

WARTON LECTURE ON ENGLISH POETRY

Coleridge's New Poetry

J. C. C. MAYS

University College Dublin

THE LAST ATTEMPT TO COLLECT Coleridge's poetical writing, plays as well as poems, was in 1912. The 1912 edition, edited by Ernest Hartley Coleridge for the Clarendon Press,¹ proved remarkably durable but mistakes and omissions have become evident; also, expectations concerning the way poetry texts should be presented have altered in the intervening years. In EHC's edition, the poems were arranged in two categories: Volume I was made up of a main sequence of serious and achieved poems, and Volume II contained sequences of different sub-canonical forms and levels of achievement (epigrams, jeux d'esprit, metrical experiments, drafts and fragments).

The effect of the divided arrangement was to relegate Volume II material to a category where it appeared extra, optional, ignorable. The less literary and the less finished were bundled away and excluded, the implication being that there are higher and lower levels of poetic activity and those which fail to preserve decent poetic reputation are best ignored. The old edition was put together at a time when poetry aimed to be poetic in a late nineteenth-century, high serious or at least magical kind of way, and times have changed. The canonical/non-canonical separation is nowadays more contentious than helpful, and the poems in the forthcoming new edition are therefore arranged in a unified chronological sequence.

Read at the Academy 24 April 1996. © The British Academy 1997.

¹ *The Complete Poetical Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, ed. Ernest Hartley Coleridge (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2 vols. 1912; reprinted with corrections); hereafter 'EHC'. In the discussion which follows, to avoid confusion, I use EHC's titles even when I quote amended texts from the new *Collected Coleridge* edition.

Editors try to be accurate and informed and helpful. I think their role is subservient: simply to find appropriate ways to present textual evidence as it comes to light and surrounding information as it is relevant. Now my task is complete, however, it strikes me the *Collected Coleridge* edition involves more than repairs and improvements. I am persuaded that the poems which were previously unknown, or, if known, either have not been collected or were relegated to EHC's Volume II, will exert a powerful influence on the way the previously-known poems in Volume I are read. They are neither more nor less of the same; they constitute a different order of poetry whose encompassing requires considerable modification of some long-held views.

I stress there really is a lot of new material. Of the 706 poems in the *Collected Coleridge* edition, 257 are added to what is contained somewhere in the old one. The continuous sequence of 706 is surrounded by a penumbra of 133 poems and titles, some of which remove false attributions and others of which suggest attributions which none the less wait to be proved. If one supposes forty-three poems in the penumbral category could prove to be genuine, up to 300 new poems are added and about a third of them have never been published anywhere before. It is quite likely that many were known to EHC—he had access to notebooks, annotated volumes and other manuscript material²—but he was selective on principle. Not only did he assume the duty of presenting his grandfather in the form to which he believed his contemporaries would most positively respond, he thought it right to omit whatever might distract or not interest them.³

An example of this is provided by poems Coleridge wrote from late 1830 onwards. EHC positioned seven such poems in Volume I and three in different sections of Volume II ('Cholera Cured Before-hand' and 'To a Child' among *Jeux d'esprit*, and 'Epitaph of the Present Year on the Monument of Thomas Fuller' among *Epigrams*).⁴ A number of

² The material available to EHC is described by George Whalley, 'Annex B: The Dispersal of Coleridge's Books' in George Whalley and H. J. Jackson (eds.), *Marginalia* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 5 vols. 1980—; *Collected Coleridge* 12), I, pp. clvi–clxxiv.

³ An interesting light on EHC's relation to surrounding literary standards is shed by his own *Poems* (London: John Lane, The Bodley Head, 1898). They can be compared with the more lively taste in poetry manifested by his fellow Coleridge editor, James Dykes Campbell.

⁴ That is, compare EHC, I, pp. 487–92 and II, pp. 985–7, 975 respectively. A complete listing is supplied in Appendix A below.

misreadings and misunderstandings are easily corrected⁵ and further improvements (e.g. more exact dating) can be made on the basis of further information.⁶ EHC based 'Cholera Cured Before-hand' on two texts: I know of four. He based 'My Baptismal Birth-day' on two printed texts: five manuscripts must now be added. He reported one manuscript of 'Love's Apparition and Evanishment': six manuscripts have since come to light. So the story continues. The poems from the years 1830–4 in the old edition rested on a base of about twenty manuscript and printed versions. (It is impossible to be precise because EHC sometimes introduces readings from extraneous sources.) The same ten poems now rest on more than forty versions—that is, the textual base has doubled.

To the improved texts of these ten late poems, the new edition adds twenty-four more.⁷ Eight of the twenty-four have been published (in *Collected Letters*, in academic journals, in early magazines) but the remaining sixteen have not previously been published in any form. Some exist in multiple versions (up to six, in one case), the majority in a single version. Only a couple are new in the sense they were previously unknown to anyone working on Coleridge: the larger number were known to the librarians in whose care they rested or to other Coleridge editors who drew them to my attention, they have exchanged owners in salesrooms, a good proportion must have been seen, as I said, by EHC; yet they are new in the sense that they are brought into relation

⁵ In the three poems positioned in Volume II, for example, EHC (i) passes over a stanza-break between ll. 34–5 of 'Cholera Cured Before-hand'; (ii) derives the title 'To a Child' from James Dykes Campbell's 1893 edition, not from the *Athenaeum* text as the footnote suggests; and (iii) misreads several words in 'Epitaph on the Present Year' (the title properly continues 'or' [not on] 'a Monument'; 'though' in the last line should read 'then'; I think EHC also misread the tangled l. 7). Compare (i) *Collected Letters of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, ed. Earl Leslie Griggs (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 6 vols. 1956–71), VI, pp. 917–18 and *Poetical Works* (London: William Pickering, 3 vols. 1834), II, pp. 142–4; (ii) *Athenaeum*, No. 3144 (28 January 1888), 116 with *Poetical Works*, ed. James Dykes Campbell (London: Macmillan, 1893), p. 467A; and (iii) British Library, C.44.g.1, rear flyleaves (also compare Campbell, 645B with EHC's version of this last: EHC had a touching respect for Campbell's editing and took over more than his titles).

⁶ For instance, the group of poems written from towards the end of 1830 should include 'Inscription on a Time-piece'. EHC, II, p. 974 gives it as an 'Epigram', taking his text from *Literary Remains* (1844). It had in fact been included in the second edition of *Table Talk* (1835) as one of the poems 'accidentally omitted' from *Poetical Works* (1834); also, nine different manuscript versions are now known and affect the positioning as well as the make-up of the text; it dates from November 1830. 'Reason' and 'Forbearance', on the other hand, need to be removed from the 1830–4 group; that is, further evidence suggests earlier origins.

⁷ Listed below in Appendix B.

with the other poems in a single undivided sequence for the first time. Whereas the old standard edition presents Coleridge's ten last poems (164 lines of verse) resting on twenty-three texts, the new edition replaces them with thirty-four poems (334 lines) resting on eighty-one texts—to which can be added six more poems with varying, lesser claims to authenticity.

As I will go on to describe, the picture changes because the additions are not simply more of the same: they supply what was suppressed or excluded. EHC's seven last poems—'Reason', 'Self-Knowledge', 'Forbearance', 'Love's Apparition and Evanishment', 'To the Young Artist Kayser of Kaserwerth', 'My Baptismal Birth-day' and 'Epitaph'—make up a rather solemn, one-directional sequence. When the poems which were relegated to Volume II or excluded altogether are reinstated, all is changed. It is at once apparent that EHC's divided presentation rests on a highly selective canon; the boundary-division between his first and second volumes collapses when the full amount of what Coleridge wrote is admitted. Newly-edited texts can be compared to refurbished pictures: to concentrate the same metaphor, when everything is allowed to enter the frame, the picture is transformed.

Coleridge was described as belonging to a 'new school' of poetry, along with Wordsworth and Southey, from the time of Jeffrey's review of *Thalaba* onwards.⁸ The irony is, that in the process by which the 'new school' was incorporated into mainstream culture as the Romantic movement, Coleridge's contribution came to be seen, by himself as well as others, in a mainly Wordsworthian light. This nineteenth-century view of Coleridge is what the 1912 edition canonises and what the suppressed and excluded poems challenge. They upset the conventional story that he came into his own as a poet when he began to write in a more or less Wordsworthian way and later came to write a different kind of poem when he reflected on his inability to sustain such notes: they make the relation between the so-called 'canonical' and 'sub-canonical' sorts of writing crucial instead. At the same time, Coleridge's poetry becomes of greater interest in its own right—that is, not simply to adorn a tale of a few miraculous successes followed by disappointment, 'Why is the harp of Quantock silent?'⁹—and on grounds other than those to which conventional appeal is made.

⁸ *Edinburgh Review*, I: 1 (October 1802), 63–83.

⁹ Wordsworth in a note to his 'Memorials of a Tour on the Continent, 1820', in *Poetical Works*, eds. E. De Selincourt and Helen Darbishire (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 5 vols. 1940–9; rev. 1952–9), III, p. 472.

The new Coleridge is different from the old in being more widely various, and, if he appears no less complicated, the complications are of a different sort. The relation to be understood is not between success and unsuccess but different levels of seriousness, varieties of address. Coleridge's whole poetry straddles a divide between exploration and meditation, on the one hand, and humour and satire on the other. The divide is not necessarily anguished, as some readers assume. He wrote poems of mystery in a literal sense, in that they utilise poetry to produce an order which at the beginning is unknown, and poems which are social and self-conscious and attempt different kinds of outcome. Such categories of poetry are not discontinuous, nor are the values they register. Understanding is not a matter of supplementing one category with the other but of perceiving how they thrive by virtue of their interconnectedness.

Walter Savage Landor was advised by his friend and future biographer, John Foster, to omit from a new edition of the *Imaginary Conversations* those which were on political and miscellaneous subjects, so as to heighten the specifically literary appeal of those which remained, but Landor resisted:

There is a particle of salt in the very poorest of them which will preserve it from decomposition. Beside, this is to be considered, which nobody has considered sufficiently. If Shakespeare had written but *Othello*, the noblest of human works, he would scarcely have been half so great as the having written many dramas, even inferior ones, has made him. Genius shows its power by its multiformity.¹⁰

This is the burden of what I have to say, likewise, and the example of the poems Coleridge wrote from late 1830 onwards will supply the detail.

The twenty-four poems to be added at the end of Coleridge's poetic life are representative of the additions contained in the new *Collected* edition. They are made up of rewriting and altering, typically in marginalia. For instance, five lines pretending to be 'From a Manuscript Poem of Athanasius Sphinx' are written into Nehemiah Grew's *Cosmologia Sacra* (1701) and two lines *On an Ellipsis* are written into John

¹⁰ John Forster, *Walter Savage Landor: A Biography* (London: Chapman and Hall, 2 vols. 1869), II, pp. 450–1.

Kenyon's *Rhymed Plea for Tolerance* (1833).¹¹ Lines are written in published letters and still-unpublished notebooks on subjects ranging from George Croly's *Apocalypse* and Reed's *Shakespeare* to a versified adaptation of Isaiah.¹² There are two sets of poems which were copied out against the demands of autograph-hunters; indeed the last in the new sequence is a sample of doggerel sent to a Mr Saunders a fortnight before Coleridge died.¹³ There is a forgotten sonnet titled 'The Irish Orator's Booze' published in *Fraser's Magazine*.¹⁴ There are poems over which Coleridge evidently took some care which exist in multiple versions, such as the 'Sonnet to my Tin Shaving-pot', and others such as a pair of commemorative word-cartoons of Lady Mary Shepherd at Cambridge which together extend to thirty-four lines but which were left in a notebook.¹⁵

The topics embraced by the additional poems are very much of their time. The adaptation of Isaiah departs from Coleridge's earlier interest, which was metrical—specifically hexametrical—and interprets the prophet in terms of contemporary imports from the East, the French as Philistines, Whig politicians, and so on.¹⁶ The one poem with an explicit socio-political meaning which is included in EHC's edition—'Cholera Cured Before-hand'—is joined by several others on reform. Coleridge writes about the Irish in politics and literary politics, about doctors and their professional lives as well as doctors from the point of view of a long-suffering patient. He writes about neighbours and house-visitors, and his attitudes towards women and children are, for better or worse, those of his time; the poem EHC titled 'To a Young Child' is characteristic. He writes against bluestockings but finds the commingling of George Croly's intellectual and social pretensions no less ridiculous:

The Keeper of the Seals inscribes my name—
What? in the Book of Life? O better far—

¹¹ British Library, C.44.g.1, p. -5 and C.126.d.16, p. 3; compare *Marginalia*, II, p. 888 and III, p. 370.

¹² These are written in Notebook 54, fol. 22, Notebook 55, fol. 18^v, and Notebook 52, fol. 23 (British Library, Add MSS 47549, 47550, 47547 respectively).

¹³ See *Collected Letters*, VI, pp. 988–9. There is a facsimile in Sotheby Catalogue, 17 December 1981, p. 114 (lot 199); also a photocopy in British Library, RP 2277 (ii).

¹⁴ V (July 1832), p. 721.

¹⁵ The two sets of lines on Mary Shepherd are in Notebook Q, fol. 72–3, also 68^v (New York Public Library, Berg Collection). The 'Tin Shaving-pot' poem is quoted in part below.

¹⁶ Coleridge's literary interest in Isaiah was usually in the possibility of hexametrical translation. A new, thirty-seven line version dating from December 1799 (Victoria College Library, S MS F2.7) is included in the *Collected Coleridge*.

In the Book of LIVINGS! *This* now I call Fame
O Croley! born beneath auspicious Star!¹⁷

Casual poems alternate with serious ones. Thus, 'Love's Apparition and Evanishment' appears between three savage lines on 'The Hunger of Liars' written in a notebook and thirty-six loosely-written lines beginning 'Oh! might I but my Patrick *love*' dictated to a medical assistant.¹⁸ 'Epitaph' is sandwiched between 'Athanasius Sphinx' and a jokey apology for Abraham Wivell's half-length portrait:

'In truth he's no beauty!' cry'd Moll, Poll, and Tab,
But they all of them own'd He'd the Gift of the Gab.¹⁹

'Know Thyself' comes between the lines 'On an Ellipsis of John Kenyon's' and five lines in mixed Latin and English which Coleridge glossed as 'Hexamerised Gobbets, expectorated 3 Feby. 1833, at the 10th Hour A.M. by me, poor body-crazed Sinner'. In Lorna Arnold's translation, they go:

Rumbling in the bowels, laborious Breathing, Bile, troublesome
catarrh;
Hand on hand pressed hard across the Duodenum;
Gall, unhappy Cat whose name is purulent Pus,
Mucus, when we Sing—i.e. Miew! curse! with Wheezing;
And this common Cough = Hecking, Tuzzle and Tearing.²⁰

One can easily appreciate what EHC achieved by passing over such lines and allowing only three carefully chosen examples into his Volume II.

The interpretation which EHC's choice imposes is that a serious poet at the end of his life writes about his coming end. The poet reflects on baptism, youth, lost love, truth, death, but seriousness is not compromised by levity. EHC's Coleridge does not indulge in outrageous rhymes and puns or write a poem such as the following, which acts out a drumming attempt to provide distraction from pain. It is headed,

¹⁷ Notebook 54, fol. 22 (British Library, Add MS 47549). Here and elsewhere I have not recorded fresh starts and deleted words in quoting from manuscript. The editor of *The Literary Gazette*, William Jerdan, used his influence to obtain a suitable benefice for Croley, but in vain, and it was not until 1835 that Croley became rector of St Stephen's, Walbrook.

¹⁸ 'The Hunger of Liars' appears in Notebook 51, fol. 5^v (British Library, Add MS 47546); 'Oh! might I but my Patrick *love*' in a contemporary notebook-album in private hands.

¹⁹ Versions of the lines are to be found in Arthur Coleridge, *Reminiscences*, ed. J. A. Fuller-Maitland (London: Constable, 1921), p. 43 and *Collected Letters*, VI, p. 969.

²⁰ The original lines were drafted in Notebook 54, fol. 19 (British Library, Add MS 47549).

‘Substitute for swearing under the torture of Sciatic Rheumatism and of equal virtue as a Charm’:

O Screams of Scotch Bagpipes! O Rub a Dub Dub!
 O Satan! O Moloch! O Bēelzebub!
 O Gripes Grapes and Barberries, acrid and crabby!
 Diabole diabolissime, abi! abi! abi!²¹

No matter that the related ‘Dialogue between a Nimble Doctor and a Crippled Patient’ is more representative of Coleridge’s late verse than the seven poems chosen by EHC which are recycled by the anthologists:

D^r Hop-o-my-thumb! my right Thigh’s rheumatic.
 Yes, Sir, a plain case! tis a dolour Sciatic.
 D^r Hop-o’ my-thumb, that frisk on so skittish,
Sigh Attic d’ ye call it? No, by Jove! ’tis Great British.²²

No matter that both sets of verses are indeed more representative of Coleridge’s verse overall: there are earlier ‘Lines on the Cur, Arthritis’ and the second addition to the complete sequence is ‘Fragments of an Ode on Punning’.²³ Such poems are an embarrassment to the assumptions about poetry which the 1912 arrangement protects.

Coleridge did not go soft in the head in his later years; I mean, additional poems of the sort I have been describing are distributed through his career. ‘Inscription on a Time-piece’, drafted in November 1830, is anticipated by ‘For a Clock in a Market-place’ drafted in 1809.²⁴ The ‘Tin Shaving-pot’ repeats the celebration of a battered tea-kettle at Christ’s Hospital.²⁵ ‘The Irish Orator’s Booze’ carries on from poems published in the *Morning Post* in 1801.²⁶ The copying-out of ‘A Guilty Sceptic’s Death Bed’ for autographs in November 1832

²¹ The first of six album epigrams copied in Coleridge’s hand on 13 October 1832 (Victoria College Library, S MS F2.15). The last line can be translated as ‘Most devilish devil! Avaunt! Avaunt! Avaunt!’

²² The last of the six epigrams described in the previous note. The sciatic rheumatism for which Coleridge was receiving treatment from J. H. B. Williams was the subject of two of the other six epigrams.

²³ For the first, a letter to Thomas Poole dated 17 May 1801 (British Library, Add MS 35343, fol. 279), see *Collected Letters*, II, p. 732. The second appears in Notebook 42, fols. 71–2 and is as yet unpublished.

²⁴ Compare Notebook 48, fol. 6^v (British Library, Add MS 47543) with Notebook L, fol. 22^v (*The Notebooks of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, ed. Kathleen Coburn *et al.* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 5 double vols. 1957—), III, #3546).

²⁵ ‘Monody on a Tea-kettle’ is printed in EHC, I, pp. 18–19.

²⁶ ‘Song to be sung by the Lovers of All the Noble Liquors Comprised under the Name of Ale’ and ‘Drinking *versus* Thinking; or, A Song Against the New Philosophy’ appeared in the *Morning Post*, 18 and 25 September 1801, over a pseudonym.

was prompted by a recollection of 'Epitaph on a Bad Man' which had been published in September 1801.²⁷ So the dialogue continues across the years. The first version of 'Epitaph' was conceived in a form and spirit close to the epitaph Coleridge wrote for himself at Edinburgh in 1803.²⁸ 'Self-knowledge' can be read as a companion to or development from 'Human Life, on the Denial of Immortality'.²⁹ There is continuity between the new poems I have been discussing and the earlier writing.

The previous canon of Coleridge's published poetry had included one sort of 'bad' poem from the start and its early date was its excuse. The three-volume collections of 1828 and 1829 went back to the single-volume collections of 1796, 1797 and 1803, to which Henry Nelson Coleridge added poems from manuscript in 1834. The following lines from EHC's version of 'The Kiss' are representative:

In tender accents, faint and low,
Well-pleas'd I hear the whisper'd 'No!'
The whispered 'No' —how little meant!
Sweet Falsehood that endears Consent!³⁰

Judges are nowadays reprimanded for saying as much, and the different level of thinking in poems like *Christabel* is startling. But the point at issue here is that poems of a differently 'bad' sort, which family editors excluded for understandable reasons at earlier times, were written by Coleridge in abundance throughout his life. Their number and quality suggest the continuity of his career is not to be seen as sentimental prentice work, emerging into the Stowey *annus mirabilis*, before collapsing into drugs and metaphysics—as Wordsworth put it, "in blossom" only for four years—from 1796 to 1800.³¹ They require us to look again at the sort of poet Coleridge most prolifically and continuously was.

The 287 poems which make up the sequence of EHC's canonical Volume 1 form less than half of what he wrote and one must acknowledge that they were accompanied by a range of poetry different in quality and ambition from the beginning. It is not helpful to relegate

²⁷ 'The Guilty Sceptic's Death Bed' is one of five sets of verses now at Boston University (Special Collections). The earlier poem, drafted in Notebook 3½ (*Notebooks*, I, #625 fol. 120^v), was published over a pseudonym in the *Morning Post*, 22 September 1801.

²⁸ Located in EHC, I, pp. 491–2 and II, p. 970, no.61 respectively.

²⁹ EHC, I, p. 487 and I, pp. 425–6.

³⁰ 'The Kiss', ll. 21–4; EHC, I, p. 64.

³¹ To Sir Henry Taylor; see his *Autobiography . . . 1800–1875* (London: Longman, 2 vols. 1885), I, p. 188.

the 'unserious' poems so as to contemplate the 'serious' poems without distraction. Poems like 'Epitaph' and 'The Pains of Sleep' and the 'Monody on the Death of Chatterton' make less sense when they are isolated in this way. The larger accompaniment comprises shards and fragments, and the additional completed poems are generally short, it is true, but they constitute a matrix, a substrate. It is not even accurate to describe the two modes as alternating. They are simultaneous; the additions supply the dominant continuum. It is difficult at first to understand how poems like 'Epitaph', 'The Pains of Sleep', and 'Monody on Chatterton' might arise from a background of continual poetic burbling but the effort is worthwhile. It enables one to appreciate qualities in the 'serious' poems which are otherwise obscured, and qualities in the merely rhyming, insistently punning poems which are equally worthy of attention.

I described the additional poems as 'merely' rhyming but the description requires qualification. We should note that, of the 334 lines of verse Coleridge wrote between the end of 1830 and his death, only five lines are unrhymed. His rhyming schemes usually follow a simple *aabb* or *abab* pattern; that is, his poems of all sorts characteristically rhyme merely. The most complicated instances among these late poems—'My Baptismal Birth-day' and 'Love's Apparition and Evanishment'—only reshuffle regroupings of the same. Coleridge makes no attempt to use rhyme-patterns in counterpoint with complicated shifts of point of view, as Blake and Wordsworth do in their earlier quatrain poems. His rhymes do not provide a form to write into and against, like the more elaborate stanzas favoured by Keats and Shelley; they exist simply to carry meaning forward. Stress falls on the rhymes, and the effect is as often as not mildly surprising, but the effects are neither delayed nor complicated by other effects. The metrical pattern is typically some version of pentameter, with free substitutions. Rhyme enables the lines to move in a spontaneous, ad-libbed, associative way, constituting for the most part a kind of 'low boil' verse.

Such a use of rhyme constitutes an aural worry bead; or, better, an invitation to articulate: 'Rhymes seeks S. T. COLERIDGE,' he professed.³² The insistent puns are part and parcel of the same manner:

³² In William Upcott's collection of autographs gathered entitled *Reliques of my Contemporaries* (2 MS vols. 1830–3), II, p. 46 at New York Public Library, Berg Collection. Compare 'Written in an Album', l. 2; EHC, II, p. 972, no.70.

after all, puns are constructed of words whose sounds fuse in total rhyme as their meanings fly apart. The interrelated rhyming and punning of Coleridge's late poems is witness to continual resolution and dissolution of meaning. Sometimes the puns are technically complex. The conclusion of the Latin-English original of the lines quoted earlier in Lorna Arnold's translation runs:

Mucus, cum Canimus—i.e. Miew! curse! with Wheezing;
Ac hic et haec Tussis = Hecking, Tuzzle and Tearing.

A reader must translate 'Canimus' into 'we sing', and then 'Wheezing' back into 'we sing' to get the point. 'Mucus' is not simply 'Mucus', it is 'Miew! Curse!' This is perhaps what many of us expect from puns, and there are other unpublished poems in which Coleridge goes further, with triple puns in several languages in characters transliterated into other alphabets.

The interest is not simply bookish gamesmanship, however. In 'The Three Patriots: Cockney Snip, Irish Blarney, and Me', the rhyming-punning sets out a critical-political position in the month before the Reform Bill passed its third reading in the Commons:

Cockney Snip.

I'se a Rifforman!

Irish Blarney.

A Rafformer I!

Me.

And I write them both, a loud cry,
And for this Riff-raff-form will live and die!³³

The mimicry sums up the coming together of divergent instinctive interests in a larger idea. It is satirical about the supporters and sympathetic to the general cause. Against such a background, the punning structure of the better-known 'My Baptismal Birth-day' is less likely to be overlooked:

Is that a Death-bed, where the CHRISTIAN lies?
Yes!—But not *his*: 'tis DEATH itself, *there* dies.

³³ In a letter to Charles Aders, 11 February 1832 (Cornell University, WORDSWORTH; *Collected Letters*, VI, p. 883).

‘My Baptismal Birth-day’ is based on the same punning coincidence of kinds of living and dying and the reversibility of categories as Donne’s Holy Sonnet 6, ‘Death be not proud . . .’. Even as Coleridge’s pun heroically yokes together meanings in a final statement, the appositional grammar tempers its effect as a conclusion. A device which elsewhere blows up in a reader’s face here lowers him more gently into the ground.

Puns are often effortful and pointless and they can also be sad, as in this last example. Perhaps late Victorians believed serious poets did not pun, but Coleridge was a contemporary of Charles Lamb and Thomas Hood and believed that, at the highest level, extremes meet. Like rhymes which draw attention to themselves, puns can be sombre as well as funny. They are ‘strictly, in a philosophical sense, a natural expression of natural emotion’; ‘Language itself is formed upon associations of this kind’.³⁴ Here is another previously unpublished poem from the years 1830–4 in which sounds clang shut like iron gates, and forms associated with light verse are freighted with anguish:

Rack not my death-bed!—Silence! No replying!
 Ah stern Alternative—Nothing or Hell!
 Of this poor hope would’st rob me, that in dying
 I became nothing! Hark! that distant Yell!
 No! twas the Echo, that repeated—HELL.³⁵

And here is a passage from another—‘An Elegiac Plusquam-Sesqui-Sonnet to my Tin Shaving-pot’—in which the overlaying of sound becomes, differently, a testament to tenderness:

Thy Tears on the hot Hob
 Say, Iss! Iss! Iss! hard by the Top-bar reeks,
 And to each tear makes answer with a Sob!
 The Cambrian’s Broth is none the worse for *Leeks*;
Rents are the landed Noble’s pride and glee;
Holes, side or bottom, both to Man and Gun
 Are apt and seemly.—Would, twere so with *thee*!³⁶

³⁴ *Lectures 1808–1819: On Literature*, ed. R. A. Foakes (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2 vols. 1987; *Collected Coleridge* 5), I, p. 271; *Notebooks*, III, #3762 fol. 97. Compare Sylvan Barnet, ‘Coleridge on Puns: A Note to his Shakespeare Criticism’, *Journal of English and Germanic Philology*, LVI (1957), 602–9.

³⁵ ‘A Guilty Sceptic’s Death Bed’ (Boston University, Special Collections).

³⁶ The version quoted here is from a fair copy in Coleridge’s own hand, made in his ‘Bed, book-room & sick-cage’ at Highgate (on fol. 34 of Quarto Notebook at New York Public Library, Berg Collection).

This is all very well, I hear someone say. There are no doubt connections between these poems written at the same time. It is not altogether surprising that the collapsing rhymester of 'Lines on Lady Shepherd' ('With Sal Atticum corn'd, / With Paper-Spice pepper'd, / With Book-Garnish adorn'd— / Enter Lady Mary Shepheard—')³⁷ should employ simple couplets to turn the meaning of 'Know Thyself' inside out ('Ignore thyself, and strive to know thy God!'). After all, 'Epitaph' employs identical means to convert 'Death in Life' into 'Life in Death'. What, though, is the connection between this kind of writing and Coleridge's earlier poems? To stop beating about the bush, what about the 'Ancient Mariner' and 'Christabel'? What has 'Kubla Khan' to do with the kind of poetry represented by the categories excluded by EHC's old standard edition? The question is a fair one and I think it can be answered fairly. DEATH and LIFE-IN-DEATH entered Coleridge's poetry in the 'Ancient Mariner'. The continuity is real.

The connecting factor was long ago described by Kenneth Burke in an essay entitled 'Musicality in Verse'.³⁸ Burke writes about the marked consistency of texture of Coleridge's verse, and explains it with reference to habitual phonetic and grammatical patterns: alliteration concealed in cognate variation as in 'bathed by the mist', acrostic scrambling as in 'tyrannous and strong' and 'A damsel with a dulcimer', tonal chiasmus ('The ship drove fast'), patterns of augmentation and diminution. His detailed analysis makes evident that the kind of effects which give Coleridge's verse its characteristic sound are gained by versions of punning and rhyming such as I have been describing. Compare the changing of vowels within a constant consonantal frame in 'loud lewd Mirth'; or the repeating of one consonant while varying its partner with a non cognate variant ('glimmers with green light'; 'fluent phrasemen', 'in green and sunny glade'). The effects are subtle and, without going so far as to claim that the habitual patterns Burke describes were consciously striven for, Coleridge appears to have been aware of the reversals of direction they contained.

In the 'Ancient Mariner', the narrative establishes itself with preliminary interruptions and quickly settles into a mood of rising expectation

³⁷ ll. 1–4 in Notebook Q, fol. 72 (New York Public Library, Berg Collection).

³⁸ Appended to *The Philosophy of Literary Form* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2nd edn. 1967), pp. 369–78.

which then peaks and goes into reverse. As the Mariner catches up with the implications of his crime, he begins again from an opposite attitude. ‘The Sun came up upon the left’ becomes ‘The Sun now rose upon the right’ and the reversal contains the argument of the poem: how to embrace this kind of oscillation, emotionally and metaphysically. The narrative as a whole attempts to bring into alignment the details of texture analysed by Burke to achieve some kind of rapprochement. Parts V and VI, in which Coleridge expanded on the first draft of his narrative,³⁹ contain writing whose rhyme and texture is as different as are the meanings the longer stanzas try to control. They appear to represent an attempt to trawl deeper in an attempt to achieve some resolution of the debate between the ‘Two voices in the air’, one stern and the other ‘soft as honey-dew’.

‘Christabel’ takes on the argument broached in the expanded portion of the ‘Ancient Mariner’, through the metaphor of guardian spirits, at a self-consciously deeper level. Coleridge said his purpose was to ‘have more nearly realized my ideal, than I had done in my first attempt’.⁴⁰ The lengthened ballad stanzas are expanded into rhymed paragraphs, and sound-effects are stretched across an even wider field of meaning. ‘Christabel’ engages the issues which emerged during the composition of the ‘Ancient Mariner’ and founders in the attempt. Part I sets out the problem of how innocence can be contaminated by an awareness of evil with such subtle force that there is no way to continue in the same terms. Coleridge attempted to continue the narrative, but the texture of the verse in Part II reveals the focus has been deflected to a more manageable level. The real issue is a situation; it can be wound into and better understood, but not sufficiently understood to unwind into a plot with a happy outcome. ‘The reason of my not finishing Christabel’, Coleridge is reported as saying, ‘is not that I don’t know how to do it; for I have, as I always had, the whole plan entire from beginning to end in my mind; but I fear I could not carry on with equal success the execution of the Idea—the most difficult, I think, that can be attempted to Romantic Poetry—I mean witchery by daylight.’⁴¹

³⁹ This claim rests on textual analysis in the new *Collected Coleridge* edition. See meanwhile Stephen Parrish, “‘Leaping and Lingerin’”: Coleridge’s lyrical ballads’ in Richard Gravil, Lucy Newlyn and Nicholas Roe (eds.), *Coleridge’s Imagination: Essays in Memory of Pete Laver* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), pp. 102–16 (109–12 esp.)

⁴⁰ *Biographia Literaria*, eds. James Engell and W. Jackson Bate (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2 vols. 1983; *Collected Coleridge* 7), II, p. 7.

⁴¹ *Table Talk*, ed. Carl Woodring (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2 vols. 1990; *Collected Coleridge* 14), I, pp. 409–10 (1 July 1833). Earlier editions give a curtailed version under 6 July.

The relation between sound and meaning in the 'Ancient Mariner' and 'Christabel', and its radical originality, has been stated very clearly by the Irish poet, Brian Lynch.⁴² He suggests that the quality which distinguishes such poems might have been dulled as much as nurtured by the drug dependency to which it is usually ascribed, and that their effects are related to what he calls 'a sort of prosodic automatism'.

'The Ancient Mariner', 'Christabel' and the other poems in the ballad form are visionary, but the sight is sound-dependent, driven by the senseless possibilities of English rhyme. (Have these poems ever been successfully translated?)

They make up a kind of poetry which is new in the English language, 'the first that ever burst / Into that silent sea'. Richard Holmes's new anthology makes evident the centrality of the ballad-mode and Holmes reminds us of its power to connect unexpected meanings in sometimes shocking ways:

when Byron read 'Christabel' aloud at the Villa Diodati, one stormy night in June 1816, Shelley ran out in a fit and Mary Shelley began her novel *Frankenstein*.⁴³

Coleridge's later poems are not, of course, engaged in the same issues in the same way. Verse is not being used to trawl for under-meaning; he is more accepting of mysteries which cannot be explained; he wrote allegories which map situations he had previously hoped to explore. The sound of chiasmus in later poems like 'Youth and Age' is balanced self-consciously in a way Kenneth Burke calls 'pointed'. Such a reversal as 'Flowers are lovely, love is flowerlike' contains the identical oppositions which sustain poems like the 'Ancient Mariner' and 'Christabel', but with an awareness that their mystery is not to be plumbed:

FLOWERS are lovely; LOVE is flower-like;
 FRIENDSHIP is a sheltering tree;
 O the Joys, that came down shower-like,
 Of FRIENDSHIP, LOVE, and LIBERTY
 Ere I was old!⁴⁴

One has to reckon the same awareness contributed to the ironic reversal and deflation of the later punning, the later different uses of rhyme.

⁴² 'Revelation of a Profound Metaphysician' (review of Richard Holmes; see below n. 43), the *Irish Times*, No. 44,494 (13 April 1996), Weekend: Books, 8.

⁴³ *Coleridge: Selected Poems* (London: HarperCollins, 1996), p. 68.

⁴⁴ 'Youth and Age', ll. 18–22. I quote from the version published in *Poetical Works* (London: William Pickering, 3 vols. 1828), II, pp. 82–3.

A corroborative example is provided by the following ‘outgrowth’ of ‘Youth and Age’ which Coleridge used for album verses:

Dewdrops are the Gems of Morning,
But the Tears of mournful Eve:
Where no Hope is, Life’s a Warning
That only serves to make us grieve.⁴⁵

The lines employ the same rhetorical formula which sustains the opening of ‘The Irish Orator’s Booze’:

Whisky is the drink of Erin,
But of England foaming Ale:
Where good drink is, Life is cheering
That only serves to make us brave
In our old age.⁴⁶

The techniques which draw meanings together can put them asunder, whether tenderly or humorously. Chiasmus can divide as well as commingle. Echoes can be plaintive or hollow as well as resonant and magical.

As a last example of the continuity of Coleridge’s poetic means, take ‘Love’s Apparition and Evanishment’ (and I should warn that versions derived from EHC’s edition and which include the ‘Envoy’ are misleading⁴⁷). The poem returns to what many have identified as a theme connected with Coleridge’s love for Sara Hutchinson but which, as a feeling, predates their first meeting. Though this poem invokes the ‘sod-built Seat of Camomile’ he built with the Wordsworths in October

⁴⁵ From a fair copy in Folio Notebook, fol. 2^v (Huntington Library, HM 17299; *Notebooks*, IV, #5259).

⁴⁶ *Fraser’s Magazine*, V (July 1832), 721.

⁴⁷ EHC, I, pp. 488–9 prints a mixed text, combining twenty-eight lines which were twice printed as a complete poem in Coleridge’s lifetime with an ‘Envoy’ drawn from Derwent Coleridge’s edition of *Poems* (1852) (in fact extempore lines written into Notebook 28, dating from April 1824: compare *Notebooks*, IV, #5146). The mixed version is reproduced by Stephen Potter (ed.), *Coleridge: Select Poetry and Prose* (London: The Nonesuch Press, 1933), pp. 127–8; Earl Leslie Griggs (ed.), *The Best of Coleridge* (New York: Thomas Nelson, 1934), pp. 131–2; Elisabeth Schneider (ed.), *Samuel Taylor Coleridge: Selected Poetry and Prose* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1951), pp. 161–2; John Beer (ed.), *Samuel Taylor Coleridge: Poems* (London: J. M. Dent, 3rd edn., 1993), pp. 487–8 (the incorrect pattern of indentation in Beer’s ll. 1–4 incidentally derives from EHC, I, pp. 488–9, where ll. 2–3 straddle the page-break). The correct version is given by Morchard Bishop (= Oliver Stonor) (ed.), *The Complete Poems of Samuel Taylor Coleridge* (London: Macdonald, 1954), pp. 323–4; H. J. Jackson (ed.), *The Oxford Authors: Coleridge* (Oxford: OUP, 1985), p. 152; *The Oxford Poetry Library: Samuel Taylor Coleridge* (Oxford: OUP, 1994), pp. 152–3; Holmes (ed.), *Selected Poems*, p.221.

1801, the image of longing repeats the situation of 'Frost at Midnight' written at Stowey and set, earlier again, in childhood days at Christ's Hospital. It is written out of a deep sense of dissatisfaction and failure, yet in the late poem failure is accepted as a pre-condition of lasting satisfaction. The meeting of Love and Hope is situated at a distance from the observer, who reacts to it as if to a charade. The characters act out a trauma which is repetitive but in an unrealised way. The situation is nuanced by regret, but the will to intervene and change the situation is suspended.

One must recognise that 'Love's Apparition and Evanishment' reflects the grounds of Coleridge's Christian belief, his sense of the moral dimension of failure which distinguished him from Wordsworth and from most of his contemporaries. He was always a poet of weakness and fallibility in the Christian sense. In a note on Donne's Sermon VII he glossed Donne's observation—'as senseless, and as absurd a thing to deny that the Son of God hath redeemed the world, as to deny that God hath created the world'—as follows: 'A bold but true Saying. The man who cannot see the redemptive agency in the Creation, has but dim apprehension of the creative power.'⁴⁸ Coleridge's sense of death in life and life in death is not simply a late orthodox obsession (he was never, in the obvious sense, even in later life, orthodox). The sense of personal inadequacy which extended to the necessity for redemption makes his art of failure different from modernists such as Beckett who have also explored the limits of unachievement.⁴⁹ I introduce this reminder because the moral dimension makes the style of these late poems different, too. Coleridge's puns are a kind of apology for failure: not a *tour de force* of self-advertisement, not even (as so often in Hood) painfully desperate. They are part of a style which has a more various human content than might appear and is not separate from the poems Coleridge has previously been known by. He was always a rhymester, sometimes a poet, and the qualities of one throw light on the other.

⁴⁸ *Marginalia*, II, p. 293. I am grateful to Miss Rachel Trickett for reminding me of this remark.

⁴⁹ My own essay, 'Coleridge's "Love": "All he can manage, more than he could"' in Tim Fulford and Morton D. Paley (eds.), *Coleridge's Visionary Languages: Essays in Honour of J. B. Beer* (Woodbridge: D. S. Brewer, 1993), pp. 49–66, is open to misinterpretation on this point.

The relation between poet and rhymester is the heart of the mystery. Only Keats among Romantic poets went in for the same sort of light verse, but poems like ‘There was a naughty boy’,⁵⁰ represent his Sidmouth mood (though this poem was written in Scotland). Helter-skelter anapaests were a holiday excursion for the poet who hoped to rival Milton and Shakespeare, whereas Coleridge the rhymester moved more variously (less hectically) and for a much longer period across a broader field. The diversity of Mangan’s poetry is similar in kind but at the same time is less rich and has specifically Irish dimensions. I have argued it simply will not do to ignore Coleridge’s rhyming, and there are more continuities than I have so far mentioned. I will add one other which has to do with textual matters. It was borne in on me while the evidence was accumulating and again only afterwards came to make sense. It connects with what I have been saying about reversals of meaning and the burden of self-consciousness.

When one attempts to confront the whole wide range of textual evidence, one is struck by the gratuitousness of Coleridge’s three great poems. I mean, so much about them continues unknown, even while other evidence multiplies. Thus, Coleridge’s movements can be plotted almost week by week, sometimes day by day, throughout 1797–8 but we do not know when he wrote ‘Kubla Khan’. We have multiple draft versions of ‘Religious Musings’ and ‘The Eolian Harp’, but the first version we have of the ‘Ancient Mariner’ is the one printed in *Lyrical Ballads* 1798—that is, after it had expanded from a version of 340 lines to 658 lines—and the first versions we have of ‘Christabel’ and ‘Kubla Khan’ are presentation fair-copies. The three poems are gratuitous in that they appear without previous textual background.

One might overlook such a feature because there is a wealth of other material, but this is in fact a distraction because the material post-dates publication. In the case of the ‘Ancient Mariner’, it begins with annotated copies of *Lyrical Ballads* and proliferates with annotated copies of *Sibylline Leaves*; in the case of ‘Christabel’, there is a kind of pre-publication stage of fair-copies which circulated among enlarging circles of friends; and then, following book-publication in 1816 alongside ‘Kubla Khan’, copies were annotated in response to hostile reviews. The three poems share a distinctive textual history which is quite different from ‘Lewti’ or ‘Alice du Clos’ or ‘The Destiny of Nations’,

⁵⁰ *The Poems of John Keats*, ed. Jack Stillinger (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1978), pp. 267–70.

the preliminary stages of which are separately represented by numerous tortuous drafts.⁵¹

The feature is not limited to the three great poems. No manuscript has been discovered for 'Frost at Midnight', whose complicated textual history is all post-publication. Nor is it limited to poems written during 1797–8, so many of which appear to have been composed out of doors, walking.⁵² Two manuscripts of the verse 'Letter to Sara Hutchinson' exist but, typically, they both appear to be fair copies and their relation to one another is obscure. Negative evidence is inconclusive—materials may yet come to light—but the conclusion seems inescapable: Coleridge composed mainly in his head and wrote down what he composed at a subsequent stage. In a few instances, he retained poems in his head for more than twenty years. The so-far unpublished lines 'On Quitting Bristol for Nether Stowey: To Mr Maurice' were composed on New Year's Day 1797 and written down in 1828–9. 'The Ballad of the Dark Ladiè' was begun in 1798 but only written down in the years following 1827.⁵³

The significance of the situation can be elucidated with reference to W. B. Yeats. Yeats seems to have been unable to think without a pen in his hand. His poems begin in a manuscript draft where handwriting is often nominal—that is, a squiggle serves to indicate what might later become 'this' or 'that'. Yeats seems on the one hand to have needed to write to bring to birth and at the same time to have been guided by the feeling that a legible hand is binding, that he was more free to make and remake himself while the components were not in fair-copy dress. The Cornell Yeats is a record of this primary phase which one could accurately describe as pre-textual. French editors classify such raw

⁵¹ The tangle of rewriting in these later instances is recorded by James Dykes Campbell's type-facsimile, *Coleridge's Poems* (Westminster: Archibald Constable, 1899).

⁵² The influence of Wordsworth can be added to the domestic reasons for Coleridge's composing out of doors *in ambulando* at this time. There are no working-manuscripts of such contemporaneous ballad poems written by Wordsworth as 'The Idiot Boy' and 'Peter Bell' either. Compare 'Lyrical Ballads', and *Other Poems, 1797–1800*, eds. James Butler and Karen Green (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992) and *Peter Bell*, ed. John E. Jordan (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985). The new category of 'Hill Walking Poems' in Holmes (ed.), *Selected Poems*, pp. 133–56 should be read alongside the several recent studies of walking and Romantic poetry (e.g. by Jeffrey C. Robinson, Roger Gilbert, Anne D. Wallace). *Contra* Flaubert ('One cannot think and write, except sitting'), 'Only thoughts reached by walking have value' (Nietzsche).

⁵³ The manuscript of 'On Quitting Bristol' is at New York Public Library, Berg Collection; it is a fair-copy, not a draft. The 'Dark Ladiè' was first published in *Poetical Works* 1834; see below n. 55 on the fair-copy manuscripts.

material as *avant-texte*, German editors as *paralipomena*. The situation with respect to Coleridge is different in late years as well as early. Brief verses in notebooks and letters are often caught as they came but more extended poems in multiple versions have characteristically been evolved before the first writing-down. Coleridge's written revisions operate in a post-textual situation.

There are eight manuscript versions of 'Inscription on a Time-piece' (or nine, if one counts one which I have not been able to locate). There are six manuscript versions of 'An Elegiac Plusquam-Sesqui-Sonnet to my Tin Shaving-pot'. There are six manuscript versions of 'Love's Apparition and Evanishment'. My point is the manuscripts of these three late poems are not working-areas: they are re-runs, improved or alternative versions produced for different occasions. They are witness to someone who composed in his head and for the most part felt easy writing out versions as a whole. Once Coleridge's poems entered print, the story was different. Print freezes writing in an oppressive public space in which an author possesses no special privilege, and the anxious Coleridge was moved by antagonistic reviews to revise in a correspondingly more constricted mental space. He added errata and footnotes, marginal glosses and apologetic prefaces; he tinkered with alternatives to passages which had caused displeasure or offence; but post-textual intervention of this kind is a different order of adjustment from pre-textual composition. It is reactive, indeed very often defensive, and the revisions to 'Christabel', following the reviews,⁵⁴ provide the most graphic example of how Coleridge wrote, at this stage of composition, under a sense of threat.

Confirmation of the same feature is supplied by a habitual pattern which at first appears odd. Coleridge kept his unfinished 'Ballad of the Dark Ladiè' in his head for many years after composing it, as I have said, but he first copied it down in albums of persons he did not know. One album belonged to a friend of his daughter, the other to the wife of a politician of whom he did not specially approve.⁵⁵ It is almost as if, just because the unfinished poem was problematic, it was more

⁵⁴ Conveniently to hand in J. R. de J. Jackson (ed.), *Coleridge: The Critical Heritage* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1970), pp. 199–247. Coleridge was most deeply wounded by the reviews in the *Examiner* and the *Edinburgh Review*, which he assumed were both by Hazlitt.

⁵⁵ That is, in the albums of Louisa Powles (Bodleian, MS Eng.Misc.e.181, fols. 9–12) and of Lady Hannah Ellice (in private hands). He made another fair copy for an unknown person (Yale University, MS Vault Shelves Coleridge).

available to be released when cast to the wind. Another intensely personal poem written in the 1820s which has to do with Coleridge's feelings for Sara Hutchinson, the previously-unpublished 'Thou and I', similarly appears to have been written down only once in the album of someone he did not personally know.⁵⁶ One recalls that the only manuscript of 'Kubla Khan', which he was again evidently anxious about, was copied for another autograph collector he did not know; and that the most elaborately annotated copy of 'Christabel' was abandoned in a lending-library.⁵⁷ Coleridge was inhibited by print, even by confronting himself in words, as he imagined himself being read with other eyes.

Another kind of confirmation is supplied by the different state of the manuscripts of Coleridge's writing in blank verse and rhyming forms. The working drafts of 'Religious Musings' and 'The Destiny of Nations' are complicated in a way matched only by the revisions of 'Love' and 'Alice du Clos' among poems in ballad-rhyming form, and they are special cases. Coleridge seems to have been specially inhibited as a writer of formal blank verse, which is why he persuaded himself it might be written in a more relaxed register as 'Poems which affect not to be Poetry', *Sermoni propria*.⁵⁸ He was similarly uninhibited in the writing of dramatic blank verse, presumably because of practical exigency on the one hand and the demand to keep closer to spoken rhythms on the other. I think it can be argued from textual evidence that simple rhyme served as a mnemonic aid in the kind of composition Coleridge preferred. As the vehicle of hymns and popular ballads, it is not inhibiting in the way Miltonic blank verse can be. It supplies verse forms as unassuming as so many of Coleridge's subjects—kettles and shaving pots, arthritis and the naming of Bombay, bad German roads and a 'fill-a-sopha-col' game for Mary and Charlotte Brent—and it allows the juices to flow.

⁵⁶ Namely, James Keymer of Great Yarmouth. The mother of Coleridge's landlord, James Gillman, was a Keymer from Norwich. The manuscript is at the Pierpont Morgan Library (uncatalogued).

⁵⁷ The recipient of 'Kubla Khan' has been identified as Elizabeth Smith by Hilton Kelliher, 'The "Kubla Khan" Manuscript and Its First Collector', *The British Museum Journal*, XX: 2 (Autumn 1994), 184–98. The Ramsgate Library copy of 'Christabel' is described by Barbara E. Rooke, 'An Annotated Copy of Coleridge's *Christabel*', *Studia Germanica*, XV (1974), 179–92.

⁵⁸ Compare the subtitle and motto of 'Reflections on Having Left a Place of Retirement'. Also compare 'The Nightingale. A Conversation Poem'. The feature was long ago singled out for comment by George McLean Harper 'Coleridge's Conversation Poems' in his *Spirit of Delight* (New York: Henry Holt, 1928), pp. 3–27.

These several considerations return us to the point at issue. There is a connection between the spontaneous, ad-libbed, associative quality of what turns out to be the bulk of Coleridge's writing and his attitude towards writing down. Rhyme is already a form of 'outrance': a technical requirement which brings speech into neutral semi-public space. Rhyme has a senseless, self-sustaining life of its own which allows other things to happen. In *Biographia Literaria*, Coleridge quotes Petronius and Shakespeare on this point: 'Precipitandus est *liber spiritus*' ('The *free* spirit must be hurried onward') and "'The man that hath not music in his soul" can indeed never be a genuine poet.'⁵⁹ Sense can be brought into alignment with rhyme in the most profound way—that is, sound can bring unconscious meaning to birth⁶⁰—or rhyme can set itself against sense and laugh at it. The sound of light verse is neither less nor more complicated than the sound of serious verse: it is subtly complicated in the 'Tin Shaving-pot' poem in an evident way; 'Youth and Age' and 'The Irish Orator's Booze' march to the same tune. The difference between light and serious verse is produced by the mode of interchange between sound and meaning, even when the sounds are similar.

One might ask why Coleridge wrote down so much—lines, fragments, trial versions—when he found writing down could render the material less malleable, even inert. The answer is that though the stream of rhyming manifests the same inhibitions (puns, after all, are nothing if not self-conscious) it does so at lesser intensity. The situation of incessant versifying builds resistance to apology. He composed orally because '*writing a thing down rids the mind of it,*' even as it gives '*outness to Thoughts*',⁶¹ but by writing so much, so variously, throughout his life Coleridge was not being wasteful. The writing which EHC either relegated to an appendix or omitted altogether kept open the possibility of movement. Such poems are enabling, they provide bridges, and they are of interest in themselves.

Coleridge is impossible to believe in simply as the author of 287

⁵⁹ *Biographia Literaria*, II, pp. 14 (quoting *Satyricon*, 118) and 20 (adapting *Merchant of Venice*, V, i. 83).

⁶⁰ As T. S. Eliot testified, writing about the 'auditory imagination' (*The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism* (London: Faber and Faber, 1933), pp. 118–19; and more recently Seamus Heaney writing about 'straining towards a strain, in the sense that the effort is to repose in the stability conferred by a musically satisfying order of sounds' (*Crediting Poetry* (Oldcastle: Gallery Books, 1995), p. 28).

⁶¹ Detached thoughts recorded in Notebook 8; *Notebooks*, I ##1388, 1387.

canonical poems. The poems are separately authoritative but do not add up. One needs a sense of the matrix—their continuing, shifting, various background—to see where they come from and to understand them aright. Only the jostling variety of all 706 and more titles can communicate the creative evasiveness and inventiveness which is latent in the formally achieved poems. Just as Coleridge shifted from politics to theology to literary criticism to theory of science, and balked at domestic arrangements and romantic attachments and indeed any settled scheme, so his poetry is not contained in the high Romantic style. It moves from odes and elegies and blank verse to epigrams and satires and album verses without interruption. Chiasmus is continuous with punning and with rhyming. Streamy processes of association which conjoin complicated webs of reading also produce nonsense verses like the following sent to Wordsworth with the 'serious' *Nightingale*:

And like an honest Bard, dear Wordsworth,
You'll tell me what you think, my Bird's worth.
My opinion's briefly this—
His *bill* he opens not amiss;
And when he has sung a stave or so,
His breast, & some small space below,
So throbs & swells, that you might swear
No vulgar music's working there.⁶²

If the new enlarged Coleridge at first appears incoherent because of these reversals of mood, I can only recommend standing further back to take in more meaning.

When I look at the new *Collected* edition of Coleridge's poetry, I imagine that its first readers will follow the course I followed myself. They are likely to be most interested in what I hope are more accurate versions of the poems they already know. Mistakes become evident in any edition after a length of time and fresh material comes to light. EHC's edition has been in print for more than eighty years and it is not surprising if readers interested in such things look forward to the rectification of errors which annoy them. I also anticipate that such readers will at first find the poems which have been added something of

⁶² ll. 3–10. The lines are dated 10 May 1798 (Wordsworth Library, Grasmere, MS 14/1; *Collected Letters*, I, p. 406).

a distraction. Looking to read 'Mahomet' in its new, improved version, for example, they will find it embedded in a surround of forty epigrams translated from the German, at least a quarter of which will be totally unfamiliar. Looking to read the poem on Fulwood Smerdon, 'Written after a Walk before Supper', they will find it sandwiched between a new ninety-six-line poem in Greek and nineteen new lines in Latin.⁶³ To the extent that readers come to Coleridge's poems with established expectations, they will certainly be disconcerted.

My argument here has followed the stages of my own acquaintance. I think one begins as I described but later reaches a stage when Coleridge cannot be read in the old way any longer. One cannot simply relegate what turns out to be the larger part of his verse to a limbo-category, as previous editions have effectively done. All the verse he wrote has been brought into the new edition and it has, as I have tried to show, intimate connections with poems we thought we knew. Indeed, as I hope I have made clear, the connections oblige us to change our evaluation of both new and old. The change of perspective cannot be written off to literary history. It is true that the larger proportion of additional poems date from after Coleridge moved to Highgate, and the larger proportion of these are what might be called light verse, but they cannot be dismissed with mention of post-Napoleonic/pre-Victorian taste and a drum roll of the names of Reynolds, Hunt, Hood, Maginn. Coleridge's puns work differently from Hood's, his familiar manner is distinct from Hunt's, the different range of qualities represented by his sentimental verse was in place in the 1790s. Poems to the daughters of Highgate neighbours are continuous with the previously-unpublished 'To Miss Dashwood Bacon' written in Devonshire thirty years before.⁶⁴ Verses written during the album-craze of the 1820s cast a retrospective illumination on juvenilia like 'Kisses'.

The new material reveals Coleridge as someone who thought instinctively in verse, yet whose uncertain sense of worth allowed him a freedom and mobility in the medium denied to most contemporaries. Scott and Byron, for instance, were oppressed by obligations to the reading public; Wordsworth and Keats in their different ways were restricted by their ambition to succeed; Shelley's elevated sense of the

⁶³ That is, between the Greek-prize ode on the slave trade, 'Sors Misera Servorum . . .', and 'Latin Lines on Ottery's Inhabitants' sent to George Coleridge in a letter.

⁶⁴ 'To Miss Dashwood Bacon' is to be found on fol. 7^v of her Commonplace Book (Victoria College Library, uncatalogued). Examples of Highgate poems can be found in EHC, I, p. 482 ('To Miss A.T.') and II, p. 1009, no. 50 ('Elisa: Translated from Claudian').

poet's role was sometimes out of touch with the exigencies of domestic living. Coleridge wrote verse all the time, in the way Emily Dickinson did, but often socially as well as privately and therefore more variously. He used verse on occasions to draw out feelings he did not understand, at other times to sum up what he understood only too well. A range which extends from private meditation to hilarious sociability makes a ragged oeuvre. Some poems are polished like pebbles, others are scarred by anxiety and revision, the majority were cast upon the waters—sibylline leaves. Coleridge's rhymes make a stream which is always full and broad and which occasionally slows down over deeper currents. He emerges as the author not of three or thirty or even 300 poems, muddling in their difference, but of a body of 700 poems whose connected qualities derive from their variety.

What I mean is, as more evidence is brought to bear, the apparent raggedness of the whole body of Coleridge's writing becomes important in itself. I can think of no other writer whose collected poems contain such muddle, and yet it is not a muddle. Coleridge never struck any note simply. An early *jeu d'esprit* which EHC included in his main sequence of poems, 'A Mathematical Problem', and presumably reckoned could be excused as youthful high jinks, turns out not to be a simple literary exercise at all. The geometrical construction of an equilateral triangle simulates the democratic reasoning of those French calculators against whom Burke wrote: 'True; if the constitution of a kingdom be a problem of arithmetic.'⁶⁵ The most innocently literary-seeming poems turn out to be something else as well. We were long ago taught to see politics in the 'Ancient Mariner' and 'Kubla Khan'; they are also present in 'This Lime-tree Bower my Prison' and even in 'Love'. Few statements in Coleridge are entirely unqualified by other meanings, and, when he appears to be most in earnest, his reader should be most on guard.

In October 1832, after a sulphated hot-air bath treatment for sciatic rheumatism, after his skin then began to peel and he cut himself shaving, Coleridge wrote (or pretended to have written) the following 'Autograph on an Autopergamene' (autopergamene = self-parchment):

Why, sure, such a wonder was never yet seen!
An Autograph on an Autópergamene!

⁶⁵ *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, ed. Conor Cruise O'Brien (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1968), p. 141. Compare EHC, I, pp. 21–4. Coleridge's poem participates in a minor genre of Cambridge undergraduate poems on the democratic triangle.

A Poet's own Name, and own Hand-writing both,
 And the Ink and the Parchment all of his own growth—
 The Ink his own Blood and the Parchment his Skin—
 This from's Leg, and the other from's razor-snipt Chin—⁶⁶

The poem was one of those taken up by journalists a while ago,⁶⁷ somewhat to my discomfort, but when I heard it read on the Irish radio and the newscaster finished off, with evident affection, 'There's old Coleridge for you!', I was made to think. Coleridge was never as respectable as his family wanted him to be: he has a maverick side which was cramped by conventional expectations. I believe he is the better poet because he was always more than a poet and because his serious side did not exist independently of his whole nature.

Perhaps so-called 'ordinary readers' always knew this: it is certainly contrary to much academic thinking, but I think the instincts of ordinary readers are right. When Coleridge's rhyming is accepted, he appears less solemn, more fun. He appears more sociable, as in Richard Holmes' biography,⁶⁸ but also more bookish at the same time; his arc is intellectually as well as emotionally wide. Coleridge does not sit as Shelley pictured him, 'obscure / In the exceeding lustre and the pure / Intense irradiation of a mind, . . . A hooded eagle among blinking owls'.⁶⁹ He gambols like the friend who made Dorothy Wordsworth and her brother laugh:

Noisy he was, and gamesome as a boy;
 His limbs would toss about him with delight,
 Like branches when strong winds the trees annoy.
 Nor lacked his calmer hours device or toy
 To banish listlessness and irksome care;
 He would have taught you how you might employ
 Yourself; and many did to him repair,—
 And certes not in vain; he had inventions rare.

Not that he was devoid of a serious side:

⁶⁶ The version quoted here is from a letter to James Gillman dated 13 October 1832 at Princeton University Library (Robert H. Taylor Collection; *Collected Letters*, VI, p. 927 var). Coleridge copied out another version in a manuscript now at Victoria College Library (S MS F2.15).

⁶⁷ Nick Brooke and Tim Rayment, 'Don Finds 300 Coleridge poems', *Sunday Times*, No. 8894 (12 February 1995), 3; etc.

⁶⁸ *Coleridge: Early Visions* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1989).

⁶⁹ 'Letter to Maria Gisborne', ll. 202–4, 208; *The Complete Poetical Works of Percy Bysshe Shelley*, ed. Thomas Hutchinson (London: OUP, rev. 1945), p. 368.

He would entice that other Man to hear
His music, and to view his imagery.⁷⁰

Wordsworth did not always picture Coleridge so. He came to judge him as a failed version of the kind of poet he was himself. 'Coleridge's twenty-sixth year was his "annus mirabilis", and . . . if he had not suffered himself to be drawn aside from poetry he must have proved the chief poet of modern times.'⁷¹ I hope I have said enough to show the old myth will have to be replaced, I hope with something closer to William and Dorothy's earlier view. Coleridge colluded in the fiction of being a dead poet, as indeed he became in the Romantic sense. He meanwhile went on writing in ways not dissimilar from what he had written before and betimes. He was congenitally transgressive, he never succeeded in anything, according to one way success is measured, but he succeeded so much the better in others. The 'new poetry' in the *Collected Coleridge* edition will prove him to be a 'chief poet', in Wordsworth's words, in whom 'modern times' can delight.

Appendix A

The Complete Poetical Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge, ed. Ernest Hartley Coleridge (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2 vols. 1912), I, pp. 487–92. Beginning with the last poem dated under 1830 and continuing to the end of the sequence.

*p. 487: 'Reason', 8 lines beginning 'Whene'er the mist, that stands 'twixt God and thee'; dated 1830; only text *On the Constitution of the Church and the State* (London: Hurst, Chance, 1830) [first coll *Poetical and Dramatic Works*, ed. Richard Herne Shepherd (London: Macmillan, 4 vols. 1877–80)].

p. 487: 'Self-Knowledge', 10 lines beginning 'Gnothi seauton!—and is this the prime'; dated 1832; only text *PW* (1834) [title from *PW* (1893)].

*p. 488: 'Forbearance', 16 lines beginning 'Gently I took that which ungently came'; dated ?1832; only text *PW* (1834) [title from *PW* (1893)].

⁷⁰ 'Stanzas Written in my Pocket-copy of Thomson's "Castle of Indolence"', ll. 47–54, 64–5 in *Poetical Works*, II, pp. 26–7.

⁷¹ Aubrey de Vere, *Recollections* (London: Edward Arnold, 1897), p. 42.

pp. 488–9: ‘Love’s Apparition and Evanishment. An Allegoric Romance’, 32 lines beginning ‘Like a lone Arab, old and blind’; dated 1833; texts cited are *Friendship’s Offering* for 1834, *PW* (1834), *Poems* (1852), *PW* (1893), *Letters* (1836), draft (in vol. 2 appendix) ‘Now first published from an MS.’

p. 490: ‘To the Young Artist Kayser of Kaserwerth’, 15 lines beginning ‘Kayser! to whom, as to a second self’; dated 1833; only text *PW* (1834).

pp. 490–1: ‘My Baptismal Birth-Day’, 14 lines beginning ‘God’s child in Christ adopted,—Christ my all,—’; dated 1833; texts cited are *Friendship’s Offering* for 1834, *PW* (1834).

pp. 491–2: ‘Epitaph’, 8 lines beginning ‘Stop, Christian passer-by!—Stop, child of God’; 9 November 1833; texts cited are *PW* (1834) and six mss—letter to Mrs Aders, 1833 (*Letters* 1895), letter to J. G. Lockhart, letter to J. H. Green of 29 October 1833, two versions in a copy of Grew’s *Cosmologia Sacra*, in a copy of the *Todtentanz* which belonged to Thomas Poole (these last three in vol. 2 appendix, the *Todtentanz* from Mrs Sandford’s *Poole* via *PW* (1893)).

Supplement this sequence with poems printed in vol. 2. Thus:

Insert before ‘Love’s Apparition and Evanishment’ the lines EHC gives in II, pp. 985–6, no. 17 (under ‘Jeux d’Esprit’): ‘Cholera Cured Beforehand’, 44 lines beginning ‘Pains ventral, subventral’; dated 26 July 1832; texts cited are *PW* (1834) and letter to J. H. Green dated 26 July 1832.

Insert following ‘My Baptismal Birth-day’ the lines EHC gives in II, p. 975, no. 80 (under Epigrams): ‘Epitaph of the Present Year on the Monument of Thomas Fuller’, 10 lines beginning ‘A Lutheran stout, I hold for Goose-and-Gaundry’; dated 28 November 1833; text ‘Now first published from an MS.’

Insert following ‘Epitaph’ the lines EHC gives in II, p. 987 no. 19 (under Jeux d’Esprit): ‘To a Child’, 7 lines beginning ‘Little Miss Fanny’ dated 1834; text first published in *Athenaeum* 28 January 1888, first collected in *PW* (1893).

(The first and third poems listed, ‘Reason’ and ‘Forbearance’ in EHC, I, pp. 487, 488, are marked with an asterisk because they appear to date from earlier than the rest of these 1830–4 poems.)

Appendix B

S. T. Coleridge, *Poetical Works*, ed. J. C. C. Mays (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 3 vols. forthcoming; *Collected Coleridge* 16). Beginning with the last poem dated under 1830 and continuing to the end of the sequence.

- *672 'Inscription on a Time-piece'
- 673 'An Extempore Couplet in "Table Talk"'
- 674 'An Elegiac Plusquam-Sesqui-Sonnet to my Tin Shaving-pot'
- 674.X1 'Old Bailey Report'
- 675 'The Three Patriots'
- 675.X1 'The Retort'
- 676 'The Irish Orator's Booze. A Sonnet'
- *677 'Cholera Cured Beforehand'
- 678 'Sciatic Rheumatism'
- 678.X1 'A "Natural" Curiosity; or, A Curious "Natural"'
- 679 'An Autograph on an Autopergamene'
- 680 'Dialogue between a Nimble Doctor and a Crippled Patient'
- 680.X1 'Stanza Interpolated into a Hymn'
- *681 'My Baptismal Birth-day'
- 682 'Epigram: A Guilty Sceptic's Death Bed'
- 683 'Kind Advice and Invitation'
- 684 'Specimen of Pure Latinity, Ex Tempore'
- 685 'Two Lines in Spring'
- 686 'The Hunger of Liars'
- 686.X1 'Lines on a Willow Reflected in the Water, at Caen Wood'
- *687 'Love's Apparition and Evanishment'
- 688 'Oh! might I but my Patrick *love*'
- 689 'O sing and be glad'
- *690 'To the Young Artist, Kayser of Kayserwerth'
- 691 'From a Manuscript Poem of Athanasius Sphinx'
- *692 'S.T.C.'
- 693 'S.T.Coleridge, Ætat. Suae 63'
- 694 'Adaptation of Isaiah 2.7'
- 695 'Lines on Lady Mary Shepherd'
- 696 'Other Lines on Lady Mary Shepherd'
- *697 'Epitaph on the Present Year; or, A Monument to the Memory of Dr Thomas Fuller'

- 698 'On an Ellipsis of John Kenyon's'
*699 'E Coelo Descendit'
700 'Splendida Bilis'
701 'Latin Address to Christopher Morgan'
701.X1 'Suggested Alterations in Thomas Pringle's "African Sketches"'
702 'Lines on George Croly's "Apocalypse"'
703 'A Motto for Reed's Shakespeare'
*704 'To Miss Fanny Boyce'
705 'Doggerel Letter for an Autograph'

(The first two of EHC's ten last poems are missing from this list and no. 672 has been added to it. The nine poems which appear somewhere in EHC are marked here with an asterisk. Note that a couple of poems have different titles.)