

# 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



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