real pain, and that alone can cure;

How would ye bear in real pain to lie, 260  
Despis'd, neglected, left alone to die?  
How would ye bear to draw your latest breath,  
Where all that's wretched paves the way for death?

**2. Charlotte Smith,<sup>1</sup> "Sonnet III: To a Nightingale."**  
*Elegiac Sonnets, and other Essays.* London: Dodsley,  
1784. 4

Poor melancholy bird, that all night long  
Tell'st to the moon thy tale of tender woe;  
From what sad cause can such sweet sorrow flow,  
And whence this mournful melody of song?

Thy poet's musing fancy would translate  
What mean the sounds that swell thy little breast,  
When still at dewy eve thou leav'st thy nest,  
Thus to the listening night to sing thy fate.

Pale Sorrow's victims wert thou once among,  
Tho' now releas'd in woodlands wild to rove, 10  
Or hast thou felt from friends some cruel wrong,  
Or diedst thou martyr of disastrous love?  
Ah! songstress sad! that such my lot might be,  
To sigh and sing at liberty—like thee!

**3. From William Cowper, *The Task, A Poem, In Six Books.***  
**London: Johnson, 1785. 27–32. Canto I, lines 506–607**

[...] The earth was made so various, that the mind  
Of desultory man, studious of change,  
And pleased with novelty, might be indulged.  
Prospects however lovely may be seen  
'Till half their beauties fade; the weary sight, 510  
Too well acquainted with their smiles, slides off  
Fastidious, seeking less familiar scenes.  
Then snug enclosures in the shelter'd vale,  
Where frequent hedges intercept the eye,  
Delight us, happy to renounce a while,  
Not senseless of its charms, what still we love,  
That such short absence may endear it more.  
Then forests, or the savage rock may please,

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1 *Charlotte Smith* [1749–1806], English novelist and poet whose *Elegiac Sonnets* helped revive the sonnet in Britain.

That hides the sea-mew in his hollow clefts  
 Above the reach of man: his hoary head 520  
 Conspicuous many a league, the mariner,  
 Bound homeward, and in hope already there,  
 Greets with three cheers exulting. At his waist  
 A girdle of half-wither'd shrubs he shows,  
 And at his feet the baffled billows die.  
 The common overgrown with fern, and rough  
 With prickly goss, that shapeless and deform  
 And dangerous to the touch, has yet its bloom  
 And decks itself with ornaments of gold,  
 Yields no unpleasing ramble; there the turf 530  
 Smells fresh, and rich in odorif'rous herbs  
 And fungous fruits of earth, regales the sense  
 With luxury of unexpected sweets.

There often wanders one, whom better days  
 Saw better clad, in cloak of sattin trimm'd  
 With lace, and hat with splendid ribband bound.  
 A serving maid was she, and fell in love  
 With one who left her, went to sea and died.  
 Her fancy followed him through foaming waves  
 To distant shores, and she would sit and weep 540  
 At what a sailor suffers; fancy too,  
 Delusive most where warmest wishes are,  
 Would oft anticipate his glad return,  
 And dream of transports she was not to know.  
 She heard the doleful tidings of his death,  
 And never smil'd again. And now she roams  
 The dreary waste; there spends the livelong day,  
 And there, unless when charity forbids,  
 The livelong night. A tatter'd apron hides,  
 Worn as a cloak, and hardly hides a gown 550  
 More tatter'd still; and both but ill conceal  
 A bosom heaved with never-ceasing sighs.  
 She begs an idle pin of all she meets,  
 And hoards them in her sleeve; but needful food,  
 Though press'd with hunger oft, or comelier clothes,  
 Though pinch'd with cold, asks never.—Kate is craz'd.

I see a column of slow-rising smoke  
 O'ertop the lofty wood that skirts the wild.  
 A vagabond and useless tribe there eat  
 Their miserable meal. A kettle slung 560  
 Between two poles upon a stick transverse,  
 Receives the morsel; flesh obscene of dog,

Or vermin, or at best of cock purloin'd  
 From his accustom'd perch. Hard-faring race!  
 They pick their fuel out of ev'ry hedge,  
 Which kindled with dry leaves, just saves unquench'd  
 The spark of life. The sportive wind blows wide  
 Their flutt'ring rags, and shows a tawny skin,  
 The vellum of the pedigree they claim.  
 Great skill have they in palmistry, and more 570  
 To conjure clean away the gold they touch,  
 Conveying worthless dross into its place.  
 Loud when they beg, dumb only when they steal.  
 Strange! that a creature rational, and cast  
 In human mould, should brutalise by choice  
 His nature, and though capable of arts  
 By which the world might profit and himself,  
 Self-banish'd from society, prefer  
 Such squalid sloth to honourable toil.  
 Yet even these, though feigning sickness oft 580  
 They swathe the forehead, drag the limping limb  
 And vex their flesh with artificial sores,  
 Can change their whine into a mirthful note  
 When safe occasion offers, and with dance  
 And music of the bladder and the bag  
 Beguile their woes and make the woods resound.  
 Such health and gaiety of heart enjoy  
 The houseless rovers of the sylvan world;  
 And breathing wholesome air, and wand'ring much,  
 Need other physic none to heal th' effects 590  
 Of loathsome diet, penury, and cold.

Blest he, though undistinguish'd from the crowd  
 By wealth or dignity, who dwells secure  
 Where man, by nature fierce, has laid aside  
 His fierceness, having learnt, though slow to learn,  
 The manners and the arts of civil life.  
 His wants, indeed, are many; but supply  
 Is obvious; placed within the easy reach  
 Of temp'rate wishes and industrious hands.  
 Here virtue thrives as in her proper soil; 600  
 Not rude and surly, and beset with thorns,  
 And terrible to sight, as when she springs,  
 (If e'er she spring spontaneous) in remote  
 And barb'rous climes, where violence prevails,  
 And strength is lord of all; but gentle, kind,  
 By culture tam'd, by liberty refresh'd,  
 And all her fruits by radiant truth matured. [...]

4. Helen Maria Williams,<sup>1</sup> “To Sensibility.” *Poems, In Two Volumes*. London: Cadell, 1786. 21–28

In *Sensibility*'s lov'd praise  
I tune my trembling reed;  
And seek to deck her shrine with bays,  
On which my heart must bleed!

No cold exemption from her pain  
I ever wish'd to know;  
Cheer'd with her transport, I sustain  
Without complaint her woe.

Above whate'er content can give,  
Above the charm of ease, 10  
The restless hopes, and fears that live  
With her, have power to please.

Where but for her, were Friendship's power  
To heal the wounded heart,  
To shorten sorrow's ling'ring hour,  
And bid its gloom depart?

'Tis she that lights the melting eye  
With looks to anguish dear;  
She knows the price of ev'ry sigh,  
The value of a tear. 20

She prompts the tender marks of love  
Which words can scarce express;  
The heart alone their force can prove,  
And feel how much they bless.

Of ever finer bliss the source!  
'Tis she on love bestows  
The softer grace, the boundless force  
Confiding passion knows;

When to another, the fond breast  
Each thought for ever gives; 30  
When on another, leans for rest,  
And in another lives!

---

1 Helen Maria Williams] (1761–1827), English poet, novelist, and journalist best known for her *Letters Written in France* (1790–96).



Quick, as the trembling metal flies,  
When heat or cold impels,  
Her anxious heart to joy can rise,  
Or sink where anguish dwells!

Yet tho' her soul must griefs sustain  
Which she alone, can know;  
And feel that keener sense of pain  
Which sharpens every woe;

40

Tho' she the mourner's grief to calm,  
Still shares each pang they feel,  
And, like the tree distilling balm,  
Bleeds, others wounds to heal;

While she, whose bosom fondly true,  
Has never wish'd to range;  
One altered look will trembling view,  
And scarce can bear the change;

Tho' she, if death the bands should tear,  
She vainly thought secure;  
Thro' life must languish in despair  
That never hopes a cure;

50

Tho' wounded by some vulgar mind,  
Unconscious of the deed,  
Who never seeks those wounds to bind  
But wonders why they bleed;—

She oft will heave a secret sigh,  
Will shed a lonely tear,  
O'er feelings nature wrought so high,  
And gave on terms so dear;

60

Yet who would hard INDIFFERENCE choose,  
Whose breast no tears can steep?  
Who, for her apathy, would lose  
The sacred power to weep?

Tho' in a thousand objects, pain,  
And pleasure tremble nigh,  
Those objects strive to reach, in vain,  
The circle of her eye.

Cold, as the fabled god appears  
To the poor suppliant's grief, 70  
Who bathes the marble form in tears,  
And vainly hopes relief.

Ah *Greville!*<sup>1</sup> why the gifts refuse  
To souls like thine allied?  
No more thy nature seem to lose  
No more thy softness hide.

No more invoke the playful sprite  
To chill, with magic spell,  
The tender feelings of delight,  
And anguish sung so well; 80

That envied ease thy heart would prove  
Were sure too dearly bought  
With friendship, sympathy, and love,  
And every finer thought.

5. [William Wordsworth], "Sonnet on seeing Miss Helen  
Maria Williams Weep at a Tale of Distress." *European  
Magazine* XL (March 1787): 202

She wept.—Life's purple tide began to flow  
In languid streams through every thrilling vein;  
Dim were my swimming eyes—my pulse beat slow,  
And my full heart was swell'd to dear delicious pain.  
Life left my loaded heart, and closing eye;  
A sigh recall'd the wanderer to my breast;  
Dear was the pause of life, and dear the sigh  
That call'd the wanderer home, and home to rest.  
That tear proclaims—in thee each virtue dwells,  
And bright will shine in misery's midnight hour; 10  
As the soft star of dewy evening tells  
What radiant fires were drown'd by day's malignant pow'r,  
That only wait the darkness of the night  
To cheer the wand'ring wretch with hospitable light.

AXIOLOGUS<sup>2</sup>

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1 *Greville*] Francis Greville (1726–89), author of "A Prayer for Indifference" (1759).

2 AXIOLOGUS] Wordsworth's pseudonym is a pun on his name, from the Greek "axio" [worthy] and "logus" [word].

6. From Erasmus Darwin,<sup>1</sup> *The Botanic Garden, Part II, containing The Loves of the Plants, a Poem with Philosophical Notes*. Lichfield: J. Jackson, 1789. ix, 1–2, 26–29. Advertisement and Canto I, lines 1–20, 283–326<sup>2</sup>

Advertisement

The general design of the following sheets is to inlist Imagination under the banner of Science; and to lead her votaries from the looser analogies, which dress out the imagery of poetry, to the stricter ones, which form the ratiocination of philosophy. While their particular design is to induce the ingenious to cultivate the knowledge of BOTANY, by inducing them to the vestibule of that delightful science, and recommending to their attention the immortal works of the celebrated Swedish Naturalist LINNEUS. [...]

Canto I

Descend, ye hovering Sylphs! aerial Quires,  
And sweep with little hands your silver lyres;  
With fairy foot-steps print your grassy rings,  
Ye Gnomes! accordant to the tinkling strings;  
While in soft notes I tune to oaten reed  
Gay hopes, and amorous sorrows of the mead.—  
From giant Oaks, that wave their branches dark,  
To the dwarf Moss, that clings upon their bark,  
What Beaux and Beauties croud the gaudy groves,  
And woo and win their vegetable Loves.\* 10  
How Snow-drops cold, and blue-eyed Harebells blend  
Their tender tears, as o'er the stream they bend;  
The love-sick Violet, and the Primrose pale  
Bow their sweet heads, and whisper to the gale;  
With secret sighs the Virgin Lily droops,

\* *Vegetable Loves*. l. 10. Linneus the celebrated Swedish naturalist, has demonstrated, that all flowers contain families of males or females, or both; and on their marriages has constructed his invaluable system of Botany. [Darwin's note.]

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- 1 *Erasmus Darwin* (1731–1802), prominent English physician, poet, and founding member of the Lunar Society in Birmingham, a group devoted to the practical application of science; Darwin's botanical poems were admired, at least initially, by both Coleridge and Wordsworth.
  - 2 283–326] In the 1789 edition, there is an error in the line numbering, and so these lines appear in the text as lines 263–306.

And jealous Cowslips hang their tawny cups.  
 How the young Rose in beauty's damask pride  
 Drinks the warm blushes of his bashful bride;  
 With honey'd lips enamour'd Woodbines meet,  
 Clasp with fond arms, and mix their kisses sweet.—[...] 20

All wan and shivering in the leafless glade  
 The sad ANEMONE\* reclin'd her head;  
 Grief on her cheeks had paled the roseate hue,  
 And her sweet eye-lids drop'd with pearly dew.  
 —“See, from bright regions, borne on odorous gales  
 The Swallow,\*\* herald of summer, sails;  
 Breathe, gentle AIR! from cherub-lips impart  
 Thy balmy influence to my anguish'd heart; 270  
 Thou, whose soft voice calls forth the tender blooms,  
 Whose pencil paints them, and whose breath perfumes;  
 O chase the Fiend of Frost, whose leaden mace  
 In death-like slumbers seals my hapless race;  
 Melt his hard heart, release his iron hand,  
 And give my ivory petals to expand.  
 So may each bud, that decks the brow of spring,  
 Shed all its incense on thy wafting wing!”—  
 To her fond prayer propitious Zephyr yields,  
 Sweeps on his sliding shell through azure fields, 280  
 O'er her fair mansion waves his whispering wand,  
 And gives her ivory petals to expand:  
 Gives with new life her filial train to rise,  
 And hail with kindling smiles the genial skies.

\* *Anemone*. l. 264. Many males, many females. Pliny says, this flower never opens its petals, but when the wind blows, whence its name; it has properly no calix, but two or three sets of petals, three in each set, which are folded over the stamens and pistil in a singular and beautiful manner, and differs also from ranunculus in not having a melliferous pore on the claw of each petal. [Darwin's note.]

\*\* *The swallow*. l. 268. There is a wonderful conformity between the vegetation of some plants, and the arrival of certain birds of passage. Linneus observes that the wood anemone blows in Sweden on the arrival of the swallow; and the marsh mary-gold, *Caltha*, when the cuckoo sings. Nearly the same coincidence was observed in England by Stillingfleet. The word *Coccyx* in Greek signifies both a young fig and a cuckoo, which is supposed to have arisen from the coincidence of their appearance in Greece. Perhaps a similar coincidence of appearance in some parts of Asia gave occasion to the story of the loves of the rose and nightingale so much celebrated by the eastern poets. See *Dianthus*. [...] [Darwin's note.]

So shines the Nymph in beauty's blushing pride,  
 When Zephyr wafts her deep calash aside;  
 Tears with rude kiss her bosoms gauzy veil,  
 And flings the fluttering kerchief to the gale.  
 So bright, the folding canopy undrawn,  
 Glides the gilt Landau<sup>1</sup> o'er the velvet lawn, 290  
 Of beaux and belles displays the glittering throng;  
 And soft air fans them, as they roll along.

Where frowning Snowden bends his dizzy brow  
 O'er Conway, listening to the surge below;  
 Retiring LICHEN\* climbs the topmost stone,  
 And 'mid the airy ocean dwells alone.—  
 Bright shine the stars unnumber'd o'er her head,  
 And the cold moon-beam gilds her flinty bed;  
 While round the rifted rocks hoarse whirlwinds breathe,  
 And dark with thunder sail the clouds beneath.— 300  
 The steepy path her plighted swain pursues,  
 And tracks her light step o'er the imprinted dew;  
 Delighted Hymen gives his torch to blaze,  
 Winds round the craggs, and lights the mazy ways;  
 Sheds o'er their *secret* vows his influence chaste,  
 And decks with roses the admiring waste. [...]

7. **Gottfried August Bürger,**<sup>2</sup> “**Lenora.**” **Trans. William Taylor of Norwich.** *Monthly Magazine and British Register* 2 (March 1796): 135–37

At break of day, with frightful dreams  
 Lenora struggled sore:  
 My William, art thou slaine, say'd she,  
 Or dost thou love no more?

\* *Lichen*. l. 295. Calcareum. Liver-wort. Clandestine Marriage. This plant is the first that vegetates on naked rocks, covering them with a kind of tapestry, and draws its nourishment perhaps chiefly from the air; after it perishes, earth enough is left for other mosses to root themselves; and after some ages a soil is produced sufficient for the growth of more succulent and large vegetables. In this manner perhaps the whole earth has been gradually covered with vegetation, after it was raised out of the primeval ocean by subterraneous fires. [Darwin's note.]

1 *Landau*] Four-wheeled carriage with convertible top that can be closed or opened.  
 2 *Gottfried August Bürger*] (1747–94), German poet and translator of Thomas Percy's *Reliques of Ancient English Poetry* (1765); “Lenore” was first published in German in 1773.

He went abroade with Richard's host,<sup>1</sup>  
The Paynim<sup>2</sup> foes to quell;  
But he no word to her had writt,  
An he were sick or well.

With sowne of trump, and beat of drum,  
His felow-soldyers come; 10  
Their helmes bedeckt with oaken boughs,  
They seeke their long'd-for home.

And ev'ry roade an ev'ry lane,  
Was full of old and young  
To gaze at the rejoicing band,  
To hail the gladsome tounge.

"Thank God!" their wives and children saide,  
"Welcome!" the brides did saye:  
But greeete or kiss Lenora gave  
To none upon that daye. 20

She askte of all the passing traine,  
For him she wisht to see:  
But none of all the passing traine  
Could tell if lived hee.

And when the soldyers all were bye,  
She tore her raven haire,  
And cast herself upon the growne  
In furious despaire.

Her mother ran and lyfte her up,  
And clasped in her arme, 30  
"My child, my child, what dost thou ail?  
God shield thy life from harm!"

"O mother, mother! William's gone!  
What's all besyde to me?  
There is no mercye, sure, above!  
All, all were spar'd but hee!"

---

1 *Richard's host*] Those who fought in the third crusade, under the command of Richard I of England, to take the Holy Land from Muslim control.

2 *Paynim*] A pagan or non-Christian, especially Muslim.

“Kneel downe, thy paternoster<sup>1</sup> saye,  
’Twill calm thy troubled spright;  
The Lord is wyse, the Lord is good;  
What hee hath done is right.” 40

“O mother, mother! say not so;  
Most cruel is my fate:  
I prayde, and prayde; but watte awayl’d?  
’Tis now, alas! too late.”

“Our Heavenly Father, if we praye,  
Will help a suff’ring childe:  
Go take the holy sacrament;  
So shall thy grief grow milde.”

“O mother, what I feel within,  
No sacrament can staye; 50  
No sacrament can teche the dead  
To bear the light of daye.”

“May be, among the heathen folk  
Thy William false doth prove,  
And puts away his faith and troth,  
And takes another love.

Then wherefore sorrow for his loss?  
Thy moans are all in vain:  
And when his soul and body parte,  
His falsehode brings him paine.” 60

“O mother, mother! Gone is gone;  
My hope is all forlorne;  
The grave mie onlye safeguarde is—  
O, had I ne’er been borne!

Go out, go out, my lampe of life;  
In grislie darkness die:  
There is no mercye, sure, above!  
For ever let me lie.”

“Almighty God! O do not judge  
My poor unhappy childe; 70  
She knows not what her lips pronounce,  
Her anguish makes her wilde.

---

1 *paternoster*] The Lord’s Prayer, especially the Latin version.

My girl, forget thine earthly woe,  
And think on God and bliss;  
For so, at least, shall not thy soule  
Its heavenly bridegroom miss.”

“O mother, mother! what is blisse;  
And what the fiendish celle?  
With him ’tis heaven any where,  
Without my William, helle.

80

Go out, go out, my lamp of life;  
In endless darkness die:  
Without him I must loathe the earth,  
Without him scorne the skye.”

And so despaire did rave and rage  
Athwarte her boiling veins;  
Against the Providence of God  
She hurld her impious strains.

She bet her breaste, and wrung her hands,  
And rollde her tearlesse eye,  
From rise of morne, till the pale stars  
Again did streeke the skye.

90

When harke! abroad she hearde the trampe  
Of nimble-hoofed steed;  
She hearde a knight with clank alighte,  
And climb the staire in speede.

And soon she hearde a tinkling hande,  
That twirled at the pin;  
And thro’ her door, that open’d not,  
These words were breathed in.

100

“What ho! what ho! thy dore undoe;  
Art watching or asleepe?  
My love, dost yet remember mee,  
And dost thou laugh or weep?”

“Ah! William here so late at night!  
Oh! I have watchte and wak’d:  
Whence dost thou come? For thy return  
My hearte has sorely ak’d.”



“At midnight only we may ride;  
I come o’er land and sea: 110  
I mounted late, but soone I go;  
Aryse, and come with me.”

“O William, enter first my bowre,  
And give me one embrace:  
The blasts athwarte the hawthorne hiss;  
Awayte a little space.”

“Tho’ blasts athwarte the hawthorne hiss,  
I may not harbour here;  
My spurre is sharpe, my courser pawes,  
My houre of flighte is nere. 120

All as thou lyst upon thy couch,  
Aryse, and mount behinde;  
To-night we’le ride a thousand miles,  
The bridal bed to finde.”

“How, ride to-night a thousand miles?  
Thy love thou dost bemocke:  
Eleven is the stroke that still  
Rings on within the clocke.”

“Looke up; the moone is bright, and we  
Outstride the earthlie men: 130  
I’ll take thee to the bridal bed,  
And night shall end but then.”

“And where is, then, thy house and home;  
And where thy bridal bed?”  
“Tis narrow, silent, chilly, dark;  
Far hence I rest my head.”

“And is there any room for mee,  
Wherein that I may creepe?”  
“There’s room enough for thee and mee,  
Wherein that wee may sleepe. 140

All as thou ly’st upon thy couch,  
Aryse, no longer stop;  
The wedding guests thy coming waite,  
The chamber dore is ope.”

All in her sarke,<sup>1</sup> as there she lay,  
Upon his horse she sprung;  
And with her lily hands so pale  
About her William clung.

And hurry-skurry forth they go,  
Unheeding wet or drye; 150  
And horse and rider snort and blowe,  
And sparkling pebbles flye.

How swift the flood, the mead, the wood,  
Aright, aleft, are gone!  
The bridges thunder as they pass,  
But earthlie sowne is none.

Tramp, tramp, across the land they speede;  
Splash, splash, across the see:  
“Hurrah! the dead can ride apace;  
Dost feare to ride with mee? 160

The moone is bryghte, and blue the nyghte;  
Dost quake the blast to stem?  
Dost shudder, mayde, to seeke the dead?”  
“No, no, but what of them?

How glumlie sownes yon dirgye song!  
Night-ravens flappe the wing.  
What knell doth slowlie toll ding dong?  
The psalms of death who sing?

It creeps, the swarthie funeral traine,  
The corse is on the beere; 170  
Like croke of todes from lonely moores,  
The chaunt doth meete the eere.”

“Go, bear her corse when midnight’s past,  
With song, and tear, and wayle;  
I’ve gott my wife, I take her home,  
My howre of wedlocke hayl.

Lead forth, O clarke, the chaunting quire,  
To swell our nuptial song:  
Come, preaste, and reade the blessing soone;  
For bed, for bed we long.” 180

---

1 *sarke*] A chemise or undershirt.

They heede his calle, and husht the sowne;  
The biere was seene no more:  
And followed him ore the feeld and flood  
Yet faster than before.

Halloo! halloo! away they goe,  
Unheeding wet or drye;  
And horse and rider snort and blowe,  
And sparkling pebbles flye.

How swifte the hill, how swifte the dale,  
Aright, aleft, are gone! 190  
By hedge and tree, by thorpe and towne,  
They gallop, gallop on.

Tramp, tramp, across the land they speede;  
Splash, splash, across the see:  
“Hurrah! the dead can ride apace;  
Dost fear to ride with mee?”

Look up, look up, an airy crewe  
In roundel daunces reele:  
The moone is bryghte, and blue the nyghte,  
Mayst dimlie see them wheele. 200

Come to, come to, ye gostlie crew,  
Come to, and follow mee,  
And daunce for us the wedding daunce,  
When we in bed shall be.”

And brush, brush, brush, the gostlie crew  
Come wheeling ore their heads,  
All rustling like the wither'd leaves  
That wyde the whirlwind spreads.

Halloo! halloo! away they go,  
Unheeding wet or dry; 210  
And horse and rider snort and blowe,  
And sparkling pebbles flye.

And all that in the moonshyne lay,  
Behynde them fled afar;  
And backwarde scudded overhead  
The skye and every star.

Tramp, tramp, across the lande they speede;  
Splash, splash, across the see:  
“Hurrah! the dead can ride apace;  
Dost fear to ride with mee? 220

I weene the cock prepares to crowe;  
The sand will soone be runne:  
I snuffe the earlye morning aire;  
Downe, downe! our work is done.

The dead, the dead can ryde apace;  
Oure wed-bed here is fit:  
Our race is ridde, our journey ore,  
Our endlesse union knit.”

And lo! An yren-grated gate  
Soon biggens to their viewe: 230  
He crackte his whyppe; the clangynge boltes,  
The doors asunder flewe.

They pass, and ’twas on graves they trode;  
“’Tis hither we are bounde:”  
And many a tombstone gostlie white  
Lay inn the moonshyne round.

And when hee from his steede alytte,  
His armour, black as cinder,  
Did moulder, moulder all awaye,  
As were it made of tinder. 240

His head became a naked skull;  
Nor haire nor eyne had hee:  
His body grew a skeleton,  
Whilome so blithe of blee.<sup>1</sup>

And att his dry and bony heele  
No spur was left to be;  
And inn his witherde hand you might  
The scythe and hour-glasse see.

And lo! his steede did thin to smoke,  
And charnel fires outbreathe; 250

---

1 *Whilome so blithe of blee*] Before so fair a hue.

And pal'd, and bleach'd, then vanish'd quite  
The mayde from underneath.

And hollow howlings hung in aire,  
And shrekes from vaults arose.  
Then knew the mayde she mighte no more  
Her living eyes unclose.

But onwarde to the judgement seat,  
Thro' myste and moonlighte dreare,  
The gostlie crewe their flyghte persewe,  
And hollowe inn her eare:—

260

“Be patient; tho' thyne herte shoulde breke,  
Arrayne not Heven's decree;  
Thou nowe art of thie bodie refte,<sup>1</sup>  
Thie soule forgiven bee!”

**8. Charlotte Smith, “Sonnet LXX: On being cautioned  
against walking on an headland overlooking the sea,  
because it was frequented by a Lunatic.” *Elegiac  
Sonnets and Other Poems*. 2 vols. 8th ed. London:  
Cadell and Davies, 1797. II:11**

Is there a solitary wretch who hies  
To the tall cliff, with starting pace or slow,  
And, measuring, views with wild and hollow eyes  
Its distance from the waves that chide below;  
Who, as the sea-born gale with frequent sighs  
Chills his cold bed upon the mountain turf,  
With hoarse, half utter'd lamentation, lies  
Murmuring responses to the dashing surf?  
In moody sadness, on the giddy brink,  
I see him more with envy than with fear;  
*He* has no *nice felicities* that shrink  
From giant horrors; wildly wandering here,  
He seems (uncursed with reason) not to know  
The depth or the duration of his woe.

10

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1 *refte*] Robbed.

**9. Robert Southey, "Inscription III. For a Cavern that overlooks the River Avon." *Poems*. Bristol: Cottle, 1797. 57–58**

Enter this cavern Stranger! the ascent  
Is long and steep and toilsome; here awhile  
Thou mayest repose thee, from the noontide heat  
O'ercanopied by this arch'd rock that strikes  
A grateful coolness: clasping its rough arms  
Round the rude portal, the old ivy hangs  
Its dark green branches down, and the wild Bees,  
O'er its grey blossoms murmuring ceaseless, make  
Most pleasant melody. No common spot  
Receives thee, for the Power who prompts the song, 10  
Loves this secluded haunt. The tide below  
Scarce sends the sound of waters to thine ear;  
And this high-hanging forest to the wind  
Varies its many hues. Gaze Stranger here!  
And let thy soften'd heart intensely feel  
How good, how lovely, Nature! When from hence  
Departing to the City's crouded streets,  
Thy sickening eye at every step revolts  
From scenes of vice and wretchedness; reflect  
That Man creates the evil he endures. 20

**10. Joanna Baillie, *De Monfort, a Tragedy*. IV.i.32–57. Published in *A Series of Plays: In which It Is Attempted to Delineate the Stronger Passions of the Mind*. 3 vols. London: Cadell and Davies, 1798–1812. I:378–79**

[...] *Rezenvelt*. Ha! does the night-bird greet me on my way?  
How much his hooting is in harmony  
With such a scene as this! I like it well.  
Oft when a boy, at the still twilight hour,  
I've leant my back against some knotted oak,  
And loudly mimick'd him, till to my call  
He answer would return, and thro' the gloom  
We friendly converse held.  
Between me and the star-bespangl'd sky 40  
Those aged oaks their crossing branches wave,  
And thro' them looks the pale and placid moon.  
How like a crocodile, or winged snake,  
Yon sailing cloud bears on its dusky length!  
And now transformed by the passing wind,

Methinks it seems a flying Pegasus.  
Ay, but a shapeless band of blacker hue  
Comes swiftly after.—  
A hollow murm'ring wind sounds thro' the trees;  
I hear it from afar; this bodes a storm. 50  
I must not linger here—  
(*A bell heard at some distance.*)

What bell is this?  
It sends a solemn sound upon the breeze.  
Now, to a fearful superstitious mind,  
In such a scene, 'twould like a death-knell come:  
For me it tells but of a shelter near,  
And so I bid it welcome. [*Exit.*]

**11. Robert Southey, "The Idiot." *The Morning Post* 30 June  
1798**

*The circumstances of the following ballad happened some years since  
in Herefordshire.*

It had pleas'd God to form poor Ned,  
A thing of idiot mind,  
Yet to the poor, unreas'ning man,  
God had not been unkind.

Old Sarah lov'd her helpless child,  
Whom helplessness made dear,  
And life was happiness to him,  
Who had no hope nor fear.

She knew his wants, she understood  
Each half artic'late call, 10  
And he was ev'ry thing to her,  
And she to him was all.

And so for many a year they dwelt,  
Nor knew a wish beside,  
But age at length on Sarah came,  
And she fell sick and died.

He tried in vain to waken her,  
And call'd her o'er and o'er.  
They told him she was dead—the sound  
To him no import bore. 20

They clos'd her eyes and shrouded her,  
And he stood wond'ring by,  
And when they bore her to the grave,  
He follow'd silently.

They laid her in the narrow house,  
They sung the fun'ral stave;  
But when the fun'ral train dispers'd,  
He loiter'd by the grave.

The rabble boys who us'd to jeer  
Whene'er they saw poor Ned,  
Now stood and watch'd him at the grave,  
And not a word they said.

30

They came and went and came again,  
'Till night at last came on,  
And still he loiter'd by the grave,  
'Till all the rest were gone.

And when he found himself alone,  
He swift remov'd the clay,  
And rais'd the coffin up in haste,  
And bore it swift away.

40

And when he reach'd his hut, he laid  
The coffin on the floor,  
And with the eagerness of joy,  
He barr'd the cottage door.

And out he took his mother's corpse,  
And plac'd it in her chair,  
And then he heapt the hearth, and blew  
The kindling fire with care.

He plac'd his mother in her chair,  
And in her wonted place,  
And blew the kindling fire, that shone  
Reflected on her face;

50

And pausing now, her hand would feel,  
And now her face behold,  
"Why, mother, do you look so pale,  
And why are you so cold?"



It had pleas'd God from the poor wretch  
His only friend to call,  
But God was kind to him, and soon  
In death restor'd him all. 60

12. Thomas Beddoes,<sup>1</sup> "Domiciliary Verses: December 1795." *Annual Anthology, Volume 1*. London: Longman, 1799. 287–88

Invitingly yon single-storied cot  
Peeps o'er the frosted heath. The broad, brown door,  
Scaled of its white-wash, is so low that he  
Who steps in upright, steps in jeopardy  
To smite his forehead. Two projecting walls  
Fence in the roomy fire-place. Close by each  
Is set an oaken bench, on whose hard sides,  
His sore impatience many a lubber loon,  
Keen for his meal, has notched. Here, when silently  
Coating the green and lozenged panes, thick snow 10  
Bedims the scanty daylight, nestles the snug  
Family, delighted up the chimney's shaft,  
Illumining the chasm, to trace the spark's  
Ascent; or touch with timid finger-tip  
The faggot's hissing ooze, and snift the fumes.

I knew an Irishman; to England he  
Came every spring a hay-making; and much  
Would praise his cabin. By a bog it stood,  
And he had store of peats. Without a chimney  
Stood the little cabin. Full of warmth and smoke, 20  
It cherished its owner. The smoke he loved,  
Loved for the warmth's sake, though it bleared his eyes.

Now when the North-East pinches, I bethink me  
Of this poor Irishman; and think "how sweet  
It were to house with him, and pat his cur,  
And peel potatoes mid his cabin's smoke."

---

1 *Thomas Beddoes*] (1760–1808), physician and radical reformer, composed this poem in 1798 while reading *Lyrical Ballads*; he then had his poem printed on similar paper in the same font and physically bound it into the collection between Wordsworth's "Lines left on the Seat of Yew Tree" and Coleridge's "The Nightingale." This is probably the earliest parody of the form and subject matter of the collection.

**13. Robert Southey, "The Mad Woman." *Morning Post* 11  
June 1799**

*The circumstance on which the following Ballad is founded,  
happened not many years ago in Bristol.*

The Traveller's hands were white with cold,  
The Traveller's lips were blue,  
Oh! glad was he when the village Church  
So near was seen in view!

He hasten'd to the village Inn,  
That stood the Church-door nigh—  
There sat a Woman on a grave,  
And he could not pass her by.

Her feet were bare, and on her breast  
Thro' rags did the winter blow, 10  
She sat with her face toward the wind,  
And the grave was cover'd with snow.

Is there never a Christian in the place,  
To her the Traveller cried,  
Who will let thee, in this cold winter time,  
Sit by his fire side?

I have fire in my head, she answered him,  
I have fire in my heart also;  
And there will be no winter time  
In the place where I must go! 20

A curse upon thee man,  
For mocking me, she said;  
And he saw the woman's eyes like one  
In a fever-fit were red.

And when he to the inn door came,  
And the host his greeting gave,  
He ask'd who that mad woman was  
Who sat upon the grave.

God in his mercy, quoth the host,  
Forgive her for her sin; 30

For heavy is her crime, and strange  
Her punishment has been.

She was so pale and meagre-ey'd,  
And scarcely to be known,  
When to her mother she return'd  
From service in the town.

She seldom spake, she never smil'd,  
What ail'd her no one knew,  
But every day more meagre, pale,  
And sullen sad she grew. 40

It was upon last Christmas eve,  
As we sat round the hearth,  
And every soul but Martha's  
Was full of Christmas mirth.

She sat, and look'd upon the fire  
That then so fiercely shone,  
She look'd into it earnestly,  
And we heard a stifled groan.

And she shook like a dying wretch  
In a convulsive fit; 50  
And up she rose, and in the snows,  
Went out on a grave to sit.

We follow'd her, and to the room  
Besought her to return;  
She groan'd and said, that in the fire,  
She saw her baby burn.

And in her dreadful madness then  
To light her murder came,  
How secretly from every eye  
Nine months she hid her shame. 60

And how she slew the wretched babe  
Just as he sprung to light,  
And in the midnight fire consum'd  
His little body quite.

Would I could feel the winter wind,  
Would I could feel the snow,

I have fire in my head, poor Martha cried,  
I have fire in my heart also.

So there from morn till night she sits—  
Now God forgive her sin!  
For heavy is her crime, and strange  
Her punishment has been.

70

**14. Robert Southey, “English Eclogues: Eclogue IV: The Sailor’s Mother.” *Poems*. 2 vols. Bristol: Biggs and Cottle, 1799. II:182–83, 206–15**

The following Eclogues I believe, bear no resemblance to any poems in our language. This species of composition has become popular in Germany, and I was induced to attempt it by an account of the German Idylls given me in conversation. They cannot properly be stiled imitations, as I am ignorant of that language at present, and have never seen any translations or specimens in this kind.

With bad Eclogues I am sufficiently acquainted, from Tityrus and Corydon<sup>1</sup> down to our English Strephons and Thirsises.<sup>2</sup> No kind of poetry can boast more illustrious names or is more distinguished by the servile dullness of imitated nonsense. Pastoral writers “more silly than their sheep”<sup>3</sup> have like their sheep gone on in the same track one after another. Gay stumbled into a new path.<sup>4</sup> His eclogues were the only ones that interested me when I was a boy, and did not know they were burlesque. The subject would furnish matter for a long essay, but this is not the place for it.

How far poems requiring almost a colloquial plainness of language may accord with the public taste I am doubtful. They have been subjected to able criticism and revised with care. I have endeavored to make them true to nature. [...]

---

1 *Tityrus and Corydon*] Characters appearing in Virgil’s first two *Eclogues*.  
2 *Strephons and Thirsises*] Common shepherd names in pastoral poetry; Southey later corrected “Thirsises” to “Thyrsises.”  
3 *more silly ... sheep*] Quoted from line 61 of Ambrose Philips’s “Second Pastoral” (1709).  
4 *Gay ... path*] John Gay (1685–1732), British dramatist and poet best known for *The Beggar’s Opera* (1728); Southey refers to Gay’s mock pastoral poems, *The Shepherd’s Week* (1714).



There may be still enough for comfort left.  
An arm or leg shot off, there's yet the heart  
To keep life warm, and he may live to talk  
With pleasure of the glorious fight that maim'd him,  
Proud of his loss. Old England's gratitude  
Makes the maim'd sailor happy.

WOMAN

'Tis not that—  
An arm or leg—I could have borne with that.  
'Twas not a ball, it was some cursed thing  
That bursts\* and burns that hurt him. Something Sir 30  
They do not use on board our English ships  
It is so wicked!

TRAVELLER

Rascals! a mean art  
Of cruel cowardice, yet all in vain!

WOMAN

Yes Sir! and they should show no mercy to them  
For making use of such unchristian arms.  
I had a letter from the hospital,  
He got some friend to write it, and he tells me  
That my poor boy has lost his precious eyes,  
Burnt out. Alas! that I should ever live  
To see this wretched day!—they tell me Sir 40  
There is no cure for wounds like his. Indeed  
'Tis a hard journey that I go upon  
To such a dismal end!

TRAVELLER

He yet may live.  
But if the worst should chance, why you must bear

---

\* The stink-pots used on board the French ships. In the engagement between the Mars and L'Hercule, some of our sailors were shockingly mangled by them: One in particular, as described in the Eclogue, lost both his eyes. It would be policy and humanity to employ means of destruction, could they be discovered, powerful enough to destroy fleets and armies, but to use any thing that only inflicts additional torture upon the victims of our war systems, is cruel and wicked. [Southey's note.]

The will of heaven with patience. Were it not  
Some comfort to reflect your son has fallen  
Fighting his country's cause? and for yourself  
You will not in unpitied poverty  
Be left to mourn his loss. Your grateful country  
Amid the triumph of her victory 50  
Remember those who paid its price of blood,  
And with a noble charity relieves  
The widow and the orphan.

WOMAN

God reward them!  
God bless them, it will help me in my age  
But Sir! it will not pay me for my child!

TRAVELLER

Was he your only child?

WOMAN

My only one,  
The stay and comfort of my widowhood,  
A dear good boy!—when first he went to sea  
I felt what it would come to,—something told me  
I should be childless soon. But tell me Sir 60  
If it be true that for a hurt like his  
There is no cure? please God to spare his life  
Tho' he be blind, yet I should be so thankful!  
I can remember there was a blind man  
Lived in our village, one from his youth up  
Quite dark, and yet he was a merry man,  
And he had none to tend on him so well  
As I would tend my boy!

TRAVELLER

Of this be sure  
His hurts are look'd to well, and the best help  
The place affords, as rightly is his due, 70  
Ever at hand. How happened it he left you?  
Was a seafaring life his early choice?

## WOMAN

No Sir! poor fellow—he was wise enough  
To be content at home, and 'twas a home  
As comfortable Sir! even tho' I say it,  
As any in the country. He was left  
A little boy when his poor father died,  
Just old enough to totter by himself  
And call his mother's name. We two were all,  
And as we were not left quite destitute 80  
We bore up well. In the summer time I worked  
Sometimes a-field. Then I was famed for knitting,  
And in long winter nights my spinning wheel  
Seldom stood still. We had kind neighbours too  
And never felt distress. So he grew up  
A comely lad and wonderous well disposed;  
I taught him well; there was not in the parish  
A child who said his prayers more regular,  
Or answered readier thro' his catechism.  
If I had foreseen this! but 'tis a blessing 90  
We don't know what we're born to!

## TRAVELLER

But how came it  
He chose to be a Sailor?

## WOMAN

You shall hear Sir;  
As he grew up he used to watch the birds  
In the corn, child's work you know, and easily done.  
'Tis an idle sort of task, so he built up  
A little hut of wicker-work and clay  
Under the hedge, to shelter him in rain.  
And then he took for very idleness  
To making traps to catch the plunderers,  
All sorts of cunning traps that boys can make— 100  
Propping a stone to fall and shut them in,  
Or crush them with its weight, or else a springe  
Swung on a bough. He made them cleverly—  
And I, poor foolish woman! I was pleased  
To see the boy so handy. You may guess  
What followed Sir from this unlucky skill.  
He did what he should not when he was older:



I warn'd him oft enough; but he was caught  
In wiring hares at last, and had his choice  
The prison or the ship.

TRAVELLER

The choice at least 110  
Was kindly left him, and for broken laws  
This was methinks no heavy punishment.

WOMAN

So I was told Sir. And I tried to think so,  
But 'twas a sad blow to me! I was used  
To sleep at nights soundly and undisturb'd—  
Now if the wind blew rough, it made me start  
And think of my poor boy tossing about  
Upon the roaring seas. And then I seem'd  
To feel that it was hard to take him from me  
For such a little fault. But he was wrong 120  
Oh very wrong—a murrain<sup>1</sup> on his traps!  
See what they've brought him too!

TRAVELLER

Well! well! take comfort  
He will be taken care of if he lives;  
And should you lose your child, this is a country  
Where the brave sailor never leaves a parent  
To weep for him in want.

WOMAN

Sir I shall want  
No succour long. In the common course of years  
I soon must be at rest, and 'tis a comfort  
When grief is hard upon me to reflect  
It only leads me to that rest the sooner. 130

15. **Mary Robinson, "The Haunted Beach."** *Lyrical Tales*.  
London: Longman, 1800. 72–76

Upon a lonely desert Beach,  
Where the white foam was scatter'd,

---

1 *murrain*] Pestilence.

A little shed uprear'd its head,  
Though lofty Barks were shatter'd.  
The Sea-weeds gath'ring near the door,  
A sombre path display'd;  
And, all around, the deaf'ning roar,  
Re-echo'd on the chalky shore,  
By the green billows made.

Above, a jutting cliff was seen 10  
Where Sea Birds hover'd, craving;  
And all around, the craggs were bound  
With weeds—for ever waving.  
And here and there, a cavern wide  
Its shad'wy jaws display'd;  
And near the sands, at ebb of tide,  
A shiver'd mast was seen to ride  
Where the green billows stray'd.

And often, while the moaning wind 20  
Stole o'er the Summer Ocean;  
The moonlight scene, was all serene,  
The waters scarce in motion:  
Then, while the smoothly slanting sand  
The tall cliff wrapp'd in shade,  
The Fisherman beheld a band  
Of Spectres, gliding hand in hand—  
Where the green billows play'd.

And pale their faces were, as snow,  
And sullenly they wander'd:  
And to the skies with hollow eyes 30  
They look'd as though they ponder'd.  
And sometimes, from their hammock shroud,  
They dismal howlings made,  
And while the blast blew strong and loud  
The clear moon mark'd the ghastly croud,  
Where the green billows play'd!

And then, above the haunted hut  
The Curlews screaming hover'd;  
And the low door with furious roar  
The frothy breakers cover'd. 40  
For in the Fisherman's lone shed  
A MURDER'D MAN was laid,

With ten wide gashes in his head  
And deep was made his sandy bed  
Where the green billows play'd.

A Shipwreck'd Mariner was he,  
Doom'd from his home to sever;  
Who swore to be through wind and sea  
Firm and undaunted ever!  
And when the wave resistless roll'd, 50  
About his arm he made  
A packet rich of Spanish gold,  
And, like a British sailor, bold,  
Plung'd, where the billows play'd!

The Spectre band, his messmates brave  
Sunk in the yawning ocean,  
While to the mast he lash'd him fast  
And braved the storm's commotion.  
The winter moon, upon the sand  
A silvery carpet made, 60  
And mark'd the Sailor reach the land,  
And mark'd his murd'rer wash his hand  
Where the green billows play'd.

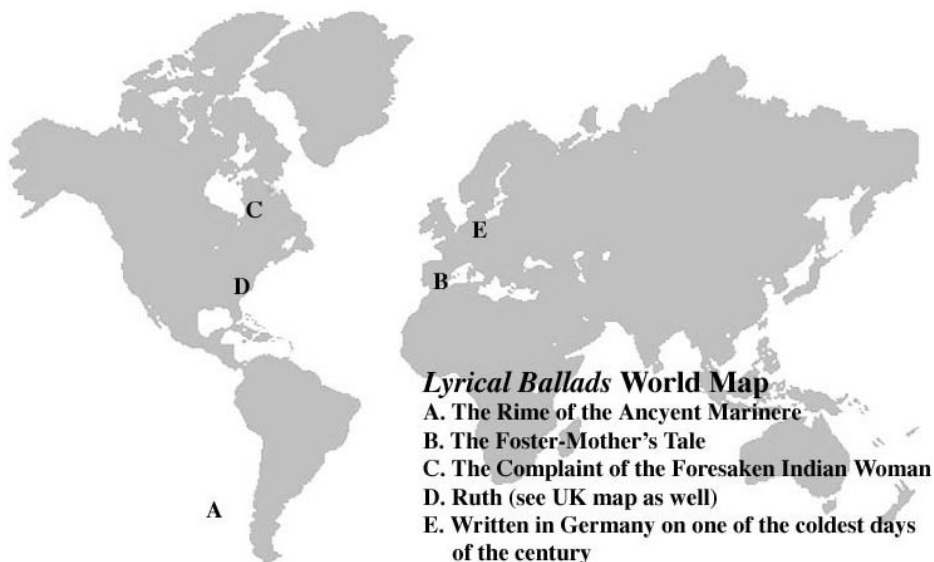
And since that hour the Fisherman  
Has toil'd and toil'd in vain!  
For all the night, the moony light  
Gleams on the specter'd main!  
And when the skies are veil'd in gloom,  
The Murd'rer's liquid way  
Bounds o'er the deeply yawning tomb, 70  
And flashing fires the sands illumine,  
Where the green billows play!

Full thirty years his task has been,  
Day after day more weary;  
For Heaven design'd, his guilty mind  
Should dwell on prospects dreary.  
Bound by a strong and mystic chain,  
He has not pow'r to stray;  
But, destin'd mis'ry to sustain,  
He wastes, in Solitude and Pain— 80  
A loathsome life away.

## Appendix H: Mapping the Poems

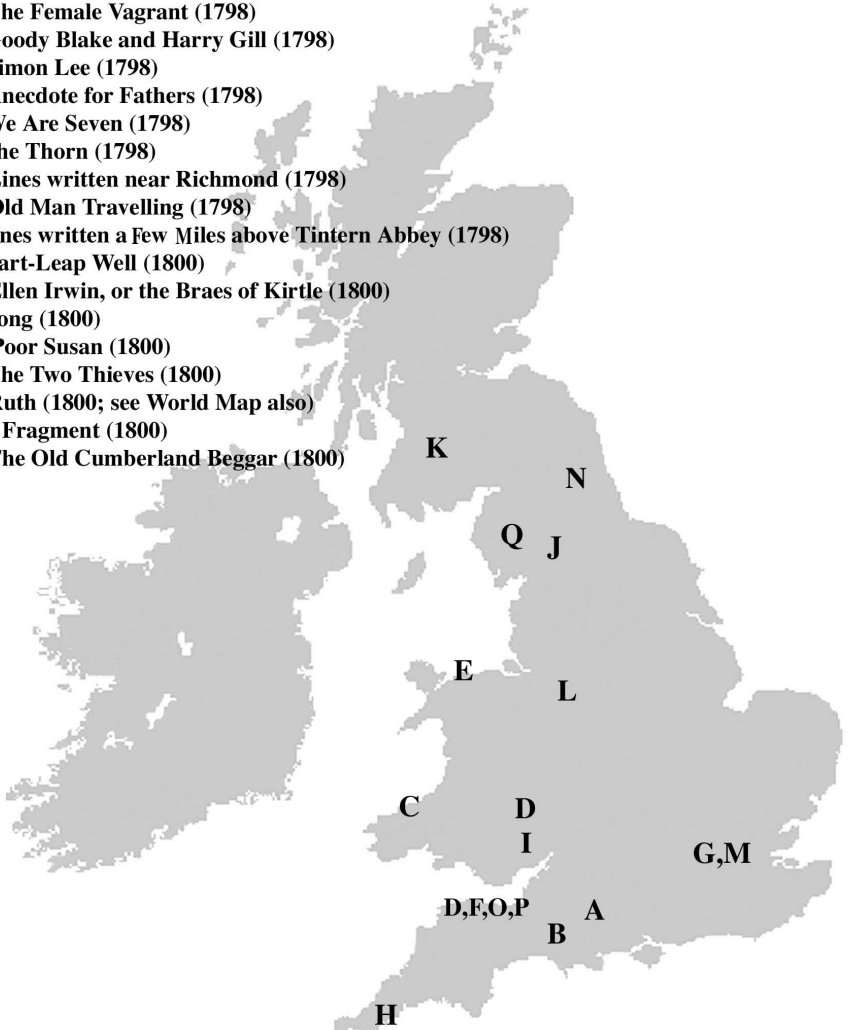
[One of the most interesting aspects of the development of *Lyrical Ballads* is its changing geography, particularly as it moved from first to second edition. Of Coleridge's contributions, "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner" crosses at least two oceans and the equator, spanning from the northern British Isles to Antarctica, while his "Foster-Mother's Tale" takes its setting in Spain and tells of a young man's escape from prison to live "among the savage men" in the New World (276). Wordsworth's "The Female Vagrant" possesses similar geographic range; set on Salisbury Plain in Wiltshire, the poem takes us, through the story of its title character, from "Derwent's side" in the Lake District to North America and back. Although Wordsworth gathered much of the material for other poems from local stories around Alfoxden and Stowey, he took care to place several in other places. Thus, "Simon Lee" is set in Cardigan and "Goody Blake and Harry Gill" in Dorsetshire, even though both stories originally were local. And though he does not cross oceans, the old man of "Old Man Travelling" makes nearly as epic a journey as does the Female Vagrant by walking all the way to Falmouth. The 1798 *Lyrical Ballads* thus at least can claim to cover nearly all of England. With its focus on mariners, on sea-ports, and on wars in foreign lands, the volume also could be said to have transatlantic pretensions.

After returning from Germany, however, Wordsworth appears to have altered this practice. With few exceptions, the poems produced after May of 1799 are determinedly local, usually set in the Lake District and frequently in the local countryside around Grasmere. We thus provide four maps for readers interested in the settings of individual poems and in the geographic scope of the 1798 and 1800 volumes. The maps move from the global to the local, and include World, United Kingdom, and Lake District maps. We also provide a copy of the map that Wordsworth included in his *Description of the Scenery of the Lakes in the North of England*. Ours is from the third edition of 1822.]



## ***Lyrical Ballads United Kingdom Map***

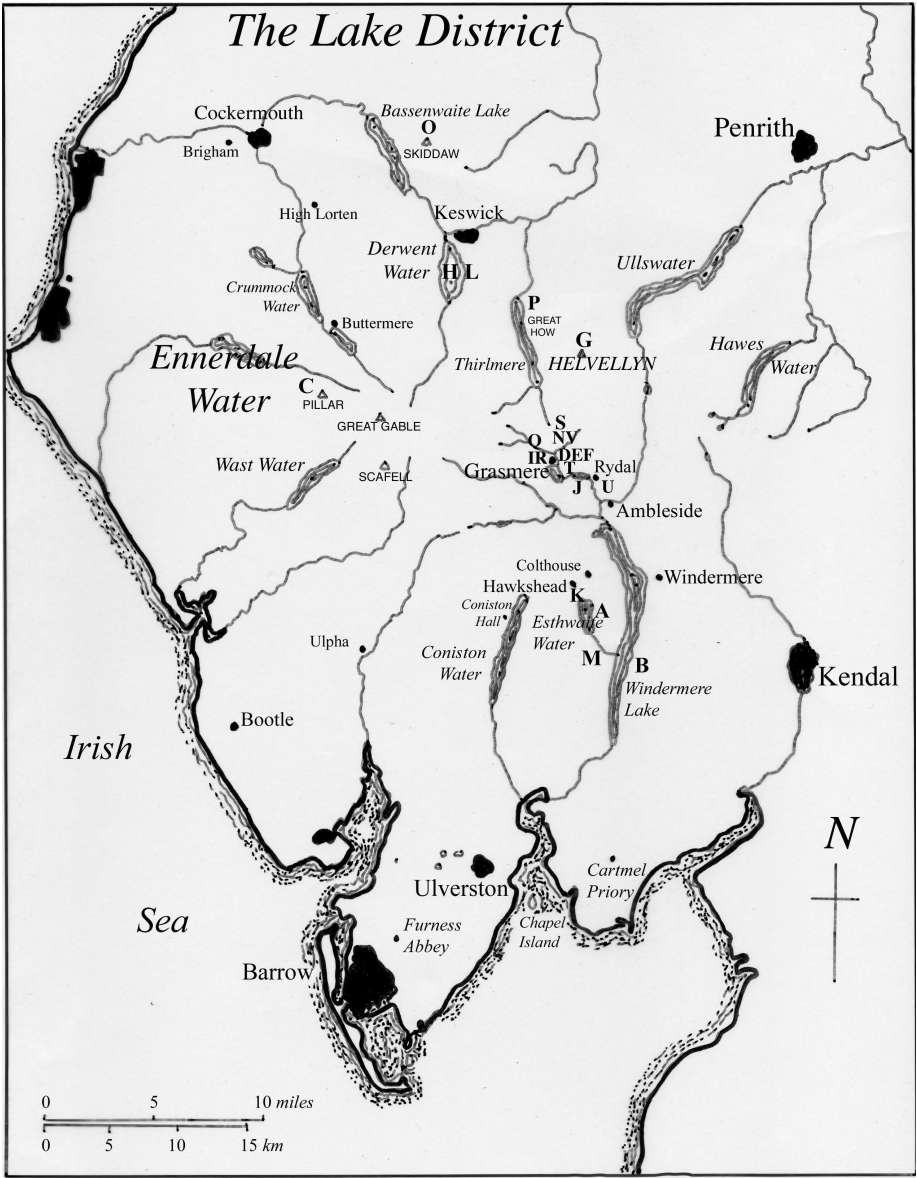
- A. The Female Vagrant (1798)**
- B. Goody Blake and Harry Gill (1798)**
- C. Simon Lee (1798)**
- D. Anecdote for Fathers (1798)**
- E. We Are Seven (1798)**
- F. The Thorn (1798)**
- G. Lines written near Richmond (1798)**
- H. Old Man Travelling (1798)**
- I. Lines written a Few Miles above Tintern Abbey (1798)**
- J. Hart-Leap Well (1800)**
- K. Ellen Irwin, or the Braes of Kirtle (1800)**
- L. Song (1800)**
- M. Poor Susan (1800)**
- N. The Two Thieves (1800)**
- O. Ruth (1800; see World Map also)**
- P. A Fragment (1800)**
- Q. The Old Cumberland Beggar (1800)**



**Note:** the poems on this list either lie outside of the Lake District, or else have a regional but not precise location, as with “The Old Cumberland Beggar.” See Lake District Map for poems with precise locations within the Lake District.



Map published in Wordsworth's *Description of the Scenery of the Lakes in the North of England*, 3rd ed. London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme, & Brown, 1822.



Lake District Map: The letters on the map represent the sites of particular poems. A key is provided on the page following this one.



## Lake District Map: Key to Poems

- A. Lines left upon a Seat in a Yew-Tree Which Stands Near the Lake of Esthwaite (1798)
- B. There was a Boy (1800)
- C. The Brothers, a Pastoral Poem (1800)
- D. The Waterfall and the Eglantine (1800)
- E. The Oak and the Broom, a Pastoral (1800)
- F. The Idle Shepard-Boys, or Dungeon-Gill Force, a Pastoral (1800)
- G. 'Tis said, that some have died for love (1800)
- H. Inscription for the Spot where the Hermitage stood on St. Herbert's Island, Derwent-Water (1800)
- I. Inscription for the House (an Out-house) on the Island at Grasmere (1800)
- J. Lines written with a Slate-pencil upon a Stone, &c. (1800)
- K. Lines written on a Tablet in a School (1800)
- L. The Two April Mornings (1800)
- M. Nutting (1800)
- N. The Pet-Lamb, a Pastoral (1800)
- O. The Childless Father (1800)
- P. Rural Architecture (1800)
- Q-U. Poems on the Naming of Places (1800)
  - Q. "It was an April morning" (1800)
  - R. To Joanna (1800)
  - S. "There is an Eminence" (1800)
  - T. "A narrow girdle of rough stones and crags" (1800)
  - U. To M. H. (1800)
- V. Michael, a Pastoral Poem (1800)

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