

Poems for S. T. Coleridge

Edward Sanders

1.

Coleridge
won a medal
his 1st year in college
(Cambridge 1792)

for a “Sapphic Ode
on the Slave Trade”

2.

Pantisocracy

Sam Coleridge and Bob Southey
conceived of Pantisocracy in 1794

just five years after the beautiful
tearing down of the Bastille

twelve couples would found an
intentional community on the
Susquehanna River

which flows from upstate New York
ambling for hundreds of miles
down thru Pennsylvania &
emptying into the Chesapeake Bay

The plan was to work maybe 2-3 hours a day
with sharing of chores

Each couple had to come up with 125 pounds

So Southey & Coleridge
strove to earn their shares
through writing

C. wrote to Southey 9-1-94

2

that Joseph Priestly

might join the Pantisocrats

in America

The scientist-philosopher

had set up a "Constitution Society"

to advocate reform of Parliament

inaugurated

on Bastille Day 1791

Then "urged on by local Tories"

a mob attacked &

burned Priestly's books, manuscripts

laboratory & home

so that

he ultimately fled to the USA.

3.

Worry-Scurry for Expenses

In Coleridge

from his earliest days

worry-scurry for expenses

relying on say

a play about Robespierre

writ w/ Southey in '94

(around the time Robe' was guillotined)

to pay for their share

of Pantisocracy

on the Susquehanna

& thereafter

always reliant

on Angels

& the G. of S.

Generosity of Supporters

& brilliance of mouth

all the way

thru the hoary hundreds

4.

Coleridge & Southey
 brothers-in-law
 —the Fricker sisters, Edith & Sarah

Coleridge & Sarah Fricker married
 10-4-95

son Hartley born September 19, 1996
 short-lived Berkeley in May 1998
 Derwent Coleridge on September 14, 1800
 & Sara on Dec 23, '02

5.

The Collapse of Pantisocracy

Coleridge held true to the Vision
 but Southey's family was firmly
 against Pantisocracy

His aunt, learning about P, threw him out
 on a rainy night

& his uncle cajoled him into taking
 a six-month trip to Portugal in late '97

so that he lost the fire.

6.

Coleridge to a Cottage

1796
 he hoped to live
 in the country
 & to support himself
 “by a mixture of
 literature & husbandry”

Got a house
 w/ 1 1/2 acres

in Stowey

4

(SW England
where he wrote The Rime
& Kubla Khan)

Just after acquiring the cottage
a friend reminded C.
of an epic he'd planned
on the "Origin of Evil"

7.

always striving to domicile
not too far from
someone with a
huge & borrowable library

8.

John Thelwall Visits Coleridge

They called him Citizen Thelwall
In 1792 Thelwall helped found
the London Corresponding Society
you know, for things such as
the Right to Vote,
& parliamentary reform

The English gov't surveilled him
& sent agents after him

In '94
Thelwall & others were
accused of treason & tossed into the
Tower of London
but after a trial
found Not Guilty!

But always watched by spies
even while giving
regular lectures for political reform

On July 17, 1797 Thelwall visited C.'s cottage at Stowey
which alarmed the "neighborhood"

5

& a gov't spy was dispatched to watch
Wordsworth, Coleridge, Thelwall
& Coleridge's patron Poole

The gov't spy, named James Walsh
lurked near to Coleridge & W.
apparently lounging on a beach
& thought he heard C. & W.
talking about the philosopher Spinoza
thinking they were referring to "Spy Nozy"
a French agent

The alarms raised about Thelwall
from neighboring ruralites
caused William Wordsworth
& his sister to lose their house
at nearby Alfoxden

Thelwall wanted a place in the country
& finally got a farm in Wales
where Wordsworth & C.
visited him in 1798

Coleridge and Thelwall
stayed friends for years

9.

Christabel

He wrote part one of one of his
most famous poems at Stowey
in 1797

the mysterious beautifully-lined
poem of long-term anger
carried on
for decades
set in a time of knights and castles

Byron, according to newspaper accounts

had read the poem in manuscript
& praised it in a letter to C. as a
“singular and beautiful poem”

6

Walter Scott had heard an early version
of Christabel

& plucked a line
& the rhythm also perhaps
for the “Lay of the Last Minstrel”

Nevertheless, even with its thrilling verse,
the plot was, uh, cumbersome

& he tried, in 1799-1800, to complete it
but, alas, failed.

10.

Rime

Nov 13 1797

Coleridge & Wordsworth

(& his sister)

took off for a walk
along the cliff edge
to the Valley of Rocks at Linton
during which they were supposed
to compose together
a poem

to make 5 £

from a magazine

The co-composing broke down
after 8 miles trekking
& Coleridge took over
the writing

the result being (after time)
“The Rime of the Ancient Mariner “

which on 3-23-98

C. recited to the Wordsworths

Coleridge Writes a Drama

It was a common method of
earning scratch:

writing a drama
& many of the Romantics
tasted its thrill.

Richard Brinsley Sheridan
author of “The School for Scandal”

purchased the Drury Lane
& rebuilt it in ‘94

—always in fiscal danger

In March of ‘97
Sheridan asked C.
to write a play for his theatre

Coleridge set to work
& in October
sent the manu of “Osorio”

to Sheridan

but the Drury never
put it on the boards

something about problems
with the “obscurity of Acts III, IV, & V”

all this worry about money
perhaps leading, at least partly
to the gulping of laudanum

The Gentleman from Porlock

1797

Living in the
summer
of
1797 in what C. described as a
“lonely farm-house
between Porlock & Linton”

& also “in ill health”
one afternoon in which he had
slurped down some “anodyne”
i.e., laudanum

C. fell asleep
3 hours
& dream-schemed a poem

When the poet came awake
he could see his three-hour dream
written in his mind
like fire-flies over a stream

“On awaking,” he later wrote, “he appeared to himself
to have a distinct recollection of the whole
[envisioning a poem in his mind of 200-300 lines]
and taking his pen, ink, & paper, instantly & eagerly wrote
then the lines that are here preserved...!”

Right then, after jotting 54 lines, Coleridge
“was unfortunately called out by a person
on business from Porlock”

The gent from Porlock
was there around an hour

“and,” as C. later noted, “on his return to his room,
found, to his no small surprise & mortification, that
though he still retained some vague & dim recollections
of the general purport of the vision, yet,
with the exception of some eight or ten scattered lines and images
all the rest had passed away....!”

Leaving behind
 a partial vision
 which Charles Lamb described
 as a “vision he repeats so enchantingly
 that it irradiates and brings heaven
 and elysian bowers into my parlour
 when he sings or says it.”

13.

Evers and Coleridge

Alf Evers walking
 uphill
 along a steep path
 above his house on Hutchin Hill Road
 in Woodstock

jotting on 3 X 5 cards
 in the early '90s

“I do a lot of writing
 while I’m walking,” he told me.
 “That helps my rhythm. I try to alternate
 physical work with writing. When I’ve written
 something that’s become too complicated,
 it achieves clarity
 when I go through it in my mind
 while I’m walking.”

Coleridge too wrote while walking.
 William Hazlitt wrote
 how in April of 1798
 “Coleridge told me
 that he himself
 liked to compose
 in walking
 over uneven ground,
 or breaking through
 the straggling branches
 of a copsewood...”

Three poems in a
“little quarto pamphlet”

printed
1798, & titled:

“Fears in Solitude, written in 1798
during the alarm of an invasion
to which are added France, an Ode, and
Frost at Midnight”

one shilling &
sixpence

15.

In May of '98
Cottle spent a week at the
Wordsworths' country house at Alfoxden
and brought back
the manu of
The Rime of the Ancient Mariner

for a copyright price
of 30 guineas

which C. needed
for the upcoming trip to Germany
w/ the Wordsworths

16.

The Wedgwoods
having granted C.
an annuity
enough to live on

& just published Sept '98 was
“Lyrical Ballads, with
a few other poems”

The book was anonymous

& no hint was given
that more than one bard
was involved

11

The Rime of the Ancient Mariner
was included
among other of C.'s

Sales were slow
Sarah Coleridge, left in England
while her husband traveled in Germany
wrote that "The Lyrical Ballads
are not liked at all by any."

Also, born in Sept '98 Sarah & C.'s son
Berkeley

17.

Wordsworth & C.
left London
on 9-14-98

Boat from Yarmouth on 9-16
Arrived in Hamburg on the 16th

C. diligently studying German

Baby Berkeley
passed away in February

C. learned of it in April
Sarah grieving badly
wanted her husband back by May
"as he had promised."

C. arrived back in July

October '99
 C.
 attempting to
 finish "Christabel"

to insert it as
 the lead poem
 in Southey's
 2nd Annual Anthology

& failing, alas

19.

Work Work Work

The Death of Wallenstein
 A Tragedy in 5 Acts

translated by S. T. C.
 from the German
 of Frederich Schiller

published in 1800

20.

Late 1800 he wrote of his
 son Hartley as
 "a spirit of joy
 dancing
 on an aspen leaf."

21.

Ambivalent on poesy

12-17-00 he wrote to John Thelwall
 that he has given up verse
 for metaphysics
 "being convinced that he never

Sure, Sam, sure.

22.

Joining the Lotophagoi

4-18-01

after ten days abed

Beset with anxieties, money worries,
& even though only 29,
suffering from what he described
as "irregular gout... it flies about
in unsightly swellings
of my knees,
and dismal afflictions
of my stomach and head.
what I suffer in mere PAIN is incredible."

Using brandy & laudanum
to overcome such "fits"—
"The disgust," he wrote, "the loathing, which followed
these fits, and no doubt in part, too the use of brandy
and laudanum which they rendered necessary..."

Remembering my lotophagoi friends,
when I was young
such as the poets Al Fowler and Szabo

& others such as Corso, Huncke, & Burroughs

and wondering now
about Coleridge & how he
finally slipped into junkiedom
in 1801

Thus always needing a Good Connection

I swa' I swa'!
 I never took to dope
 for pleasure!

but just to wipe away
 the pain & anguish

24.

Sisters: Mary & Sarah Hutchinson
 of Sockburn, England (in the NE)
 Wordsworth married Mary in 1802
 & C. fell in love
 with Sarah

25.

C. not with Sarah
 when Sara
 was born
 on Christmas Eve '02

26.

Mar 5 '04
 a boat to Malta

His pecuniosity secure
 w/ 100 £ loan from the Wordsworths
 100 from Sir Geo Beaumont
 & 150 £ annuity
 from the Wedgewoods
 enough for his wife Sara's expenses
 back in England

so off C. sailed!
 The reasons? most importantly
 to kick opium

and feeling bad about his poetry
at age 31

His plan: to kick or die
in Malta
& if he kicked
to return to England
& resume his career

Early July '04 C. became the “honored guest”
& in ways the private secretary
of Malta’s governor (or Civil Commissioner)
Sir Alexander John Ball

In January '05
C. was appointed the
Public Secretary of Malta
at £600 a year! Wow!

His duties included such things as
signing an “affidavit
of the Paymaster
of the Maltese Artillery”

By May of '05 he complained of “overwork”
& wrote to his wife
he was eager
To Go Home!

But he traveled to Rome late September
& then to winter in Naples
then to Rome the 1st months of '06

C. reported he was warned to split from Rome (& Italy)
because Napoleon had ordered his arrest
(for articles he had written years previous)
—true or possible

So that Coleridge finally sailed for England
arriving at the point of quarantine
at Portsmouth 8-11-06

dejected and ill-disposed

After over a month back
he wrote Sara at Greta Hall
he “might” be there on 9-29-06

Wordsworth had recently written
that C. “dare not go home, he recoils so much from
domesticity with Mrs. Coleridge, with whom,
though on many accounts he much respects her,
he is so miserable he dare
not encounter it.”

Pantisocracy ‘s embers
were finally trampled out.

27.

1806
lectures
upon his return

a series,
on “Taste”
at the Royal Institute

He’d decided
by November
to separate from Sara
& she apparently sadly agreed
allowing C. to take “Hartley
and Derwent and supervise their education”
with the mother having them
at holidays

Early '07
Wordsworth recited
his autobio-po
known now as “The Prelude”
& addressed to S. T. C.

Dorothy W.
noted that C.
was still hooked

Coleridge Creates his own Greek Grammar

To instruct his own children
C. created his own Greek Grammar

29.

1808 Sam & Sara
though separated
and on “friendly” terms
sometimes under the same roof

Coleridge’s prospectus for “The Friend”
first issue June 1, '09
C. printed 620 copies
& 650 for #2

mistake to call it a weekly
since #3 came out on 8-10-'09
and #4 on 9-7
“The Friend” lasted till March

He worked with Sara Hutchinson on it.

30.

Trouble 'Tween Coleridge & Wordsworth

In Oct 1810 C. was to stay in London
with a person named Basil Montague
& C. was to stay there indefinitely

but Wordsworth told Montague
that some of Coleridge’s demeanor
might prove “inconvenient to
a well-ordered” house in town

Montague told a somewhat stronger version
of what Wordsworth had told him. Montague told C.

and C., hurt, broke with Wordsworth

After a year of the “difference”
with Wordsworth
C. wrote that comparing the sufferings of which
“all former afflictions of my life
were less than flea-bites.”

31.

Coleridge writing for the Courier paper
July 1811
wrote an article on the Duke of York
The gummint suppressed it
so that 2,000 copies had to be mulched

When needful of moolah,
beginning in 1808 C. did lectures
ten years
supported himself

So he schemed out a sequence of 17 lectures
to be given
at the London Philosophical Society
“on Shakespeare and Milton in illustration of the
Principles of Poetry, and their application as
grounds of Criticism to the most popular works
of later English Poets, those of the living included.”

all of which he duly delivered
to an average audience of 150

Byron attended one of them, on 1-20-12

32.

Through the intercession of Byron
who was on the Drury Lane acceptance committee
C.’s play “Remorse”
was produced
& ran for 20 nights
beginning on 1-23-13
a success

Every year or so
moolah from lectures:

Coleridge
Dickens
Twain

shoes touching
the bases of lecterns

34.

Coleridge
absolutely riveting
in his spontaneous talking

like, say, Robert Duncan or Charles Olson
in our own Time

35.

Oct '13
lectures on Shakespeare & Milton
in the Great Room of the "White Lion"
in Bristol

10-28 the first one
arriving an hour late
6 talks till 11-16

Then another couple
of lecture rounds
in Bristol

C.'s "countenance," as someone wrote at the time,
"in an excited state, glowing with intellect"

very pleasing to the audience.

36.

1815
in the spring

Coleridge was very active
 helping agitate
 against the Government Bill
 banning foreign corn until
 “the average price of wheat should reach
 80 shillings per quarter.”

Coleridge wrote protests & pamphlets
 against the Corn Laws of 1815

High bread prices
 during the wars 'gainst Napoleon
 Then 1815
 war ended

Then landowners
 forced the House of Commons
 to raise the tariffs
 on imported Corn

Bread ↑↑

Coleridge wrote the “Calne petition”
 (against the Corn Law)
 to the Prince Regent

and spoke in public,
 as C. wrote, when he “mounted
 on the butcher’s table,
 made a butcherly sort of speech
 of an hour long to a very ragged
 but not butcherly audience”
 in the market place.

Coleridge also supported Child Labor Laws

Such as the 1819 Act for the Regulation
 of Cotton Mills & Factories
 which forbade children under 9 from work
 & prevented those over 12 from slaving over 12 hrs per day

Same year, August 10
 the first installment of the
 “Biographia Literaria”
 went to the printer.

Deciding to Kick

April 9, 1816

C. consulted with a Dr. Adams
for help

admitted he'd used big amounts of opium
for years

but now would like to kick

His friends, he told the Dr., had
not been firm enough

& now he wanted Dr. Adams
to put together a severe regimen
for kicking

It didn't work
but C. settled into
a regular dose
just strong enough
to avoid withdrawal symptoms

Too bad there wasn't the chance
for a daily small paper cup of o.j. & methadone

38.

Early May '16
Christabel, Kubla Khan, &
The Pains of Sleep
published, sold well
& then a second volume

39.

**Biographia Literaria; or Biographical Sketches
of MY LITERARY LIFE and OPINIONS**

1817, in two vols.
23 chapters

It is said he dictated it
 from his ever-retentive mind

Grim review in October in “Blackwood’s Magazine”
 renewing the “old Anti-Jacobin charge
 of abandoning his wife and children”

The bard thought of suing for libel.

40.

1818
 “Treatise on Method” was published.

C. gave lectures on the History of Philosophy
 ending in March o’ ’19
 his final talks on literature

41.

For decades,
 house ’pon house ’pon house
 open to the great man
 often for lengthy visits

known as an awe-inspiring talker.

42.

Spring o’ ’24
 the most popular
 of all his prose:
 “Aids to Reflection”

Bitter-penned Thomas Carlyle
 visited him
 & described in a letter to his brother
 6-24-24: “I have seen many curiosities,
 not the least of them I reckon Coleridge,
 the Kantian metaphysician and quondam Lake Poet...
 Figure a fat, flabby, incurvated personage,

at once short, rotund, and relaxed, with a watery mouth, a snuffy nose, a pair of strange brown, timid, yet earnest-looking eyes, a high tapering brow, a great bush of grey hair; and you have some faint idea of Coleridge.”

Carlyle found no solace
in C.s ability
to talk & talk and talk

43.

C. was given a Royal Associateship
granting him 100 guineas a year

May 18, 1825
read a paper at the
Royal Society of Literature
on Aeschylus’s “Prometheus”

44.

June 1828
a six week tour along the Rhine
with Wordsworth & W.’s daughter Dora

C. reported that the trip had improved
his “health, spirits and mental activity.”

45.

1830
the last of his works published during life
the pamphlet “On the Constitution of the
Church and State, according to the idea of each;
with and toward a right judgment on the
late Catholic Bill.”

46.

The last few years
a long fade

Jan '31

Wordsworth long conversations
with Coleridge, observing
“his constitution seems much broken up....
his mind has lost none of his vigour.”

then fading fading

Forgiven for Fame

It was written that Coleridge
“was fond
of writing epitaphs
on himself.”

On December 9, 1833 he wrote
asking “to be forgiven for fame”:

EPITAPH

STOP, Christian passer-by! —Stop, child of God,
And read with gentle breast. Beneath this sod
A poet lies, or that which once seem'd he.—
O, lift one thought in prayer for S. T. C.;
That he who many a year with toil of breath
Found death in life, may here find life in death!
Mercy for praise— to be forgiven for fame
He ask'd, and hoped, through Christ.
Do thou the same!

July '34

ten days from thanatos
C. wrote, “For the last three or four years
I have, with few and brief intervals,
been confined to a sick-room”

The great bard passed on July 25, 1834
61 years old

Wordsworth, reading of C.'s death,
said he was “the
most wonderful man
that he had ever known.”

Oh Coleridge Coleridge
Wend thou Home

w/ the Albatross
high Overhead

Coleridge's Books (of verse)

1. Poems on Various Subjects 1796
2. second edition of above 1797
3. Lyrical Ballads (with Wordsworth) 1798
4. second edition of Lyrical Ballads 1801
(published under Wordsworth's name)
5. Christabel, Kubla Khan, & the Pains of Sleep 1816
(as a book)
6. Poetical Works (in three volumes) 1828
7. second edition of Poetical Works 1829

—August-September 2015
Edward Sanders