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Coleridge's Later Poetry and the Rise of Literary Annuals

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1. *English Literary Annuals and the Romantic Poets*

ALTHOUGH Coleridge's later poems have been relatively neglected, they are not necessarily without poetic value. In the last decade of his life, Coleridge composed and completed "Youth and Age," "Work without Hope," "The Two Founts," "Constancy to an Ideal Object," "The Pang More Sharp than All," "Love's Apparition and Evanishment," "Alice Du Clos," and "The Garden of Boccaccio" being the best pieces he wrote after his *annus mirabilis*. Many of these poems were first published in literary annuals, a newly established form of publication that flourished in the 1820s and the 1830s. Indeed, the re-birth of Coleridge's poetic creativity coincided with the rise of these annual publications. I would suggest that this coincidence was not merely accidental; the request of contribution made by the annual editors in fact stimulated Coleridge's creativity; and he made the full use of the opportunity for reaching a greater number of readers and for poetic experimentations through the annual publications.

It is undeniable that to write to order was incongruous with the creative process which Coleridge claimed to be ideal. He often maintained that creative activities, especially the writing of poetry, are "no voluntary" business which could not be controlled by other forces than the internal creativity of an artist. Despite his claim, we would recollect the fact that even *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* was originated from a plan to earn five pounds for a walking tour in Wales, by contributing the work to the *Monthly Magazine*.¹ Eventually, the poem grew into one of the most notable poetical works by Coleridge, and was published as the opening piece of the first edition of *Lyrical Ballads*. This episode shows that the fact that a work was originated from a plan of gaining some income does not affect to the quality of the work produced as a result. The fact that some works were composed or completed in order to fulfil a contract with publishers contradicts with the ideal of creative activities based on inspiration only; however, for Coleridge who retained a strong wish to make a contribution to the public through his writings throughout his career, inspiration was often prompted by demand from the public. As I shall discuss in this essay, Coleridge was capable of responding to the requests from the annual editors, which were supposed to reflect the public demand for his works, and, indeed, the ability to respond to the demand from the public was vital for him as a professional man of letters.

As a way of grasping the nature of Coleridge's undertakings for the literary annuals, I shall survey the characteristics of English literary annuals, commenting upon his view and relationship with them. The idea of the literary

¹ John Spencer Hill, *A Coleridge Companion* (London: Macmillan, 1983) 103.

annual was imported from the continent—mainly from Germany and France—to Britain at the beginning of the 1820s. In late 1822 in an effort to create a suitable gift for Christmas and the coming year, Rudolph Ackermann published the *Forget-Me-Not* for 1823, the first annual gift-book in Britain.² The success of this book encouraged other proprietors to launch new books of this kind. In the following year two new annuals the *Friendship's Offering* and the *Graces*, were initiated, and in the next year seven more appeared, including the *Literary Souvenir*. Then in 1830, when the greatest number of annuals were issued for 1831, sixty-two were published in Britain.³ After the peak in the few years around 1830, they began to decline and had nearly died out by the end of the 1850s.⁴ Although literary works and engravings were included in the first few volumes of the *Forget-Me-Not* as well, these early gift-books displayed more practical aspects taking the form of gorgeous almanacs or diaries. However, these features had been dropped within a few years, and the two major features of gift-books became literary works and fine engravings reproduced after paintings of famous artists. To borrow the editor's words of *The Keepsake* for 1828, the aim of gift-books was "to render the union of literary merit with all the beauty and elegance of art as complete as possible." The gift-books which were sent as a token of senders' affection to recipients, were, at the same time, considered to express their refined taste in literature and the fine arts. Such gorgeously bound books at relatively reasonable price—from around 8 shillings to one guinea—were a kind of luxury that gave satisfaction to those who possessed them. Editors, by emphasising the merit and excellence of their present volume over other annuals and their own back numbers, satisfied readers' confidence in their refined tastes. It is true that appearance—elegant binding, fine engravings, and names of famous and prestigious authors—was the most important factor in the world of literary annuals. They were gracefully bound with embossed leather or watered silk, and known for engravings after paintings by members of the Royal Academy of Arts and other popular artists such as J.M.W. Turner, T. Lawrence, T. Stothard, J.M. Wright and C.R. Leslie. Indeed the mass production of such elaborate books was supported by the innovations in the field of printing industry such as steel-plate engraving, and the literary annuals themselves were children of "the age of improvement." Both editors and readers were obsessed by the notion of progress. They had confidence in the excellence of Britain as was reflected in the patriotic themes often dealt with in these books, and many annual editors

² As to the usage of the words "annuals" and "gift books" Cindy Dickinson explains: "The distinction between annuals and gift books is a technical one. Unlike annuals, true 'gift books,' which developed out of the annuals genre, were published only once. However, these two genres seem to have been indistinguishable for gift-giving purposes, and the two terms were usually used interchangeably." Cindy Dickinson, "Creating a World of Books, Friends, and Flowers: Gift Books and Inscriptions, 1825-60," *Winterthur Portfolio* 31 (1996) 54.

For basic information about annuals, see Frederick Winthrop Faxon, *Literary Annuals and Gift Books: A Bibliography, 1823-1903* (Boston, Mass: The Boston Book Company, 1912), Andrew Boyle, *An Index to the Annuals: vol.1, The Authors (1820-1850)* (Worcester: Andrew Boyle LTD, 1967), and Anne Renier, *Friendship's Offering: An Essay on the Annuals and Gift-Books of the 19th Century* (London: Private Libraries Association, 1964).

³ Faxon, 129-30.

⁴ Refer to the "Chronological Index" in Faxon, 129-140.

often claimed the superiority of English literary annuals over the annuals on the continent.⁵

The readership mainly aimed at was middle class female readers, and an ideal female reader the annual editors had in mind was, according to Anne Renier, “a pious, retiring creature, as portrayed in Dr. Gregory’s *A Father’s Legacy to his Daughters*.”⁶ Therefore there were typical themes and subjects preferred in the annuals. As Alaric Watts summed up the nature of literary annuals as “polite literature,”⁷ the contents of these sorts of publication should be basically “polite.” Portraits of aristocratic ladies and literary contributions from lords and gentlemen were indispensable. As editors of literary annuals considered themselves to be guardians of morality, they chose moralistic and religious stories whose typical protagonists were pious young ladies and innocent girls. As Alaric Watts mentioned in the preface to *The Literary Souvenir* 1827,⁸ these pieces were also to be entertaining and easy to understand by a broader reading public. From their nature as a token of affection, stories about love and friendship were essential. Politically and religiously controversial themes were avoided. Engravings of beautiful English landscapes, evoking patriotic sentiment with the nationalistic poems of Mrs. Hemans were preferred, although exotic stories and engravings were often included.

Most successful annuals sold from around 6,000 to more than 15,000 copies a year.⁹ They were highly popular, especially when compared to the books of poetry by Coleridge and Wordsworth whose normal print runs were from about 300 to 500 copies per edition.¹⁰ When the fact is taken into consideration that many different titles were published every year, we can easily imagine that they were phenomenally popular. Whilst those who bought books of poetry still remained a small minority who had a special interest in literature or in the purchasing of books, the literary annuals were popular

⁵ For example, in the preface to *The Literary Souvenir* 1828, Alaric Watts tried to refute the unfavourable criticisms of British annuals, and claimed their superiority: “Those... who may have been at the pains of turning over the leaves of the principle foreign annuals, will have discovered that their embellishments are, without an exception, every way inferior to the least successful specimens of engraving that have appeared in any publication of the same kind in England, during the last three years.” Though he admitted German annuals included literary works of great German authors like Schiller’s “History of the Thirty Years’ War,” he criticised them for being “vehicles for the publication of History—Philosophy—Metaphysics—and the Drama”, in short, “too solid for the digestions of the great mass of the readers to whose patronage such works are principally addressed,” and claimed the merit of the British annuals, being of appropriate lightness to please their readers and containing contributions from “a great number of the most deservedly distinguished writers of the age.” See *The Literary Souvenir* 1828, ed. Alaric Watts (London: Longman, Rees, Orme, Brown, and Green, 1828) vii-xii.

⁶ Renier, 16.

⁷ Alaric Alfred Watts, *Alaric Watts: A Narrative of his Life*, vol. 1 (London: Richard Bentley and Son, 1882) 173. Hereafter cited as *Alaric Watts*.

⁸ See footnote 5 above.

⁹ The sales figure of *The Literary Souvenir* 1825 and 1827 were 6,000 and more than 10,000 copies respectively. See the preface to *The Literary Souvenir* 1826, v, and *Alaric Watts*, 249-50. *The Keepsake* 1828 is said to have sold more than 15,000 copies. See Morton D. Paley, “Coleridge and the Annuals,” *The Huntington Library Quarterly*, 57 (1994) 2.

¹⁰ For instance, *The Collected Works of S. T. Coleridge* 1828 was issued in only 300 sets, though Coleridge himself was confident that “1,000 copies would have been sold in a twelvemonth,” if it had been “properly advertised.” (CL VI 760). As to Wordsworth, Peter Manning explains that Wordsworth’s *Miscellaneous Poems* of 1820 in four volumes “had sold only 485 copies and earned less than £156 by 1826. Peter Manning, “Wordsworth in the *Keepsake*, 1829,” *Literature in the Marketplace: Nineteenth-Century British Publishing and Reading Practices*, ed. John O. Jordan and Robert L. Patten (1995; Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1998) 50.

products within the reach of a larger public.

The literary annuals were often treated by authors with contempt, and it seems that there were two main reasons for their aversion. For one thing, they were highly popular commercial products aiming at female readership. It was undeniable that the literary merits of the works were not supposed to have the primary importance to the annual editors and readers, whose main interest was in the possession of the elegantly bound books with fine engravings and literary works by big-name authors. For another, their aversion is based on the editors' excessively commercially orientated ways of dealing with their contributors. It was not uncommon that annual editors included some works without their authors' consent.

Many poets and writers were reluctant to publish their works in gift-books, as they feared that their reputation would be degraded by contributing to such popular publications. Though well known writers published some of their works in gift-books, Robert Southey considered them to be "picture-books for grown children," and Charles Lamb, a famous hater of annuals, rather emotionally criticised the ostentatious appearance and literary pretension of literary annuals by saying: "I hate the paper, the type, the gloss, the dandy plates, the names of contributors poked up into your eyes in first page, and whistled through all the covers of magazines, the barefaced emulation, the immodest candidates."¹¹ He further continued: the "sight of one of those Year Books makes me sick. I get nothing out of any of 'em not even a Copy."¹² Wordsworth, though he contributed to four gift-book volumes, declined various requests for contributions made by nearly all annual editors.¹³ Alaric Alfred Watts, the son of Alaric Watts of the *Literary Souvenir*, wrote in his father's biography, referring to the *Literary Souvenir* for 1827, to which Southey, Coleridge, Bowles, Campbell, and Montgomery contributed: "Mr. Wordsworth excused himself from associating his valued name with the volume, on the plea of a general rule which he had laid down to himself, not to contribute to these annual publications."¹⁴

It seems that Coleridge did not complain about the aspect of literary annuals as a popular commercial product. Rather he seems to have taken the literary annuals more seriously than his contemporary writers and had welcomed an opportunity to publish his poems in them; at least he did not regard them with contempt. It is easy to attribute the reason for this to his weak financial position, but this does not sufficiently convey the truth. Despite his very strict ideal of his authorship, he was capable of responding to the requests made by the publishers and editors. This flexibility of Coleridge often seems to contradict his own claims about literary creation, but it was a

¹¹ Charles Lamb, *The Complete Works and Letters of Charles Lamb*, ed. Saxe Comins (New York: The Modern Library, 1935) 953.

¹² Lamb, *The Complete Works*, 995.

¹³ William Wordsworth and Dorothy Wordsworth, *The Letters of William and Dorothy Wordsworth, The Later Years, Part 1, 1821-1828*, ed. Ernest de Selincourt, rev. Alan G. Hill, 2nd ed. (1978; Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2000) 583.

¹⁴ *Alaric Watts*, 252.

vital ability as a professional man of letters.

When the editor of *The Keepsake* 1829 asked Wordsworth for some comments on the volume, Wordsworth refused to make any comment on it for he deemed judgement as to the “absolute merit of works of this kind” of little value. He unsympathetically stated that “What you have to consider is the fitness of the Articles for the Market, everything else is comparatively insignificant.”¹⁵ In contrast, though this may be mixed with some compliments, in a letter to S. C. Hall, the editor of *The Amulet*, dated 14th November 1827, Coleridge expressed his willingness in making suggestions for future improvements of *The Amulet*. He recommended the editor to include “short biographies, from one page [to] three or four, of men who played a great part in the revolutions of the world, political, philosophical and religious, yet of whom little is to be found in common reading.” (CL VI 708) In another letter to Alaric Watts, who sent Coleridge three back numbers of the *Literary Souvenir* 1825-27, Coleridge replied that he would read through these volumes in the coming two weeks and suggest some ideas which he thought might be useful to the editor. In the closing part of the letter, he also promised “one or two small poems for 1828, of a more imaginative character & better suited to your Work.” (CL VI 660-61) As these statements show, Coleridge regarded the annuals to be suitable media for educational purposes.

As for the conduct of the annual editors, Coleridge was also troubled. In September 1828, Coleridge cheerfully explained his negotiations with annual editors, and wrote: “I am up to my chin in business for myself and others” in a letter to Charles Aders (CL VI 757). Lamb worried about Coleridge as being “deep among the Prophets—the Year-servers—the mob of Gentleman Annuals” and added “they’ll cheat him, I know.”¹⁶ Lamb’s comment was partly right, as some editors published Coleridge’s poems without informing him about the publication and his relationship with the annual editors was not always a pleasant one, due to their dishonest conduct.

Although most editors of literary annuals were poets themselves, they were basically businessmen who were engaging in a very profitable enterprise and were ready to do anything to attain their object to produce more saleable annuals. They often published writers’ works without gaining their permission or consent, and sometimes did not pay the promised amount for their contribution. Coleridge was also a victim of such chicanery. He received only ten pounds for his “New Thoughts on Old Subjects” which was written for S. C. Hall’s *The Amulet* with the promise of twenty pounds. In addition, Hall published the “Fragments of a Journey over the Brocken” in *The Amulet* for 1829 and three poems “Love’s Burial Place,” “The Butterfly,” and “A Thought Suggested by a View of the Saddleback in Cumberland” for 1833 without notifying Coleridge of their publication. These were the pieces which Hall had

¹⁵ William Wordsworth and Dorothy Wordsworth, *The Letters of William and Dorothy Wordsworth, Later Years, Part 2, 1829-1834*, ed. Ernest de Selincourt, rev. Alan G. Hill, 2nd ed. (1979; Oxford: Clarendon P, 2000) 13-14.

¹⁶ Lamb, *The Complete Works*, 953.

rejected in 1827; however, he had copied them before he returned the manuscripts to Coleridge, and published them in later issues.

Indeed ten pieces in four gift-book volumes were published without Coleridge's agreement. In *The Bijou* for 1828, five of his poems—"The Wanderings of Cain," "Work without Hope," "Youth and Age," "A Day Dream" and "The Two Founts"—were published without Coleridge's consent. These were hitherto unpublished works except for "The Two Founts" which had already been published in *The Annual Register* for 1827. Although Coleridge was not given any information from the publisher about this publication before and even after the publication, in the preface to *The Bijou* 1828 the editor W. Fraser wrote:

In expressing the Editor's thanks in a separate paragraph to S. T. Coleridge, Esq., it must not be supposed that his obligations are the less important to those whose names have been just mentioned; but where a favor has been conferred in a peculiar manner, it at least demands that it should be peculiarly acknowledged. Mr. Coleridge, in the most liberal manner, permitted the Editor to select what he pleased from all his unpublished MSS., and it will be seen from the "Wanderings of Cain," though unfinished, and the other pieces bearing that Gentleman's name, that whenever he may favour the world with a perfect collection of his writings he will adduce new and powerful claims upon its respect.¹⁷

This happened because the publisher of *The Bijou*—William Pickering—was the publisher who was about to publish *The Poetical Works of S.T. Coleridge* in three volumes in 1828. The reference to "all his unpublished MSS" were supposed to be the manuscripts for the forthcoming book of Coleridge's poetry. The fact that "Youth and Age" was included in *The Bijou*, caused the break up of Coleridge's relationship with *The Literary Souvenir*, to which he had contributed since 1826. Coleridge had promised to contribute "Youth and Age" to Alaric Watts's *The Literary Souvenir*.¹⁸ To Coleridge's further embarrassment, in the same volume of *The Bijou*, "Night and Death: A Sonnet," a poem addressed to Coleridge by his friend Joseph Blanco White was also included immediately before Coleridge's "The Wanderings of Cain," again without White's permission. In the book sent as a token of friendship and affection, a poem which expresses a person's reverence and affection for a friend was very suitable. There is no doubt that the publisher and the editor included some of Coleridge's poems and treated him as a special figure, expecting their annual would be a kind of advertisement for the forthcoming book of Coleridge's poetry. In the book advertisements attached at the end of the volume, they shrewdly put an advertisement for "The Poetical Works of S. T. Coleridge, with numerous additional Poems now first collected, and revised

¹⁷ *The Bijou* (London: William Pickering, 1828) vii.

¹⁸ Alaric Watts, who found that "Youth and Age" was included in *The Bijou*, added at the end of the editor's introduction: "I have just learned (too late, however, to notice the circumstance in the entire impression of this volume), that "Youth and Age," by Mr. Coleridge, is about to be published in another annual work. I can only say, that I received it from the author, as a contribution to the *Literary Souvenir*." *The Literary Souvenir* 1828, xvi.

by the Author.” These five poems in *The Bijou* were a kind of preview of the upcoming book. Coleridge rightly protested against the publication of his poems without permission. However, the publisher repeated the same conduct by publishing Coleridge's *Christabel* in *The Bijou* for the next year. It is ironical, but these excellent poems which would have been just included in the book printed in only 300 copies, were presented to a much larger public in *The Bijou* 1828 by the publisher's illegitimate publication.

Although the literary annuals were not ideal outlets for his poems because of the dishonest conducts of annual editors, they were effective media for Coleridge in communicating his ideas and appealing his existence as a poet to the public. He appreciated a guaranteed large readership of these annual publications.

II. Coleridge in the Literary Annuals

Despite these troubles, Coleridge did not dissociate himself from literary annuals. This is chiefly because what he wanted to write was in agreement with what annuals expected from authors, and this fact made the annual a comfortable medium for Coleridge to publish his poems. As I have noted, moralistic stories were preferred in gift-books; and it seems that, at that time, in his actual life Coleridge had become very eager to undertake the role of mentor giving guidance to younger people. The Thursday evening talk was a kind of informal class, and he opened another course for young people from 1822 to 1827 hiring a room in Lincoln's Inn Fields.¹⁹ Naturally he composed poems in which he gives guidance to younger people. It seems that the theme desired by the annual editors corresponded with Coleridge's wish to be an advisor of the young.

Furthermore, Coleridge had a strong concern with female education and conduct. As early as the spring of 1814, Coleridge thought of giving lectures on female education as the advertisement printed in some Bristol newspapers showed:

Mr. COLERIDGE has been desired by several highly respectable ladies, to carry into effect a Plan of giving one or two LECTURES, in the MORNING, on the Subject of FEMALE EDUCATION, of a nature altogether practical, and explaining the whole machinery of a School organised on rational principles, from the earliest Age to the completion of female education, with a list of the books recommended, &c. so as to evolve gradually into utility and domestic happiness the powers and qualities of womanhood. Should a sufficient number of Ladies and Gentlemen express their design to patronize this plan, Mr. COLERIDGE will hold himself ready to realize it, at such time as may be found most convenient to his auditors.

(LL II 6)

¹⁹ See Richard Holmes, *Coleridge: Darker Reflections* (London: Harper Collins, 1998) 524.

Having finished a course of lectures on Shakespeare and Milton in Bristol, which had been announced in the same advertisement above, Coleridge referred to the projected lectures on female education:

... the two far, far more important Lectures, for which I have been long preparing myself and have given more thought to than to any other Subject, viz. those on female Education from Infancy to Womanhood, practically systematized, I shall be (God permitting) ready to give, the latter end of the Week after next— CL III 474)

It is unlikely that the two lectures on female education were given, but this passage shows that female education was a topic which he considered important. In a table talk as well, Coleridge mentioned that he would write a book about the duties of women (TT II 368). Although his message was based on his view of female as a “characterless” and submissive being remaining within the domestic sphere, and made an ideal partner to her husband, female education and conduct were topics which he could deal with willingly. In fact, as I have noted, the model of a gift book reader was a “pious, retiring” ladies; and this image was incongruous with Coleridge’s view of female propriety.

The advertisement of his prospective lectures quoted above also shows that Coleridge was keen to answer requests from the audience as long as he had some opinions on the subjects. As is usual with his lectures in which broad themes or subject matters were suggested by the hosting organization like the Royal Institution, and Coleridge proposed the prospectus based on the requests made by the organization; annual editors requested some pieces or certain amount of literary works, but they did not interfere with the works themselves as long as they did not transgress their general editorial principles. Therefore, the literary annual was a form in which Coleridge could express his ideas quite freely. If we borrow his favourite word, he attempted a reconciliation of the requests made by annual editors and his own wishes; in other words he reconciled requests from the trade with his vocational sense of mission. By contributing his poems to gift books which had a large female readership, Coleridge caught an opportunity to comment upon a female education and conduct as well as a chance to appeal his presence as a poet.

Some poems which I shall discuss below were actually written prompted by the requests of his friends and acquaintances, and others took the form that the speaker, who was supposed to express Coleridge himself, responded to the questions and requests by others. This framework reflects the actual arrangement made between annual editors and Coleridge, who responded to the requests brought by annual editors; and the speaker’s willingness in developing his ideas according to the requests by other people reflected Coleridge’s own eagerness in answering such demands.

“Love, Hope and Patience in Education,” which was published in *The Keepsake* 1830 as “The Poet’s Answer, To a Lady’s Question Respecting the Accomplishments Most Desirable in an Instructress of Children” was

originally written for his young friend Emily Trevenon. As the title in *The Keepsake* clearly suggests, the poem was his answer concerning desirable qualities in ladies who engage in education. The poet states that "LOVE," "HOPE" and "PATIENCE" are most important and explains the reason by means of an allegorical drama. He claims that they should be held together firmly, because "If HOPE prostrate lie, /LOVE too will sink and die." However he continues:

LOVE is subtle, and will proof derive
 From her own life that HOPE is yet alive.
 And bending o'er, with soul-transfusing eyes,
 And the soft murmurs of the Mother Dove,
 Woos back the fleeting spirit, and half supplies:
 Thus LOVE repays to HOPE what HOPE first gave to LOVE.
(PW 656 15-20)²⁰

And when both LOVE and HOPE give in, their "mute sister, PATIENCE" supports them and takes over both of their roles. This piece which explains the mechanism of the human mind in terms of an allegorical drama creates clear images. Coleridge preferred to adopt allegory in his later poems, and allegorical mode of expression is suitable for the moralizing purpose of this poem as well.

"New Thoughts on Old Subjects; or Conversational Dialogues on Interests and Events of Common Life" which was contributed to *The Amulet* for 1828, was an ambitious work of more than ten pages which consists of a prose introductory discourse, a dialogue between two young ladies and an improvisator, and a concluding verse by the improvisator. The dialogue and an improvisational verse were entitled "No. I.—THE IMPROVISATORE; OR 'JOHN ANDERSON, MY JO, JOHN?'" In the prefatory prose note to this work, Coleridge wrote: "There is no source of pleasure, that I can at present recall to my mind, so constant and universal in its effects, as the unexpected union of novelty, and a freshness of sensation, with old and familiar objects, the images and facts of every-day occurrence."²¹ "To give the charm of novelty to things of every day" is what Coleridge and Wordsworth aimed at by their attempts in the *Lyrical Ballads* (BL II 7). As the title and this comment suggest, in this piece of work, he is making an attempt to achieve the same objective as in the *Lyrical Ballads*.

In the work entitled "The Improvisatore; or 'John Anderson, my Jo, John,'" Coleridge dealt with the "old" question of whether true love that would not fade with time exists or not. It is proper to think that Coleridge is represented by the improvisator turned fifty, while the two ladies, Catherine and Eliza, asking questions in the "spacious drawing room, with music room

²⁰ All textual citations are from gift books, but I shall take references from PW in parenthesis.

²¹ *The Amulet* (London: W. Baynes and Son, and Wightman and Cramp, 1828) 37.

adjoining,” characterised the typical gift-book readers (PW 623 INT1). Coleridge stated that he attempted to demonstrate “the unexpected union” of the old and new in this work, but it is interesting to note that this piece of work illustrates an occasion in which antithetical beings—the young females and the old male improvisator, communicate and move towards some mutual understanding.

Furthermore, this piece of work describes the way how Coleridge made his own claim through his contributions to literary annuals, while fulfilling roles expected by the annual editors and readers. At the opening of this piece, the improvisator comes into the drawing room where Catherine and Eliza are talking about poems. The drawing room was a characteristic place for gift book readers, and the entrance of the improvisator into the room implies Coleridge’s entrance into the realm of gift book readers. In this work, the improvisator answers the questions asked by the two young ladies. At first he replies to their questions frankly but briefly; but when they express discontent with his answers, he takes up their questions more seriously and develops his ideas concerning “true love,” taking Moore’s song as a text to refer to. He does not deny the existence of such true love on earth; however, he explains how rare it is, as it is based on qualities such as “a peculiar sensibility and tenderness of nature,” “a constitutional communicativeness and *utterancy* of heart and soul” and “a delight in the detail of sympathy in the outward and visible signs of the sacrament within.” (PW 623 INT 63-66) Having heard this explanation, the young ladies requests more rational analysis by saying:

Eliza: There is something *here* (*pointing to her heart*) that *seems* to understand you, but wants the word that would make it understand itself.

Catherine: I, too, seem to *feel* what you mean. Interpret the feeling for us. (PW 623 INT 71-75)

At their requests, he begins to explicate his analysis of the human mind searching for a partner whose nature would supplement and complete the person’s “self.” His explanations end up emphasising the rarity of “true love” as it is based on “qualities” which are “rarely found united in a single individual,” but the improvisator advises the two girls not to give up the hope of realizing such love. Further, when he is asked if he had such love in his life, he composes an impromptu poem as a reply. In this verse he reflects upon his search for true love as a young man and his disappointment over his failure at finding it; but he concludes the verse with these lines:

Though, heart be lonesome, Hope laid low,
 Yet, Lady! deem him not unblest:
 The certainty that struck HOPE dead,
 Hath left CONTENTMENT in her stead:
 And that is next to Best! (PW 623 63-67)

It might be expected that disappointment will result when hope vanishes, but the improvisator claims that he gained "CONTENTMENT" instead of "HOPE." Thus this piece of work, which starts with a lady's question, ends with the soliloquy of the improvisator. The improvisator's increasing eloquence in the course of his dialogue with the two ladies, seems to reflect Coleridge's ability to respond to requests from others. As the ability of improvisation was generally supposed to be the sign of poetic genius in the Romantic period, it is also possible to interpret Coleridge asserting a claim to poetic genius in the concluding verse which was expressed as composed impromptu.

In *The Friendship's Offering* (1834), the last literary annual to which Coleridge contributed, he boldly appealed to his being as a poet. He attempted prosodic experiment in five pieces including "Hymn to the Earth" by adapting the Greek meters to the English verses. In introducing the methods he adopted in this attempt, Coleridge stated that "It may not be without use of interest to youthful, and especially to intelligent female readers of poetry, to observe, that in the attempt to adapt the Greek metres to the English language, we must begin by substituting quality of sound for quantity."²² In another piece entitled "Lines to a Comic Author, on an Abusive Review," Coleridge expressed his own discontent with and disregard for the reviewers under the form of encouragement to a young author who received an offensive review. This poem opens with provocative lines which remind us of his earlier work "Parliamentary Oscillators":

What though the chilly wide-mouth'd quacking chorus
From the rank swamps of murk Review-land croak: (PW 560 1-2)

The speaker claims that the nature of reviewing has not changed much from the ancient time, and in the concluding lines of this poem, the poet recommends that his friend laugh away the review:

No: laugh, and say aloud, in tones of glee,
"I have the quacking tribe, and they hate me!" (PW 560 16-17)

In a piece entitled "The Reproof and Reply," Coleridge transformed a beautiful garden of his neighbour in Highgate into the world of Greek myths in a half-serious and half-amusing way. This is a garden where he had been customarily enjoying his walk. As a reply to a lady's reproach that he had stolen flowers from her garden, the speaker excuses himself by saying that everything he saw and heard in the garden, which he compared to muses and the "vocal fount of Helicon," "conspir'd" with him to steal the flowers. He further explains that he is "long accustomed on the twy-fork'd hill,/ To pluck both flower and floweret" at his own will. The flower and floweret are

²² *Friendship's Offering* 1834, 164.

supposed to express poetry he composes, by gaining inspiration from the beautiful garden, and the twy-forked hill reminds readers of Parnassus. In the footnote to this part, the poet explained: "The English Parnassus is remarkable for its two summits of unequal height, the lower denominated Hampstead, the higher Highgate." (PW 585 a note to 49) This is obviously a statement of self-praise, which regarded the two peaks of English poems as being in Hampstead of Keats and Leigh Hunt and Highgate of Coleridge himself. Coleridge transmuted the geographical characteristics of the two places into the degree of eminence of the arts produced in these areas. This is an amusing, but daring comment which expressed his confidence in himself as a poet.

In all the poems which I discussed in this section, the speaker of these poems transform the occasions of answering and responding to other people's questions and complaints into opportunities to make his own claims. This process interestingly reflected the process in which Coleridge turned literary annuals to vehicles for his self-expression.

III. *The Keepsake for 1829 and "The Garden of Boccaccio"*

All editors of literary annuals competed for contributions by big-name authors, but *The Keepsake* for 1829 was matchlessly luxurious in this respect. This is also the volume which contained a poetical *tour de force* of Coleridge. The newly appointed editor Frederick Mansel Reynolds gathered contributions from nearly all representative literary figures, in order to make this volume "*live*" as "a reputed and standard work in every well-selected library" instead of falling into "a mere fleeting production, to *die* with the season of its birth."²³ The advertisement of *The Keepsake* 1829 which appeared in *The Athenaeum*, proudly stated that "such a List of Contributors has never before been presented to the Public," and provided the list of contributors as follows:

Sir Walter Scott, Sir James Mackintosh, Thomas Moore, Lord Normanby, Lord Morpeth, Lord Nugent, Lord F.L.Croker, Thomas Hynes Bayly, Mrs.Shelley, Wordsworth, Coleridge, Southey, Percy Bysshe Shelley, and the Authors of "The Life of Kemble," "Gilbert Earle," "The Roué," and "The O'Hara Tales."²⁴

It was a dramatic change from the previous volume of *The Keepsake*, which published all the literary contributions anonymously. In the preface to this volume the editor wrote:

It cannot fail to be observed, as a feature peculiar to the keepsake, that the articles are published anonymously. This course was adopted, partly from a regard to the wishes of individuals, which prevented the divulgement of names in some instances, and partly from an inclination to risk the several articles on

²³ *The Keepsake* (London: Hurst, Chance and Co., and Robert Jennings, 1829) iv.

²⁴ *The Athenaeum*, 55 (22 October 1828) 830.

their own merits, unaided by the previous reputation of the writers. Whether this deviation from custom will meet approval remains to be known; though literary idlers will probably find amusement in tracing the hand of particular authors in their respective contributions.²⁵

Although anonymous contributions were not unusual, as the editor is using the word “deviation,” all anonymous contributions were unprecedented. Names of popular and celebrated authors that attracted readers’, or rather, purchasers’ attention, was an indispensable feature for the literary annuals, so it was a daring attempt to make readers look at literary works themselves. Peter J. Manning considers that *The Keepsake* 1828 “made clear the function of the annual as a status gift rather than a book to read” by introducing the presentation plate at the opening of the book “in which the donor might inscribe his sentiments to the fortunate recipient.”²⁶ However, in the same volume, the editor attempted to encourage readers who were interested in literature to look at the works themselves without any prejudice formed by the name of the author.

The Keepsake 1828 is said to have sold between 12,000 and 15,000 copies, and turned out to be a considerable success. For further success, however, Charles Heath and his assistant and the later editor of *The Keepsake*, Frederick Mansel Reynolds, took a totally different course for the next year. In order to gather an impressive line-up of contributors, they started in the spring of 1828 a famous contributor-hunting tour to obtain agreements for contributions from prominent literary figures such as Walter Scott, Thomas Moore, Wordsworth, Southey and Coleridge. At first they hoped to welcome Scott as the editor of *The Keepsake* with an offer of £800 per a year; however, he declined this and only agreed to contribute 70-100 pages for 500 pounds. Next they approached Moore about the editorship, but he refused both to edit and to contribute to the volume, though in the end Reynolds published Moore’s “Extempore” without the author’s agreement.²⁷ Similarly, they offered unusually generous sums to Wordsworth and Coleridge—for Wordsworth 100 guineas for twelve pages; for Coleridge 50 guineas for eleven pages. To sell his works to such a popular and frivolous book for the sake of money contradicted Wordsworth’s principles; however, he was then in financial difficulty, and could not reject this offer.²⁸ Then, Reynolds, according to Coleridge’s account, brought him a letter of recommendation from Wordsworth in order more easily to obtain his agreement. This might partly have been Coleridge’s excuse to contribute to another annual, but in his letter to Alaric Watts he thus explained the reason why he agreed to contribute to *The Keepsake*: “arising in part from feelings of friendship to Wordsworth & in part from the fear of my refusal to add my name to his & Southey’s being

²⁵ *The Keepsake* (London: Hurst, Chance and Co., and Robert Jennings, 1828) vii.

²⁶ Manning, “Wordsworth in the *Keepsake*, 1829,” 45.

²⁷ As for their negotiation, see Kathryn Ledbetter, “Lucrative Requests: British Authors and Gift Book Editors,” *Bibliographical Society of America*, 88 (1994) 209-12.

²⁸ Manning, “Wordsworth in the *Keepsake*, 1829,” 50.

misinterpreted at Keswick, was beyond all comparison the more efficient Motive" (CL VI 761). Although Coleridge asserted in several letters that he never would decide to contribute to literary annuals from pecuniary motives (CL VI 761), he excitedly wrote "I had engaged to furnish...for the Keep-sake, two Poems of no great length [i.e. "The Garden of Boccaccio" and the "Alice Du Clos"], for 50 £[sic], (more than all, I ever made by all my Publications, my week's Salary of 5£ as Writer of the Leading Articles in the Morning Post during the Peace of Amiens excepted) on the condition, that I was *not* to give or sell any contribution to any other of these Annualists." (CL VI 752) In the case of the *Sibylline Leaves* 1817 and *The Poetical Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge* 1828, Coleridge had had difficulty in finding a publisher. However, this time, he is asked to furnish his works and receive a generous pecuniary reward. This request is a reflection of public interest and demand towards his works or name, and is supposed to be a satisfying experience for Coleridge.

In many cases, Wordsworth and Coleridge provided just one or two pieces to each volume of a literary annual, but in the case of *The Keepsake* 1829, they made a greater contribution to it: Wordsworth contributed five pieces "The Country Girl," "The Triad," "The Wishing Gate," and two sonnets, all of which were newly composed for *The Keepsake* and amounted to nearly fifteen pages in total; Coleridge contributed "The Garden of Boccaccio," a representative work of his later phase, and eight epigrammatic works, one of which was the concluding piece of this volume.²⁹ It is also notable that both Coleridge and Wordsworth wrote poems for the given engravings in *The Keepsake* 1829, as their works in literary annuals were usually printed without accompanying engravings. As a general practice, engravings had been made when editors sought contributors, and some writers were asked to write literary pieces to accompany them. Each volume of the annual published in Coleridge's lifetime, normally contained eleven to fifteen engravings, and most of the contributors were not requested to furnish pieces with engravings. Coleridge contributed more than thirty poems and epigrams to twelve volumes of five different titles of literary annual, but "The Garden of Boccaccio" was the sole piece which was written in order to be printed together with the engraving provided by the publisher.³⁰ Letitia Elizabeth Landon, who was one of the most popular female writers of the 1820s and wrote many poems to accompany engravings, explained: "It is not an easy thing to write illustrations to prints, selected rather for their pictorial excellence than their poetic capabilities; and mere description is certainly not the most popular species of composition."³¹ Although it was not an easy task, Coleridge composed a piece

²⁹ As to other authors, Scott furnished four pieces of seventy-five pages in total; Mary Shelley two short stories of more than twenty pages each; Percy Shelley one essay entitled "On Love" and three fragments which amounted to six pages, Southey two poetical works "Lucy and her Bird" and "Stanzas" both of which were accompanied by engravings after J. M. Wright's and Turner's paintings.

³⁰ An extract from *Christabel* was published with an engraving in *The Bijou* 1829, however, in this case, the engraving was made to accompany the extract.

³¹ *Fisher's Drawing Room Scrap-Book: With Poetical Illustrations* by L.E.L. (London: Fisher, Son and Jackson, 1832) i.

which matched well with the engraving with mastery. Of course, it is not hard to imagine that Reynolds had chosen the picture for Coleridge judging from his experience and career: he spent about two years in Italy in his early thirties and had given several lectures on Italian literature and arts; but "The Garden of Boccaccio" was indeed the exceptional product created as a result of active interaction between the poet and the picture.

A strength of this poem lies in its description of the smooth movements of spiritual changes of the speaker. In the opening verse paragraph, the speaker of this poem is in a dreary mood sitting alone in his own room. He attempts to rely on past memories in order to save himself from this "numbing spell," but this attempt only confirms that he is "bereft alike of grief and glee." Then, a friend who perceived his pain, quietly put an "exquisite design" of Boccaccio's garden on his desk. This picture which describes the garden of the third day of the *Decameron* gives a certain stimulus to the speaker's mind:

Like flocks adown a newly-bathed steep
Emerging from a mist: or like a stream
Of music soft that not dispels the sleep,
But casts in happier moulds the slumberer's dream,
Gazed by an idle eye with silent might
The picture stole upon my inward sight.
A tremulous warmth crept gradual o'er my chest,
As though an infant's finger touch'd my breast.
And one by one (I know not whence) were brought
All spirits of power that most had stirr'd my thought
In selfless boyhood, ... (PW 652 19-29)

The description of the process that the speaker is gradually put into life is exquisite in that this captures the interaction between the speaker and the picture: "Gazed by an idle eye with silent might" of the speaker, the picture of Boccaccio's garden captures his "inward sight." The transition from the bodily "idle" eye to the "inward sight" suggests the speaker's spiritual awakening. The warmth compared to an "infant's finger" implies innocence and youthful energy. This change guides him into the lively reminiscence of his youth when he was fascinated with "Philosophy" which bore the name of "Poesy." After this recollection the speaker's mind entered a new phase: he is "*all* awake" and now he can "descry" the artist's "fair creation with a mastering eye." The speaker begins to appreciate the details of the picture, and furthermore, guided by the "serviceable nymph" he enters the world of this picture:

And with that serviceable nymph I stoop
The crystal from its restless pool to scoop.
I see no longer! I myself am there,
Sit on the ground-sward, and the banquet share.
'Tis I, that sweep that lute's love-echoing strings,
And gaze upon the maid who gazing sings: (PW 652 63-68)

As if the crystal had a charm on him, the speaker senses himself as having entered the world of the picture and projects himself onto a young gallant playing a lute at the centre of the picture. The speaker who was alone in his study room is now described as sharing the banquet with the joyful company.

In the subsequent verse paragraph, the speaker recalls and praises the fertility and magnificent scenery of Italy excitedly. The gushing enumeration of the praising adjectives, and the descriptions of Italian nature effectively express the speaker's enthusiasm. He is now completely liberated from the languidness in which he was captured at the beginning of this poem. He moreover recognises a harmonious reconciliation of nature and man in Italian gardens:

Gardens, where flings the bridge its airy span,
And Nature makes her happy home with man;
Where many a gorgeous flower is duly fed
With its own rill, on its own spangled bed,
And wreathes the marble urn, or leans its head, (PW 652 86-90)

This image of Italian Garden gradually merges into the image of the Boccaccio's garden illustrated in the picture, and the speaker then recognises Boccaccio sitting at the centre of the imaginary world:

Mid gods of Greece and warriors of romance,
See! BOCCACE sits, unfolding on his knees
The new-found roll of old Mæonides;
But from his mantle' fold, and near the heart,
Peers Ovid's Holy Book of Love's sweet Smart! (PW 652 96-100)

The speaker represents Boccaccio as the "all-enjoying and all-blending sage" who introduced the works of Homer to Italy while having a spirit which was resonant with that of Ovid. This poem closes with the speaker's praise of Boccaccio and his wish to remain in the world of joyance which the garden of Boccaccio epitomises. In this poem the speaker, who was an isolated figure caught in the "numbing spell," entered the sphere of pleasure and love depicted in the picture; furthermore, he in the end developed into a being who embraced the world that the picture represented. The speaker honours the achievement of Boccaccio as an "all-enjoying and all-blending sage," but this poem proves that Coleridge was also such an able poet who could construct a poetic world which encompassed the world of Boccaccio itself.

This poem shares some characteristics of the conversational poems: its tone is conversational throughout; it starts with a depressed mood of the speaker who is alone in his room, and then moves to his spiritual liberation. But it differs from typical conversational poems in that the speaker's mind does not return to the real world at the close of the poem, and opens up the

possibility of the continuance of the state of joy and enthusiasm. This ending is significant when we construe this poem as expressing Coleridge himself who was willingly responding to the request from the annual editor. In this poem, by appreciating the beauty of the picture, which was brought to him by an annual editor, the poet's spirit was stimulated, and he further made an entrance to the world of the picture. This world filled with joy, youthful energy and love could be seen as a world of gift book readers; and the speaker who enters the world of the picture seems to represent Coleridge himself entering the community of gift book readers as well as the realm filled with creative energy. Furthermore it might be possible to see it as a society itself, as an arena for communication, in contrast with the isolation of the poet at the opening of this poem. The joy and enthusiasm that the speaker enjoys are supposed to describe Coleridge's enthusiasm upon his returning to the public sphere through his contribution to literary annuals. His wish to be indulged in the pleasure of Boccaccio which constituted the end of the poem, might represent his wish to remain in the lively sphere of society, as publication was an essential mode of communication for Coleridge as a professional man of letters.

Coleridge's wish was realised to some extent through the literary annuals. As early as 1820, Coleridge had been looking for a publisher who could publish his collected poetical works, but did not manage to come to an agreement until 1827. This seems to be not just because of his lack of popularity in the literary marketplace. This was partly because poetry was "rapidly declining in popularity" as a genre "in favor of prose and fiction" as some critics have pointed out. This was also because of the depression which the printing industry was experiencing at that time. Kathleen Ledbetter has pointed out that the annuals providing poets with "much-needed outlets for publication."³² The relatively rapid sale of the first edition of *The Poetical Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge* was not without an effect of the renewed attention to his poetical works aroused through literary annuals. I would suggest that the opportunity to publish his poems in literary annuals provided Coleridge with a chance to promote himself as a contemporary poet to his readers; and the demands from the public, which were shown as requests of contribution made by the annual editors, stimulated Coleridge's creatively itself.

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³² Ledbetter, 209.