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reads

Coleridge's Writings, Volume 4: On Religion and Psychology,

Edited by John Beer

(Palgrave, 2002)

Ron Schwartz's paper at the 2002 Coleridge Summer Conference, "Humbly Beholding: Samuel Taylor Coleridge in Courses of Theology," prompted a discussion on the ways in which Coleridge's writings can be an effective source for prompting the critical study of theology. Schwartz's paper raises an equally compelling query: how can educators better incorporate Coleridge's extensive reflections on religion in primarily *literary* courses? John Beer's *On Religion and Psychology* provides a valuable resource for either task. This volume, the fourth in the Coleridge's Writings series (Beer is also the general editor), effectively complements earlier compilations of Coleridge's thought on politics, humanity and language by examining a wide range of topics in religious studies: "Of all the multifarious interests Coleridge showed in his career religion could be said to have been the deepest and most lasting. Intended originally for the Church, he remained preoccupied by his thinking on the subject for long stretches of his life, particularly during his later years. Even his poetry—for which he is of course best known—cannot fully be understood without taking this substratum into account" (vii).

The selections are topically arranged in ten chapters. Each chapter begins with a short introduction that smoothly flows into a series of excerpts ranging from a single sentence to several pages in length. A brief introductory sentence also precedes each excerpt and, in this way, Beer effectively develops a flowing narrative. The earliest chapters attend directly to Coleridge's attempt to define religious experience in relation to philosophy, psychology and the struggles of his personal life. Later chapters engage distinctly doctrinal themes such as God, human will and sin.

The initial chapter, "The Early Intellectual Quest," stands apart from the rest for its attention to a single phase of Coleridge's life. In his exploration of Coleridge's Unitarian period, Beer draws selections on God and evil, for example, almost exclusively from *Lectures 1795: On Politics and Religion*. He also incorporates several salient passages that suggest Coleridge's doubts and gradual movement towards Trinitarianism. Coleridge's wrestling with Plato, "the wild-minded Disciple of Socrates" from whom Christians "learned their Trinity in Unity" (21), is especially prominent. In the *Biographia Literaria*, Coleridge related the doubts of this time by exclaiming, "Here I found myself all afloat" (27).

Chapters two through four explain the nature of religion and psychology. Beer does not entirely depart from Coleridge's Unitarianism in these chapters, however, but rather incorporates a range of passages that seem to suggest a uniformity of method and often provide an important connection to more

familiar verses in Coleridge's poetry:

In looking at objects of Nature while I am thinking, as at yonder moon dim-glimmering thro' the dewy window-pane, I seem rather to be seeking, as it were *asking*, a symbolical language for something within me that already and forever exists, than observing any thing new. Even when that latter is the case, yet still I have always an obscure feeling as if that new phænomenon were the dim Awakening of a forgotten or hidden Truth of my inner Nature/It is still interesting as a Word, a Symbol! It is Λογος, the Creator! and the Evolver!..." (41).

Far from a wholly abstract endeavor, though, these chapters provide a glimpse into Coleridge's tremendous inner-turmoil as well, particularly in relation to his physical maladies, addiction to opium, and an emerging conviction of the need for a Redeemer: "I have called my soul infinite, but O infinite in the depth of darkness, an infinite craving, an infinite capacity of pain and weakness, and excellent only as being passively capacious of the light from above. Should I recover I will—no—no may God grant me power to struggle to become *not another* but a *better man*... O God save me—save me from myself..." (51). It is, perhaps, a complex entwinement of personal angst and a thorough-going philosophical theology that propels Coleridge's psychological speculation. Certainly, Coleridge's stirring dreams provided fertile soil for self-analysis. One excerpt relates a nightmare in which "a claw-like talon-nailed Hand grasped hold of me" and leads to a consideration of dreams and terror, remorse and duty (71). Other entries in these early chapters, naturally, are wholly devoid of biographical qualities and provide an intriguing gateway to further study of Coleridge's works. Most all have Coleridge's characteristically captivating style: "as One can never be *known* but as it is revealed in and by the Many, so neither can the Many be *known* (i.e. reflected on) but by it's relation to a *One*, and ultimately therefore, *Ones* being = Many, only by reference to THE ONE, which includes instead of excluding the Alter. The Aleph, say the Rabbinical Philologists, is no Letter; but that in and with which all Letters are or become" (76).

The remainder of the book, chapters five through ten, focuses on vital aspects of Coleridge's vision of Christianity. Among the most important selections are those related to his conception of God, which grounds the whole of Coleridge's religious thought. Coleridge's turn from the Socinian notion of Christ to Trinitarianism ("the grand article of faith, and the foundation of the whole christian system" [99]) is linked, time and again, to his devotion to the Bible. Against modern Unitarianism, Coleridge complains, "I always told them that their interpretations of the Scripture were intolerable" (85) and "I read the New Testament again, and I became fully convinced, that Socinianism was not only not the doctrine of the New Testament, but that it scarcely deserved the name of a religion in any sense" (88). Still, Coleridge's occasionally biting

language is softened at times through important distinctions that remind readers why some have labelled Coleridge “the Father of the Broad Church movement” for his spirit of toleration: “I make the greatest difference between *ans* and *isms*. I should deal insincerely with you, if I said that I thought Unitarianism was Christianity;—no—it has nothing to do with the religion of Christ Jesus: but God forbid that I should doubt that you and many other Unitarians, as you call yourselves, are very good Christians. We do not win Heaven by Logic” (106). Of course, the roots of Coleridge’s distinction lie in his unqualified declaration of the need for the redemption of the fallen will from evil, a topic that remained a vital interest throughout Coleridge’s life. Indeed, Beer’s noted edition of *Aids to Reflection* forms the basis of an especially important chapter on Original Sin. Few subjects synthesize such a wide range of concomitant philosophical and theological issues as Coleridge’s discussion of sin: God, Christ, the human will, and the distinction between Reason and Understanding are all present in his thought-provoking examination. Subsequent chapters cover many of the major Christian themes including prayer, Eucharist, biblical notions of prophecy and the church. Beer concludes with some of Coleridge’s words to Green, “shortly before falling into his final coma”:

And be thou sure in whatever may be published of my posthumous works to remember that, first of all is the Absolute Good whose self-affirmation is the ‘I am,’ as the eternal reality in itself, and the ground and source of all other reality.

And next, that in this idea nevertheless a distinctivity is to be carefully preserved, as manifested in the person of the Logos by whom that reality is communicated to all other beings (257).

The result is a diverse collection of excerpts that can be profitably studied by new readers as well as seasoned specialists. While the vast majority of the selections are prose writings, Beer has also included relevant poetry including “Limbo,” “Ne Plus Ultra,” and “Human Life, On the Denial of Immortality” (197-99). One notable limitation of this text is the decision to exclude Coleridge’s reflections on the Bible, which would have either swelled the volume or forced out many valuable excerpts. Beer has enlisted Anthony John Harding to edit a future volume in the series on Coleridge’s lifelong work on the Bible, including his extensive biblical commentary (predominantly appearing in the recently-published fifth volume of the *Notebook(s)*) and, more significantly, his posthumously-published *Confessions of an Inquiring Spirit* (two others, “On Criticism” and “On Nature and Vision,” are also scheduled). Moreover, the *Opus Maximum*, still unpublished at the appearance of Beer’s *On Religion and Psychology*, is absent from the text with the exception of a brief excerpt on Indian philosophy from *On the Divine Ideas* (OM, frag. 3). For this reason, those who elect to use this text for the classroom will undoubtedly wish to incorporate these other crucial writings. Yet, despite these drawbacks,

Coleridge's engagement with the Bible remains ubiquitous and, quite often, Beer's judicious use of the *Letters* and the *Notebooks*—the predominant sources for the selections—provides precisely the style and tone required for a fresh evaluation of Coleridge's religious thought. In sum, Beer's *On Religion and Psychology* is a wonderful text that fulfills a serious deficiency in existing educational resources. Quite simply, *On Religion and Psychology* may be the most constructive collection of Coleridge's writings to have appeared for some time.

Nora Meurs

reads

Coleridge's Writings, Volume 5: On the Sublime

Edited by David Vallins

(Palgrave, 2003)

For all the countless attempts to couch the sublime in coherent definitions or treatises, to itemize its causes and diagnose its symptoms, one of its more recent commentators, Thomas Weiskel, opens his discussion of the Romantic sublime by simply toe-tagging this most elusive and inconstant of notions 'a stunning metaphor'.¹ With this operative description, Weiskel bypasses over two thousand years of theoretical and methodical zeal, and frees the sublime from the constraints of its various host-discourses by filtering out its transference function. What remains is the sublime unbound, the sublime as a mere device. If we add to this Kasper Nefer Olson's suggestion to see the sublime as a modern metaphor characterizing the problem of aesthetics, and in an even broader sense as referring to that which is either underneath or above the threshold or *limen* of human cognition, it should come as no surprise that this chameleon trope, 'this strange meaning-shifter the sublime', had its appeal for a mind like Coleridge's. It is, Olsen says, an 'étrangeté philologique' that the word 'sublime' always in some sense refers to what is high or elevated, while the Latin prefix *sub-* denotes exactly the opposite. This idiosyncrasy is explained by Olsen in the light of the conception in the old Roman world of a door having two thresholds, a *limen superum* and *limen inferum*. By implication, what we call 'sublime' is in fact beyond, outside, or in the Roman perspective, underneath, the upper threshold.²

The latest addition to the *Coleridge's Writings* series, entitled *On the Sublime*, is entirely devoted to Coleridge's dealings with this Roman door or stunning metaphor. In his Introduction to what is now the fifth volume in John Beer's Palgrave series, David Vallins makes a case for Coleridge's evocations of the

¹ Thomas Weiskel, *The Romantic Sublime: Studies in the Structure and Psychology of Transcendence* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1976) 4.

² Kasper Nefer Olsen, 'Anesthétique: Le sublime expliqué aux amants', *Lyotard, les déplacements philosophiques. Avec un avertissement de Jean-François Lyotard*, eds. Niels Brügger, Finn Frandsen, and Dominique Pirotte, trans. Emile Danino (Brussels: De Boeck Université, 1993) 83-84.

sublime, which, so he claims, far exceed Wordsworth's in variety as well as number. Clearly intent upon promoting Coleridge's emergence from the shadows of the 'great Bard' so as to claim his rightful place as father of the Romantic sublime in English, Vallins calls for a reassessment of Coleridge's writings on the sublime and a reevaluation of his status as 'the foremost British advocate of the aesthetic of transcendence' (p. 1). It appears to be some sort of motif in Coleridge's life, that, in more areas than one, he is to find himself being eclipsed by Wordsworth. It is fair to say that for Coleridge to deserve this seat in the choir of ever-enduring icons of the sublime, Vallins's selection ought to bring to light at least one distinguishing feature which can count as a major contribution. One way in which Coleridge stands out among his fellow theorists, is that he declined to write yet another treatise or full-length inquiry. But to take what might be mere disinterest in trying his hand at a well-plied format as conclusive evidence of originality in approach, would be awarding the medal all too easily. Before venturing in search of the Coleridgean sublime, however, the reader of this volume will most probably be faced with two other problems or questions. Firstly, why was Coleridge never awarded the accolade of mouthpiece of the Romantic sublime?—to which the more sceptic reader will probably add: has he really been overlooked all this time? Secondly, the reader may ask himself whether he will have to reconsider the long-standing synonymy of the British Romantic and the Wordsworthian sublimes.

Before addressing these questions a word on Vallins's arrangement of his selection: the reader of this volume is greeted with a passage from 'Essay XI' in Volume III of *The Friend*, which, in concert with the final chapter on Coleridge's religious thought, brackets what could be seen as an encyclopaedia of Coleridge's courtship of the sublime, opening as well as ending on the heights. The epigraph, alerting the reader to the fact that, in the words of Jonathan Wordsworth, 'Coleridge's religion is the centre of his life',³ sets down religion as the prime reconciling and regulating principle, 'the living and substantial faith 'which passeth all understanding'', and the sole 'satisfactory solution of all the contradictions... of the whole riddle of the world' (F I 523-4). A felicitous choice and good warm-up for such compelling and inspired passages as those from *The Statesman's Manual*, treating of the sublimity of religious truths, and equating religion to the light and warmth of the life-actuating master-eye of the sun (p. 160-2). But this is running ahead of things. Before reaching the heights of 'the very perfection and final bliss of the glorified spirit... represented... as a plain aspect or intuitive beholding of truth in its eternal and immutable source' (p. 161), Coleridge has some other mountains to scale and views to regale us with. The editor offers five chapters each headed by an introduction outlining the drift of Coleridge's thinking on the aspect of his aesthetics under consideration. All passages are keyed to endnotes which briefly sketch their contexts—biographical or geographical—,

³ Jonathan Wordsworth, 'The infinite I AM: Coleridge and the Ascent of being', *Coleridge's Imagination: Essays in Memory of Pete Laver*, ed. Richard Gravil, Lucy Newlyn, and Nicholas Roe (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1985) 47.

and refer to the corresponding loci in the *Collected Coleridge*. The entries under each section are grouped chronologically, and the overall structure of the different chapters maps out, with some obvious overlaps, the successive phases or periods in Coleridge's career and thinking. The passages—mainly in verse—in Chapter 1 on 'Enlightenment and Sublimity in Coleridge's Early Writings', dating from 1789 to 1798, are characterized by a sweeping gesture of hope—'O'er the ocean swell / Sublime of Hope, I seek the cottag'd dell / Where Virtue calm with careless step may stray' from 'Pantisocracy' (p. 17)—, and a preoccupation with ascent or spiritual enlightenment and freedom through social and political change. The perspective is pre-eminently forward-looking and youthfully confident, as in the closing lines of the passage from his Bristol lecture (1795): 'the Christian patriot is hopeless concerning no one... he looks forward with gladdened heart to that glorious period when justice shall have established the universal fraternity of love. These soul-ennobling views bestow the virtues which they anticipate.' (p. 20)

In the impressive and longest second chapter—filling over a quarter of the book's pages—on the 'Sublimity of Landscape', nature features as the seed-bed or 'nursery of sublime thoughts' (p. 45). In passages dating mainly from 1794 to 1806, we encounter Coleridge in full 'courtship of nature'⁴ as the seasoned fell-discoverer and aesthetic tourist, astonishingly dynamic—Coleridge as 'one of the first... of the fell-climbers for pleasure'⁵—, and keenly observant. Painterly as well as poetic gestures are unmistakable in the prose accounts from his letters and notebooks. Coleridge's word-painting in 'the colours of French impressionism'⁶ also has a smack of Pre-Raphaelite and sometimes even photographic precision of detail. Indeed, we often find him in his notebook jottings and letters armed with a pair of binoculars and a surveyor's rod—contrary to his own repeated claim that he is 'no measurer' (p. 48, 49). In his landscape-descriptions of the grand and picturesque in nature, Coleridge does not seem to suffer from the side-effects of the Burkean astonishment or 'that state of the soul, in which all its motions are suspended' and in which 'the mind is so entirely filled with its object, that it cannot entertain any other, nor by consequence reason on that object which employs it'.⁷ Rather than numbing his capacity to reason or being lost for words—that involuntary speechlessness which finds its modern counterpart in the self-imposed silence in museums—, Coleridge becomes remarkably eloquent and perceptive to every detail entering his field of vision, and seems all but pushed for a vocabulary. As Peter de Bolla observed, it is peculiar that we do not speak in front of works of art, that we do not, for instance, communicate the experience

⁴ Raimonda Modiano, *Coleridge and the Concept of Nature* (Tallahassee: Florida State UP, 1985) 4.

⁵ Kathleen Coburn, *The Self Conscious Imagination: A Study of the Coleridge notebooks in celebration of the bi-centenary of his birth 21 October 1772* (London: Oxford UP, 1974) 53.

⁶ Coburn 54.

⁷ Edmund Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*, ed. Adam Phillips (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1990) 53.

of looking at a painting.⁸ In the mountainous ‘museum’ of the Romantic aesthetic tourist, Coleridge is anything but the reserved museum-goer, saying much more than one would expect to find in the exhibition catalogue or tour guide. The act of outward gazing gives rise to psychological and metaphysical explorations of that ‘*stretched* and *anxious* state of mind’ (p. 53), as in the following passage:

... from the distance in mountain Countries being so distinct, you have a continual Inducement to look forward to the distance... Now there certainly is an intellectual movement connected with looking forward/a feeling of Hope, a stirring & inquietude of Fancy—. To look down upon, to comprehend, to be above, to look forward to, are all metaphors that shew in the original feeling a resemblance to the moral meaning christened thereafter. (p. 71)

Coleridge, as is well known, was never put off his stroke by an inattentive audience and was renowned for rambling on for hours even when his ‘interlocutor’ had shrunken to the size of a mere button.⁹ In his encounters with nature, in the absence of an audience, Coleridge becomes more ‘talkative’ than ever. The laboriously evocative descriptions in his letters, and the staccato hastiness of phrase in some of his notebook entries, bespeak an anxious attempt to take a snapshot of, or capture in words, each individual image as the play of light and mist render the spectacle of nature as a slide presentation of successive impressions. Both in his first-hand experiences of nature as well as in imaginative evocations of natural scenery—such as ‘This Lime-Tree Bower My Prison’ and ‘Hymn Before Sun-Rise’—, however, Coleridge is always in search of that ‘third something’, a *ménage à trois*, an absent other—‘why were you not with us?’, says Coleridge in a letter to Dorothy Wordsworth (p. 41); ‘Oh! that you had been with me during a thunderstorm’, to William Sotheby (p. 55)—, or seeking to gaze upon the invisible yet omnipresent God—‘Who would be, who could be, an Atheist, in this valley of wonders!’ (p. 56). There is a close connection between Coleridge’s walking, ‘talking’ and landscape as an object of aesthetic pleasure. The narrative gesture breaks down when the physical journey or literal ascent is substituted for a total absorption in the act of forward gazing or spiritual transport. The pedestrian traveller lapses into reverential silence and finds himself ‘entranced in prayer... worship[ping] the Invisible alone’—‘Hymn Before Sun-Rise’ (p. 56). The sublime vision of the unity of man, nature and God initiates a new discourse, or a desire to give more than ‘passive praise’ (p. 57) and bless God

⁸ Peter de Bolla, ‘The Sublime is Not Yet’, *Shadows of the Sublime: History of a Concept*, Third Ghent Conference on Literary Theory, Ghent University Belgium, Het Pand, Onderbergen 1, Ghent, 26 Oct. 2002.

⁹ cf. Edward V. Lucas, *The Life of Charles Lamb*, 2 vols. (London: Methuen, 1921) II, 822. Thanks to Mary Wedd for retrieving this reference, who adds, ‘Lucas is quoting from “an American writer, John Dix, in a little book otherwise of no value, entitled *Lions Living and Dead*, 1852.” After reporting the anecdote – which does seem to me to sound just like Lamb talking – Lucas says, “The story is of course untrue, but as a sidelight on Coleridge’s conversational manner it could hardly be better.”’

‘aloud’ (p. 50).

In Chapter 3 on ‘Transcendence in Literature and the Visual Arts’, Coleridge is wearing his other hat as literary or art critic, generously attributing or ‘giving’ the sublime to such authors as Shakespeare, Milton and Wordsworth. As the sense of novelty connected with seeing directly began to wane, Coleridge shifts his attention to the creative imagination and the capacity of genius—those ‘minds that feel the riddle of the world’—, ‘to contemplate the Ancient of days with feelings as fresh’, and ‘[t]o carry on the feelings of childhood into the powers of manhood, to combine the child’s sense of wonder and novelty with the appearances which every day for perhaps forty years has rendered familiar’ (p. 86). This ‘character and privilege’ of making new is memorably illustrated in a passage from *The Friend*:

Who has not, a thousand times, seen it snow upon water? Who has not seen it with a new feeling, since he has read Burns’s comparison of sensual pleasure,

To snow that falls upon a river,
A moment white—then gone forever! (p. 86)

It is, Coleridge declares in *The Friend*, the poet’s and philosopher’s appointed task to reveal the unrealized meaning which ‘lie[s] bed-ridden in the dormitory of the soul’ (p. 86).

Chapter 4 on ‘Coleridge and Romantic Psychology’—with six subsections on ‘Evolution’, ‘Thought’ and ‘things’, ‘Reason and understanding’, ‘Politics and society’, ‘Love’ and ‘The psychology of the sublime’—, and Chapter 5 on ‘Coleridge’s Religious Thought’, provide a key to his unique contribution to the discourse on the sublime. The attention, which he had earlier lavished on the outside world, is increasingly drawn inwards. Coleridge must have realized that for him to paint his masterpiece, some things would have to be different. Having stowed away his hiking boots and put down his paint brush, he engages in an exploration of the psychological, metaphysical and religious truths underlying human experience, by taking the rationalist agenda of post-enlightenment thinking to a whole new level—that is, by building towards a theology through induction. ‘Religion’, says Coleridge, ‘passes out of the ken of Reason only where the eye of Reason [the symbol of ‘our Hope & Faith’ (p. 115)] has reached its own horizon’ (p. 162). Faith is the vehicle across the front or edge of consciousness, or, in Coleridge’s words, Reason’s ‘continuation’ (p. 162). The preoccupation with spiritual ascent of being, which informs Coleridge’s writings as from such early works as ‘Religious Musings’ (1796), is, in his later thinking, embodied by a rich blend of transcendental idealism and a confrontation with the divine through Christianity. As objects of nature ultimately came to ‘want something... to make them *Satisfiers*’ (p. 69), Coleridge turns to a contemplation of the mystery of ‘absolute existence’ (p. 164). In a letter to Sara Hutchinson, written in 1802,

nature still nurtured such uncanny and animistic images as that of ‘mad water rush[ing]... with foreknowledge, like a fierce and skilful Driver... [or] a vast crowd of huge white Bears, rushing, one over the other, against the wind—their long white hair scattering abroad in the wind’ (p. 54). By 1803, however, Coleridge increasingly complains about nature’s artificiality—‘the mountains... would be better in a picture than they look in Nature’ (p. 69)—, and occasionally chides her for her disorderliness—‘[t]he Mountains around me did not any where arrange themselves strikingly’ (p. 75). ‘The further I ascend from animated Nature’, says Coleridge in a letter to Thomas Wedgwood in 1803, ‘the greater becomes in me the Intensity of the feeling of life’ (p. 129). His later thinking comprises a contemplation of religious mysteries emancipated from space and time, and a reverence towards those ideal truths or the ideas of God, Eternity and Free-Will, which alone deserve the name ‘sublime’.¹⁰ The speculative confrontation with the incomprehensibility of reality is relinquished for ‘the living and substantial faith’ in sublime truths which, as Coleridge professes in Vallins’s final entry, are ‘*not...* Conception[s] to be conceived but... *Idea[s]* to be contemplated’ (p. 169).

As Vallins’s successive chapters illustrate, Coleridge is everywhere the pure philosopher of the ‘*trans conscientiam communem*’ (p. 118), driven by the realization ‘[t]hat in our present state we have only the dawning of thus [sic] inward sun’ (p. 122). He is one of the ‘few’, who, as he proclaims in *Biographia Literaria*,

... measuring and sounding the rivers of the vale at the feet of their furthest inaccessible falls have learned, that the sources must be far higher and far inward... who even in the level streams have detected elements, which neither the vale itself nor the surrounding mountains contained or could supply. (p. 118)

Coleridge’s penchant for the ‘Trans-Alpine’ or sublime has been described at some length by such scholars as Clarence D. Thorpe,¹¹ Albert O. Wlecke,¹² Raimonda Modiano, as well as David Vallins¹³ himself. Yet, on account of the sheer grandeur of his poetry, and perhaps partly owing to Keats’s coinage of the catch phrase ‘the wordsworthian or egotistical sublime; which is a thing per se and stands alone’,¹⁴ Wordsworth still holds the stage of the Romantic

¹⁰ See SWF I 352: ‘Objects of Sense never can be of themselves *sublime*; but they may be the occasioning means of exciting certain Feelings and Ideas, as Symbols of Power, Strength, &c—and in this sense a Cataract, a stormy Sea, is sublime—tho’ not in the sense in which we call God, Eternity, Free-Will, *Sublime*’; Coleridge’s various attempts to define ‘the sublime’ as an aesthetic term, and to distinguish it from ‘the beautiful’, ‘the picturesque’, ‘the majestic’, or ‘the grand’ (see, for instance, ‘Definitions of Aesthetic Terms’, ‘On the Distinction between the Picturesque and the Sublime’, ‘“Essays on the Principles of Genial Criticism” ’ in SWF I 350-386; marginalia to J.G. Herder’s *Kalligone* in M II 1069-70), are not included in Vallins’s selection.

¹¹ Clarence DeWitt Thorpe, ‘Coleridge on the Sublime’, *Wordsworth and Coleridge: Studies in the Honor of George McLean Harper*, ed. Earl Leslie Griggs (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1939) 192-219.

¹² Albert O. Wlecke, *Wordsworth and the Sublime* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973).

¹³ David Vallins, *Coleridge and the Psychology of Romanticism: Feeling and Thought* (London: Macmillan, 2000).

¹⁴ Robert Gittings, ed., *Letters of John Keats* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1970) 157.

sublime. Although it is clear from the context that Keats's pronouncement was hardly intended as a publicity slogan for Wordsworth's poetical character, this jab at least evokes a sense of strength, assertiveness or achievement—albeit in excess. When the word 'sublime' was used with reference to Coleridge's writings by two of his contemporaries, the associations called forth were less favourable. Wordsworth, Coleridge remembers in one of his letters, earmarked his 'Hymn Before Sun-Rise' as 'a specimen of the Mock Sublime' (CL IV 974), and an equally unimpressed Southey, in the *Critical Review* for October 1798, brushed aside his 'Rime of the Ancient Mariner' as 'a Dutch attempt at German sublimity'.¹⁵ While Keats's gloss somehow seems to have turned out to Wordsworth's advantage, the above instances of contemporary criticism levelled at Coleridge are characteristically dismissive in consigning two of his works to the 'failure column', one as a weak decoction of, the other as a mere attempt at, a well-established genre. Needless to say, however, that 'that great tag "a Dutch attempt at German sublimity"', as Seamus Perry calls it,¹⁶ did not ultimately relegate the work under attack to oblivion. Although Wordsworth was quick in taking Southey's censure to heart by placing Coleridge's ballad at the back of, rather than at the head of, the second edition of the *Lyrical Ballads*, 'The Ancient Mariner' is still considered as one of Coleridge's greatest poetical achievements. This is why its exclusion from Vallins's selection is peculiar and somewhat regrettable. As an exercise in 'incomprehensibility',¹⁷ 'The Ancient Mariner' could also be seen as an experiment in, or evocation of, that beyondness without which, as Weiskel says, 'the sublime founders... or... becomes a "problem"'.¹⁸ In a letter dated 30 January 1801, a spell-bound Charles Lamb makes a case for the sublimity of 'The Ancient Mariner', the reading of which gave him that hallmark experience of being bowled over or, in his own words, 'totally possessed'¹⁹ by the poem. In answer to Wordsworth's note—added to the 1800 *Lyrical Ballads* edition—listing the 'defects' of Coleridge's poem, Lamb expresses his disagreement with Wordsworth's complaint about the Mariner not having a distinct character. It is, Lamb writes, a consequence of having undergone such sublimely terrible 'trials as overwhelm and bury all individuality and memory of what he was... that all consciousness of personality is gone'.²⁰ The Mariner, then, by virtue of a lack of identity, is a specimen of the 'camelion Poet',²¹ the perfect counterpart of the egotistical sublime. As Seamus Perry points out, Lamb also implied in his reply to Southey's dismissive review of 'The Ancient Mariner' that 'maybe Coleridge was trying to do something else apart from German

¹⁵ J.R. de J. Jackson, ed., *Coleridge. The Critical Heritage* (London: Routledge, 1970) 53.

¹⁶ Seamus Perry, 'Attempts at Sublimity: Young Coleridge and *The Ancient Mariner*', *The Coleridge Bulletin* (NS) 6 (Autumn 1995): 27.

¹⁷ Perry 21.

¹⁸ Weiskel 3.

¹⁹ Edward V. Lucas, ed., *The Letters of Charles Lamb, to which are added those of his sister Mary Lamb*, 3 vols. (London: J.M. Dent & Methuen, 1935) I, 240.

²⁰ *The Letters of Charles Lamb* I, 240.

²¹ *Letters of John Keats* 157.

sublimity, even to ‘dethrone’ it with a ‘right English’ sublimity of his own’.²²

Then too, Coleridge may have been overlooked or rather shunned in discussions of aesthetic theory on account of his Christianity, which conflicted with the increasingly secularizing trend in nineteenth-century Western thought. As Weiskel aptly put it, ‘the sublime revives as God withdraws from an immediate participation in the experience of men’, nevertheless leaving the door ajar for a Coleridgean approach by stating that a ‘humanistic sublime is an oxymoron’.²³ Unlike such Romantics as Blake, Shelley and Keats, who tended towards a more humanizing or private mythology, Coleridge, it seems, did not feel compelled to devise a *grand récit* of his own, but rather drew on an existing system of faith. If we accept Weiskel’s reasoning that the ‘secondary or problematic sublime’ makes its entry as God exits the stage of human experience, Coleridge could, by virtue of his turn towards theology, be seen as a practitioner of the ‘primary, reconciling or unifying sublime’. Coleridge’s Christianity was, however, not an uncritical or blind appropriation of received doctrine, as Vallins’s successive chapters demonstrate. As his orientation towards the Christian faith gathers strength, so also was he increasingly haunted by doubt—a feature of Coleridge’s character which does not really emerge from Vallins’s selection. As Graham Davidson points out, Coleridge’s ‘despair and... faith fighting it out in his last years, [is] still one of the least documented dramas of his life’.²⁴ The passages in Vallins’s volume are chiefly illustrative of the *limen-superum* or upper-threshold sublime. Coleridge’s courtship of the sublime emerges from this book as a tale of optimistic certainty marked by an earnest commitment to, and faith in, the ascent of being. The experience of the sublime as a progression towards the ‘glorious vision of that existence which admits of no question out of itself’ (F I 519), does not, as Raimonda Modiano suggests, involve a moment of crisis or trauma, nor a humiliation of the imagination—as in the Burkean and Kantian sublimines—but rather consists in a steady ascent or process of elevation.²⁵ Yet, trauma and dejection were a major part of Coleridge’s personal as well as intellectual life, figuring prominently in his poetry and notebooks. It is, for instance, a dire reality of Coleridge’s life that he allowed himself to suffer the deep poverty of unrequited love, only to find himself trapped in ‘the courtyard of the jester which is hidden from the sun’.²⁶ As he so heart-rendingly mythologizes in ‘Dejection: an Ode’—another notable absentee in Vallins’s selection—, despair and mental dependency inaugurated a turning point in his thinking, by prompting the self-preservative shift to ‘abstruse research’. Dejection or melancholy can be seen either as an absence of desire, or as a vehement desire for nothingness, death, deliverance from matter or literal *ex*

²² Perry 35.

²³ Weiskel 3.

²⁴ Graham Davidson, rev. of *Coleridge’s Writings, Volume 2: On Humanity*, ed. Anya Taylor, *The Coleridge Bulletin* (NS) 6 (Autumn 1995): 53.

²⁵ Modiano 135.

²⁶ Bob Dylan, ‘Wedding Song’, rec. 5, 6, 9 November, *Planet Waves*, Columbia, 1974.

stasis. The stranglehold of despair, leaving Coleridge no choice but to steal from his ‘own nature all the natural man’, played a formative part in his intellectual development, and increased the need for reversal or transcendence of self. The calamity of dejection and the pressure of guilt—resulting, for instance, from the motiveless crime in ‘The Ancient Mariner’—generate regret, repentance and a need for redemption. Prayer is singled out by Coleridge as ‘the sole instrument of regeneration’ (CN III 3355), or the gateway to that self-annihilation or transcendence of self which he seeks in the ‘religious Intercommunion between Man & his Maker’ (CN III 4017). An alternative way of conceiving a book on Coleridge and the sublime, could thus be to give equal prominence to that side of his personality caught in the deathly embrace of despair, to those instances in his poetry—such as in ‘Dejection’ and ‘The Ancient Mariner’—where regeneration is mediated by an act of blessing the other, as well as to ‘the absolute Necessity of Prayer’ (CN III 4183) as a sanctifying medium.

Finally, I want to focus on whether the high expectations raised by Vallins in his Introduction are met, that is, whether his selection yields sufficient proof for a recognition of Coleridge as the unacknowledged theorist of the Romantic sublime in English. To one who is seeking to add a chapter to the history of the analytics of the sublime, I would say no, as this book will not satisfy that reader who is accustomed to such systematic treatments in Longinus, Boileau, Burke or Kant. But then again, having a treatise to one’s name is neither a guarantee nor a prerequisite for a seat of honour, as Wordsworth’s case demonstrates—his modest essay ‘The Sublime and the Beautiful’²⁷ was undoubtedly less instrumental to his fame than such achievements as *The Prelude* and ‘Tintern Abbey’. Manifestly, thus, Coleridge does emerge from this book as the prophet of transcendence or forward dawning, and, in passing, as the witness, survivor as well as querist of the drama of humanity. As illustrated by the passage from Coleridge’s letter to Thomas Poole (p. 126-8), written on the death of his son Berkeley, he was not one to stand transfixed in the face of the abject, the unattainable, or the difficult. By setting Wordsworth’s epitaph (‘A slumber did my spirit seal’) off against his own refusal to grieve his loss and to erect a memorial for his son, Coleridge defers and extinguishes the process of forgetting that ensues from mourning. It is when calamity cuts to his heart of hearts, when ‘the living things that one has grasped and handled’ are forever ‘unsubstantiated’, that Coleridge shows the greatest measure of determination and strength, and dispels all ‘human fears’ through a recognition of the power of life in every ‘particle of being’ (p. 127). If we are to situate Coleridge in the discourse on the sublime, I would say that the Coleridgean sublime is the all-inclusive religious experience of the spectator *intra limen*, conversant in both the realm beyond the *limen inferum* and *limen superum*. Vallins’s book, in honouring the variety of Coleridge’s writings on the sublime, is as yet the most

²⁷ ‘The Sublime and the Beautiful’, *The Prose Works of William Wordsworth*, ed. W.J.B. Owen and J.W. Smyser, 3 vols. (London: Oxford UP, 1974) II, 349-59.

heterogeneous in the *Coleridge's Writings* series—each section could in fact be extended into a separate volume. And yet, as Coleridge's preoccupation with spiritual ascent, and his emphasis on hope and faith, resound throughout the passages selected, Vallins's book has an almost symphonic structure. Of all the volumes in the *Coleridge's Writings* series, it is, therefore, perhaps the most inviting, and not unlike Kathleen Coburn's *The Self Conscious Imagination* (1974) or Seamus Perry's recent *Coleridge's Notebooks: A Selection* (2002), a definite draw. For in this volume, we meet Coleridge's irresistible brockenspectre, looming out of the mist of sublimity and revealing the essence of Romanticism.

Felicity James
reads

Coleridge and the Idea of Friendship 1789—1804

(Associated University Presses, 2002)

by Gurion Taussig

In July 1797, Coleridge was in a state of excitement about receiving a present of a coat from Thomas Poole. Clearly, it was a cold summer in Nether Stowey:

You shall be my Elijah—& I will most reverentially catch the Mantle, which you have cast off.—Why should not a Bard go tight & have a few neat things on his back? *Ey?—Eh!—Eh!*²⁸

That playful figuration of the 'plain-looking' Poole as the prophet Elijah provides a nice illustration of Coleridge's particular rhetoric of friendship, borrowing from all sorts of religious, literary and cultural sources. Practical details, like the cast off coat, become imbued with emblematic significance, part of a narrative of spiritual and poetic self-creation. Coleridge is the 'Bard', poet, prophet and friend, who will take the mantle from Poole's shoulders, and, under his protection, go forth empowered, like Elisha parting the waves. Gurion Taussig's excellent study casts light on the various, complicated roles Coleridge adopted in his dealings with others. It probes his attitudes to friends, and to friendship, and in so doing provides welcome new perspectives on the poetry of the late eighteenth century.

Taussig's aim is to reconstruct the narratives of Coleridge's friendships, and to place them within a wider context of cultural preoccupations with the nature and structure of friendship during the 1780s and 1790s. The study traces the trajectory of friendship from the transcendent ideals of 1789 through the

²⁸ 26 July 1797, from *Collected Letters of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, ed. E. L. Griggs, (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1956-1971) I, 185; hereafter Griggs, (vol, page)

disillusioned pragmatism of later years; simultaneously, it provides a fascinating account of Coleridge's 'chameleon-like capacity' to imitate his friends, and to respond to their changing requirements. Each chapter is dedicated to a close examination of Coleridge's friendly relationships in their biographical context, demonstrating the variety of roles he adopted, as friend and writer. Beginning with Poole, the beneficent Nether Stowey friend, Taussig moves on to analyse Coleridge's relationships with Southey, Thelwall, Lloyd and Lamb, Wordsworth, and Godwin. He shows how Coleridge's ideas of friendship were formulated, not only through dialogue with these acquaintances, but also through interaction with the cultural, religious, literary and political models of the time. The movement of the study is broadly chronological, but it emphasises the way in which different, sometimes contradictory, attitudes to friendship overlapped. By concentrating on each relationship in turn, Taussig shows how Coleridge's articulations of friendship were changeable and fluid, shaped by context, reading, and circumstance as much as by personal conviction.

While acknowledging the achievements of psychological studies focussed purely on Coleridge, Taussig himself adopts a sensitive and thorough historicist approach. We see how Coleridge's relationships were determined not only by his particular psychological demands and conflicts, but also by conflicting contemporary ideas of friendship. This is just what is needed, not only by Coleridgeans, but by all those interested in the dynamics of Romantic friendship, and the way in which relationships are viewed and constructed during this period.

A new focus on friendship, and sociability in general, has become apparent in modern literary criticism. Indeed, a recent *European Romantic Review*, edited by Michael John Kooy and Peter Larkin, was entirely dedicated to the idea of Coleridge as friend, and to the question of why friendship may have re-emerged 'as a respectable topic of scholarly debate' in the last twenty years. We are growing more curious about the dynamics of Romantic friendship, and this study allows a fuller understanding of the concepts behind it. Although the importance of Coleridge's friendship circle has long been appreciated, few critics have been so assiduous as Taussig in working to establish the underlying cultural models of friendship in the late eighteenth century.

The range of reference in this study is particularly refreshing. Taussig opens with a survey of attitudes to friendship in the late 1780s and 1790s, situating Coleridge's early poetry in the context of a broader cultural discussion. Thus, in the first chapter, we read Coleridge poems such as 'The Nightingale' alongside Ann Yearsley and Abraham Skelton, novels such as *The Amiable Quixote*, and a great wealth of magazine articles and cartoons, anxious to define the terms and conditions of 'sublime friendship'. Through this material, Taussig traces a narrative of tension, in which a Platonic ideal of friendship is constantly undermined by the disillusionment of lived experience. For Ann Yearsley, for example, the perfect friendship, as expressed in poems

such as ‘Remonstrance in the Platonic Shade’, represented ‘a prelapsarian state of moral purity’, removed from self-interest, physical or material desire. Yet Yearsley’s quest for transcendent amity was hampered by her consciousness of her social position, as in poems such as ‘To Stella; on a Visit to Mrs. Montagu’, where she pictured herself as ‘unequal’ to the ‘name of Friend’: ‘My soul too narrow, and too low my state’. Similarly, in *Love and Friendship* and *Northanger Abbey*, Austen mocked the English enthusiasm for speedy professions of mutual attachment, where superficial friendships constantly risk running aground on materialist and practical concerns. Later in the book, we are provided with some wonderful illustrations of this kind of distrust and rivalry, engravings such as Ansell’s ‘Mutual Confidence in the Year 1799’, where friends eye one another suspiciously, spying for the Treasury under cover of benevolent enquiry (226). Taussig’s contention is that this kind of conflict between idealised benevolence and Hobbesian self-interest was becoming increasingly evident in writing of the 1780s and early 1790s, and that Coleridge himself, as he began to write, was particularly exercised by it:

‘It is against this conflicting background—in which friendship’s transcendent ideals are opened up to satirical, empiricist attack—that Coleridge’s friendships take shape’ (86)

One of the most striking examples of this conflict may be seen in the Pantisocratic scheme. As Taussig shows, Pantisocracy functioned as ‘a testing-ground for friendship, a context for negotiating between the Idea and its practical realization’ (116). In Coleridge’s eyes, it was to be a scheme determined by a Hartleian kind of ‘home-born Feeling’, the passionate intensity of domestic attachment, reinforced by personal attention and tender offices. This idea, however, ran counter to Southey’s more strictly Godwinian ideals, where friendship rested on principles of knowledge and virtue, rather than spontaneous pity and sympathy. The attempt to reconcile what Taussig terms the ‘sentimental-familial and rationalist-Godwinian modes’ was to tear Pantisocracy apart, as both friends struggled to articulate their developing ideas of affection while beset by practical and economic anxieties. Southey and Coleridge emerged disillusioned with one another, and less certain about the nature of friendship. ‘Little of that ardent enthusiasm which so lately fevered my whole character remains,’ wrote Southey, glumly, in May 1796.

Yet for Coleridge, the importance of the friendship ideal remained constant, even though its practical realization had foundered. In his second chapter, analysing the relationship with Poole, Taussig shows how ideas of radical friendship and benevolence shaped Coleridge’s political attitudes and also his private relationships in the late 1790s. That letter about Poole’s coat is a good example of the way in which the glorious vision of the Pantisocratic scheme fed into his later attachments. Poole’s friendship is figured as a sheltering refuge, where material concerns are put aside. As in Pantisocracy, possessions—the cast off coat—become mutual, and friendship is structured

around benevolent exchange. Coleridge's poems of this time, such as 'Effusion 16, To an Old Man,' first published in the 1796 edition of *Poems on Various Subjects*, reinforce this idea. Allying himself with the 'Galilean mild', who tended outcasts, the lepers and the poor, and 'call'd them Friends', the poet pictures himself sheltering and clothing an old man:

My Father! throw away this tatter'd vest
That mocks thy shiv'ring! take my garment—use
A young man's arms! P'll melt these frozen dews
That hang from thy white beard and numb thy breast.
My SARA too shall tend thee, like a Child:
And thou shalt talk, in our fire side's recess,
Of purple Pride, that scowls on Wretchedness.

This 'human mediation of divine love', as Taussig puts it, is not, however, entirely straightforward. Reading this poem alongside Coleridge's friendship with Poole, Taussig neatly maps out the problems it poses, particularly in relation to gender politics. Although the poet is extending sympathetic aid to the old man, he is also, subtly, unmaning him, drawing him into an enclosing, 'maternal' recess. How does this, Taussig asks, affect our reading of the relationship with Poole, where Coleridge himself seems to be the old man, needing a coat and shelter, constantly anxious to be 'mantled and wrapped round' by Poole's love? How do concepts of dependence, and indebtedness, affect the dynamics of the friendship?

It is good to be reminded of how flexible and fluid genderings of friendship were in the late eighteenth century, and the complexities of male discourses of brotherhood and love. The friendship between Poole and Coleridge allowed startlingly intimate professions of attachment, of the kind that has led critics such as Kathleen Jones to speculate on the nature of Poole's affection. Taussig, while not discounting the passionate, physical, quasi-erotic nature of the endearments which passed between the two, shows how their friendship was constructed in an idealistically 'marital mode', an innocent and unconditional union of protection and friendship. Within Poole's encircling care, the two seemed able to recover a perfect pre-lapsarian space, enclosed, like Milton's Adam and Eve, within their 'blissful bower'.

However, these nurturing environments, like the beautifully evoked 'arborous roof' in 'To the Rev. George Coleridge' or the lime-tree bower itself, could also be overpowering. There was a persistent uneasiness, on Coleridge's part, about the extent of his reliance on Poole, and, related to this, an anxiety about his lack of engagement with the outside world while embowered in Nether Stowey. Indeed, to return to that image of the coat with which we began, we can see a certain annoyance about Poole's charity creeping in. Coleridge's defensive, 'Why should not a Bard go tight & have a few neat things on his back?', followed by those testy exclamations, 'Ey!—Eh!—Eh!', betrays, as Taussig comments, the eternal problem of 'the transfer of divine

Idea into embodied friend' (92).

Still more problems were caused when Coleridge himself was called upon to be mentor and protector, as in his relationships with Charles Lamb and Charles Lloyd. These friendships were formed and shaped by the Unitarian ideals of friendship, sociability and love, the concept that human sympathy was linked to the divine. Although Lloyd came from a Quaker family, he drifted toward Unitarian thought while being tutored by Coleridge in Nether Stowey during early 1797, and, in his poetry and his novel, *Edmund Oliver*, provides interesting insights into Coleridgean viewpoints. Taussig follows David Fairer in his excellent examination of the nuances of Lloyd's work, too often undervalued. He shows how it intersects with the poetry of Coleridge and Lamb, and how it conveys the intense idealism of the friendship between the three in the early years of 1796 and 1797. However, Lloyd's spiritual notions of 'high-soul'd Fellowship' came into conflict with 'worldly, commercial models of relationship' (215). The tutoring relationship, for example, was figured by Coleridge as one of mutual benevolence and education; it was, in fact, heavily dependent on the capital of Lloyd's father. Similarly, in a letter to Cottle about the second edition of *Poems on Various Subjects*, Coleridge comments in a Hobbesian aside: 'Now for the saleability. Charles Lloyd's connections will take off a great many more than a hundred, I doubt not'.²⁹ Commercial pressures, too, may have been behind Coleridge's aggressive distancing of himself from Lloyd and Lamb in the parodic Nehemiah Higginbottom sonnets he published in the *Monthly Magazine*.

The intrusion of such material reality onto the transcendent friendship ideal was hard for both Lloyd and Lamb to accept. Taussig discusses their responses in detail: one interesting incident, to which he does not specifically refer, brings the image of friendly shelter into still clearer focus. Lamb's reproach to Coleridge in September 1797 uses our image of the coat again, but this time it is Lamb who is being deprived of the garment:

You use Lloyd very ill—never writing to him. I tell you again that his is not a mind with which you should play tricks... If you don't write to me now, - as I told Lloyd, I shall get angry, and call you hard names, Manchineel and I don't know what else—. I wish you would send me my Great coat—the snow and the rain season is at hand & I have but a wretched old coat, once my fathers, to keep 'em off—and that is transitory. (30)

This is a typically humorous and allusive reproach from Lamb: symbolically, as Taussig allows us to read it, it takes on deeper significance. Coleridge has, only a few months before, accepted Poole's coat, and turned it into a symbol of his friendship and 'mantling' love. Yet now he neglects to send on Lamb's coat,

²⁹ 10 March 1797, Griggs, I, 185

³⁰ Marrs, I, 123

and in so doing begins to withdraw his sheltering, protective friendship—as Lamb teasingly comments, he has become a ‘Manchineel’ tree, a poisonous refuge. Perhaps there is slightly more difference than Taussig allows between Lamb, who, even in the dark days following his mother’s death, maintained a certain playful self-awareness, and the painfully serious Lloyd. Lamb, after all, was consistently more insightful about Coleridge’s shortcomings, and, when they were reconciled in 1800, was able to overlook the past in a way Lloyd never achieved. Yet Taussig’s discussion of friendly exchange and support allows us to return to Lamb’s letters and read them with a new appreciation of the negotiations and dialogues going on behind them. We can recognise, too, the similarities with the pattern of Coleridge’s other friendships during the 1790s, such as his relationship with Thelwall, who also emerged disillusioned from his argumentative intimacy with Coleridge.

Coleridge and the Idea of Friendship allows us to see the complex intersections of Coleridge’s relationships, and how these structure his attitudes to creativity, the reading and writing of himself and others. His continuing struggles with ideas of sympathetic identification shed light on his problems with the image of the reader. As Taussig explores in his closing chapters, Coleridge’s intense need for sympathy, coupled with his desire to sympathise, his ‘preoccupation with performing the role of sympathetic friend’, contributed to his deep-seated poetic anxieties (250). Faced with Wordsworth’s ‘unmalleable individuality’, Coleridge found himself in an uneasy position of self-effacement: furthermore, he felt his friendship to be forced into competition with the exclusive familial bond of the Wordsworths. His influence was gradually displaced as Wordsworth began to turn back to his childhood memories, using landscape to foster his self-sufficiency.

Through poems and notebook entries, Taussig demonstrates the effect of this withdrawal on Coleridge’s creativity: we also see how, in the friendships of his later years, he attempted to deal with the ‘hurtfully’ isolationist attitude he felt he had encountered in Wordsworth. His concept of divinely inspired, benevolently sustained friendship had to develop and change: by the early 1800s, he felt that friendships needed to be controlled and managed, and he put this into practice in his later dealings with Godwin and Southey. His gradual perception of friendship as ‘an organic phenomenon obeying independent laws of growth and decay’ was connected to a wider cultural movement, working to negotiate and shore up those earlier idealist notions of relationship (279). Works such as the endlessly prevaricating ‘Dialogue between an Author and a Friend’, published in the *Morning Post* in 1802, demonstrate his new consciousness, certainly not apparent in those earlier letters to Southey and Lloyd, that friendship required the support of tact:

Author: Come: your opinion of my manuscript!

Friend: Dear Joe! I would almost as soon be whipt.

Author: But I will have it!

Friend: If it must be had—You write so ill, I scarce could read the

hands—

The ‘pragmatic preservation’ of friendship had become the priority; its transcendent ideal could ultimately be sustained only in imagination.

Yet, as Taussig discusses in an interesting postscript, those early friendship ideals of mutuality and attachment did continue, in some ways, to structure and influence Coleridge’s subsequent relationships, as his later intimacy with Washington Allston demonstrates. For Allston, Coleridge was a spiritual mentor and guide, and in their correspondence he affirmed their intellectual unity. Allston took his friendship with Coleridge to represent a form of national kinship, an amalgamation which would provide a ‘way of conceiving a deep organic bond between the two nations’. The book thus closes with the intriguing image of those late eighteenth-century visions of friendship thus making their way across the Atlantic, disseminating themselves into nineteenth-century American thought. In his mourning poem, ‘On Coleridge’, Allston pictures his friend parting ‘that unfathomed deep, The Human Soul’, and going forward into the light. In his afterlife, therefore, Coleridge had indeed taken on a kind of prophetic mantle, like the one he imagined receiving from Poole in 1797. Taussig offers a way into understanding those imagined visions of friendship and exchange: how they structure Coleridge’s view of himself, and how they shape our own views of Coleridge, ‘Bard’, friend, and borrower of coats.