Sibylline Tweets: Coleridge and Newspaper Writing

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COVID-19 FINALLY CAUGHT UP WITH ME AFTER TWO YEARS of cautious living, and I was surprised by how badly the brainfog affected me. So, consider this a Coleridgean conversation with my own feverish brain, rather than a chat over a pint in the pub. I haven't been to a pub in years, who in their right mind has? Like Paul Cheshire, I have fond memories of convivial sessions in the backyard of the Rose and Crown during the Coleridge Conferences in Cannington, and I'm struck by how much the pandemic has changed the way we feel, think, or even allow ourselves to live. Coleridge would have hated lockdowns. The isolation has both hightened and numbed our engagement with the media, and disinformation has taken on pandemic proportions. Glued to our screens, more so than ever, we scroll through every major disaster, every minor mishap, in increasingly tiny moments of attention. Firing off opinions now counts for more than articulating considered responses to controversial topics. 'I did my own research' has become a battle cry against proven scientific facts. Andy Warhol's 'fifteen minutes' of fame seem an eternity now. Fifteen short seconds, if that, more likely. The relevance of 'Coleridge and his newspaper writing' for us now extends to a much wider range of media forms, both online and in print. In this short piece I am not so much focusing on one key poem or essay, (although my own interest in this topic started off with the *Dejection Ode*), but on how tricky newspaper research used to be, and also on some key aspects of Coleridge's personality which would have made him an ideal proponent of today's media environment: his ready ability to respond quickly to the public events around him and his compulsive desire to reveal his private thoughts and feelings in a public arena.

First of all: it has become much easier to study newspapers than it used to be even fifteen years ago, which makes 'Coleridge and newspaper writing' a highly relevant research topic today. Even at this moment, we still don't have a very clear picture of Coleridge's newspaper writing. It has been shoehorned into editions which don't really accommodate the mercurial nature of writing produced to stringent daily deadlines, about transient events, aimed at as wide a readership as possible. Sara Coleridge's 1850 edition of her father's *Essays on his Times*, later also the basis of David Erdman's excellent three-volume edition of the *Collected Works*, brought the bulk of his newspaper writing together, but it also skewed and obscured the range, versatility, and dynamic nature of Coleridge's myriad contributions to the London newspapers. Both editions attribute a canonical status to his essays, and this somehow delegates Coleridge's newspaper writing to a more permanent or fixed status than most journalism warrants, no matter how revealing and rewarding the writing. The Collected Works edition is based on genre, so the Essays on His Times volumes delegate the more ephemeral contributions, as well as only a list of the

numerous poems, to an appendix, thereby erasing them from the patchwork of genres which made up Coleridge's writing for newspapers.

But at least, Sara Coleridge and David Erdman made Coleridge's newspaper writing available in some form, because until recently newspaper research was a nightmare. The problems of accessing newspapers is connected with the nature of their existence: as a periodical, sometimes daily, product, they are not meant to last. And in some ways, we should attribute the same transient status to the content of newspapers. Yesterday's news is today's bin liner. It's to Coleridge's credit that so much of his newspaper writing has a more lasting value than the fleeting genre it had been produced for.

The access to online versions of nineteenth-century newspapers has revolutionized how we can study a writer's journalism within its original context. In 2004, when I first did research on Coleridge's newspaper writings, I spent a sabbatical making my way to the British Library Newspaper Library in Colindale (which closed in 2013), on the Edgware branch of the dreaded Northern Line. Apparently the novelist David Mitchell referred to the Northern Line in his novel *Ghostwritten* as the 'psycho of the family', an apt description. The depth of the Northern Line, its mysterious bifurcating routes, and the frequent breakdowns provided the appropriate mental preparation for tackling the microfilm readers at the Colindale library. Accessing the actual, extremely fragile newspapers was impossible of course, so we had to do battle with machinery and spools of film. The films, threaded from their spools under a small glassplate, took on a life of their own as the images spiralled and sped through on the grainy screen. Photocopies or printouts were extortionately priced. When you were sitting at the microfilm reader there was no real space to write, so you would be spooling the film with one hand, while balancing a notebook and a pencil at the same time. The building was like a dark prison and at the end of the day I would stagger out, blinking in the sudden light of day. My memories of the eye strain, the pounding headaches, the frustration of blurred bits on the film which made the actual text illegible, are somewhat vague by now, compounded by the fact that at the time I had a two-year old who did not believe in sleep. Boy, was I envious of the father in *Frost at Midnight* who had a baby that 'slumbered' peacefully by his side. Fat chance.

What the microfilms revealed, though, was a wonderful, crowded collage of very different kinds of writing, all jostling on the same page, designed for darting eyes. This mattered greatly to me: my fascination with Coleridge as a newspaper writer had started with the textual history of one of his most extraordinary lyric poems, the *Dejection Ode*, which was published in Daniel Stuart's *Morning Post* of 4 October 1802. This poem had started off, six months earlier, as a plaintive verse letter addressed to Sara Hutchinson, and its critical history had been largely focused on the nature of private and public expression. Stephen Maxfield Parrish's *Coleridge's Dejection: The Earliest Manuscripts and the Earliest Printings* (Cornell UP, 1988) includes photographs of the letters and manuscripts, but the *Morning Post* version had been neatly cut

out into long strips, so unfortunately we don't see what surrounds the poem in its orignal newspaper context. We don't see how the readers of the newspaper would have encountered that amazing poem for the first time. If you had opened the paper over your morning coffee on Monday 4 October 1802, you would have seen the following: the first and the last of the four pages, each consisting of four columns, was largely filled with advertisements, notices and announcements. Like now on social media, the publisher made sure that you saw in the first instance what paid for the actual contents of the paper itself: advertising. Someone was offering a princely reward of one guinea for returning a lost 'Old French Dog, lately shorn, of a Light Brown Colour'; a sale 'by auction' advertises painting by Vandyke, Correggio, and Caneletto; the final advertisement sings the praises of the aptly named Leake's Patent Pills in the form of a letter by a miraculously cured sufferer of a 'Veneral Complaint'. On the inside of the paper, we find two columns of political commentary about possible sedition in the Breton section of the French army against Napoleon, the situation in Malta and Switzerland, the slave insurrection in Guadeloupe. The third column of the second page is entirely devoted to the 'Fashionable World', detailing the clothes in Paris and social gossip. Immediately adjacent to this Fashion column is the 'Original Poetry' column where we find *Dejection*. The poem also fills about twenty percent of the first column of the next page, which also features theatre reviews, shipping news, and crime reports. [1]

Coleridge wrote extensively about political topics in the *Morning Post* at the time, but with *Dejection* he struck another chord. The poem was published on the actual wedding day of William Wordsworth to Sara Hutchinson's sister Mary, and this date coincided with the unhappy seventh anniversary of Coleridge's own marriage to Sara Fricker. Seeing the poem surrounded by all sorts of articles and notices in the newspaper made it clear to me how the traditional critical debate about the 'private' verse letter and the 'public' newspaper version concealed a more complicated picture. As I started digging around it became obvious that this stark distinction did not work. The verse letter was never as private as it was labeled to be. More importantly for my purposes, the newspaper version bristled with private allusions to Coleridge's troubled engagement with the Wordsworth circle, the more so if you considered Coleridge's other newspaper contributions between 1799 and 1802, many of which I've detailed in *Coleridge and the Romantic Newspaper* (Springer, 2016).

While I never embarked on a systematic study of Coleridge as a newspaper journalist, I found out a great deal about what made Coleridge an innovative, successful journalist. He was a born performer, in any medium. From childhood onwards, as he indicated in *Biographia Literaria*, he loved to hold forth, and he did so, at great length, throughout his life. His favourite medium

[1] The two pages overleaf give a reduced, so unfortunately unreadable, impression of what readers would have seen on the pages in which *Dejection* appears. Newspaper image © The British Library Board. All rights reserved. With thanks to The British Newspaper Archive (www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk).

PARIS, Sept. 29.

On the 27th, the First Consul received in the gallery of St. Cloud the Members of the first Constituted Authorities. The Archbishop of Paris, and many other Prelates, were at the audience.

The Archbishop of Troves died on the 22d of September. He was a prelate of great learning, piety, and goodness of heart. The First Consul ordered to be laid before him an account of the situation of his family, in order to give them a proof of his good disposition towards him.

For some days there has been a talk of the arrest of several Jacobin conspirators, discovered by Mounier, Prefect of Rennes, soon after his installation. This conspiracy appeared to have been much more extensive and dangerous than is acknowledged, and Government have even used the utmost endeavours to keep it secret. This is the history of the affair. Two or three days after his arrival at Rennes, Mounier was informed that a very dangerous conspiracy existed, that General S——, who had a command in Brittany, was at the head of it, and several officers of the troops in garrison of the place, amounting to 6000 men, were concerned in it, that it was intended to raise a revolt amongst a great part of the troops in Brittany; that proclamations of the most seditious nature, in which the First Consul was called the tyrant of France, and his massacre spoken of, were printed; and that in these proclamations the name of Gen. Moreau was constantly brought forward, although that officer was wholly ignorant of the transaction. In consequence of this information, Mounier caused the proclamations to be seized, which those into whose hands they were printing, and ordered the commandant of the gendarmerie to arrest the commandant of the town; but he refused to execute the orders, and the Prefect had no room for a doubt of his being in the conspiracy, as he had been informed. He then addressed himself to the Civil Authorities, but he found them all seduced, and in the worst disposition. The commandant of the town informed of the designs to have him arrested, took refuge in the barracks, and the soldiers appeared determined to protect him, if he should be sought for there. Upon this the Prefect ordered a general review, and when all the garrison had marched out of the barracks, he again ordered the chief of he gendarmerie to go and arrest the commandant of the town, but he refused again. Mounier then applied to some other officers, who refused, under the pretext of the danger to be incurred in arresting a General at the head of his troops. Still the Prefect spoke to them with so much firmness, and made them so sensible of the yet greater danger which there was in persisting in their disobedience, that after long deliberation, they at length took the resolution to obey, and the commandant of the town was arrested. The soldiers appeared for a moment disposed to defend him; but the garrison having immediately separated itself into two parties, one of which submitted to the Prefect, it became more easy to keep the rest in subjection, and the whole terminated in murmurs, and some partial seditions, which were quickly suppressed.

On the following day the Officers seeing the conspiracy discovered, came to give in remain against each other. General S—— was arrested, and conducted to the Temple, where he still remains.—The garrison of Rennes was dispersed, and a part of it embarked for the Colonies; and thus fell to the ground a conspiracy, as they say, the most dangerous that has been formed against Bonaparte. What is most extraordinary in it is the profound secrecy which has been observed in an affair of such a nature. It was vaguely reported at Paris that Brittany was at that time in a very inquiet and turbulent state, but no particulers were known.

Morning Post and Gazetteer.

LONDON:

MONDAY, OCTOBER 4.

The Paris Journals to the 30th bring more ample details respecting the affairs of Switzerland than those we gave on Saturday; but they add nothing new. One of the evening papers mentions the existence of a convention between France and Russia for dividing Greece, Egypt, and the chief islands of the Mediterranean, between these two powers. France probably entertains such a project; but it is not likely the unambitious Emperor ALEXANDER will embrace it. The disposal of one island in the Mediterranean, Malta, indeed, becomes an object of difficulty, since he has refused to be the protector of its independence. According to very general report, this is the difficulty which occasions the delay of ANDREOSSI's appearance. It so, it cannot be a serious one. Malta, in fact, by the treaty of peace must fall into the power of France, whoever may be its protector, unless a British garrison were to retain possession of it; and Russia, foreseeing the embarassed situation her protection of it might place her in, during the future quarrels of France and England, may with great prudence have declined an office so ungracious. This course of moderation and forbearance is perfectly consistent with the character and views of ALEXANDER. It is strange, that Malta has not been evacuated within the time limited by the Definitive Treaty; and hence, it is manifest, that some difficulty has occurred. It is now said with confidence, that it has been evacuated before this time, and is left to the protection of the Neapolitan troops. The rise of the Funds on Saturday is the surest indication, that any thing which may have arisen to prevent ANDREOSSI's arrival at the time appointed, is not of a serious nature; but that a difficulty did occur, and that the time of his setting out from Paris was changed, is most certain. When we stated this fact a week ago, some of our cotemporaries contradicting our information, fixed his arrival for this day. Their assertions will now be found to be as unfounded as the intelligence we gave was authentic. No disappointment should arise in the public mind from this misinformation. Though we have stated that ANDREOSSI's coming was delayed, we never have said that it would not take place. We trust it is near at hand; and we shall not be surprised, should it be found to be much nearer than is generally imagined.

A private letter from Paris mentions the discovery at Rennes of an extensive Jacobin plot to raise Brittany against the existing Government. There is great reason to believe this account, as Brittany is known to be the least affected towards BONAPARTE.—The silence of the Parisian Journals, and of other advices from Paris, respecting this affair, does not contradict the story. The CHIEF CONSUL conceals all information of conspiracies, well knowing that their publicity would strengthen his enemies, and render his Government, in the eyes of Europe, not quite so *stable*, as he wishes the world to believe it is.

When the 13th Regiment of Dragoons was reviewed at Ashford Common on Friday, the KING not only expressed great satisfaction at the expertness and discipline of the regiment, but was highly pleased with the uniform, which is laced with gold. The charges were admirably made. The Duke of YORK went up to Colonel BOLTON, and thanked him and the regiment in the King's name. Colonel B. has recruited, we might say raised, this corps within three years from about thirty men, and has in that time brought them to perfection in their exercise.

A report was in circulation on Saturday, that a friendly understanding had been established between the Cabinets of Vienna and the Thuilleries, through the influence of the Archduke CHARLES with the CHIEF CONSUL, and that the conduct of His IMPERIAL MAJESTY, on the subject of Indemnities, had the secret concurrence of France. This explanation of the motives of the House of Austria is much more consistent with probability, than that there is any design of opposing France by force.

According to accounts from the *sea ports*, Mr. PITT is in a state of blockade, at Walmer Castle, and many persons imagine he will be taken, and carried into *Treasury Dock*. Mr. CANNING has cast anchor in the village of Walmer, and keeps up such a *constant fire* on Walmer Castle, which, though it makes no sudden impression, it is thought cannot fail of as ultimate effect.—Mr. C. LONG, in Dover Castle, takes the vessel a-head, and Lord CARRINGTON, in Deal Castle, rakes it astern; while Mr. DUNDAS sets off Kingsgate, superintending the whole opera tions, ready to come into action the moment he can do so with full prospects of success. The WILBERFORCE and GEORGE ROSE are coming up. WILLIAM PITT defends himself wholly upon a Farm of 300 acres; but it is thought he must surrender, as it is seldom the ADDINGTON has sheltered fire greatly. On this subject, more anon.

The trade of Genoa has of late greatly declined; vessels, which went thither in June and July, could neither dispose of their cargoes, nor obtain any ordinary freight. But what need Genoa care about trade? Is it not the *free* and *independent* Republic of Liguria? "Perish, Commerce; let the Constitution live!"

The Second Lieutenant-Colonels of all regiments of the line are, it is said, to be reduced on the 24th December. The Second Majors, we understand, are to be continued. We likewise hear that all additional Lieutenants belonging to the three regiments of Guards are to be reduced on the 24th inst. excepting a few, who are to remain as ensigns until vacancies may offer without purchase.

The Captain-General, RICHEPANCE, at Basseterre, Guadaloupe, has ordered the merchants of Point Petre to pay a forced loan of one million of livres tournois—The merchants held a meeting on the subject, and unanimously resolved not to pay it. —The General commanding at Point Petre, on being apprised of this determination, declared, that if they persisted in their refusal, he would arrest the principal of them, and send them in irons to Basseterre. This threat had not produced any immediate effect, and we are uninformed of the result.

About 400 blacks con inue in the woods of Guadaloupe, well armed; the French have, in a great measure, cut off their communication with the inhabited part of the island, and were in expectation of starving the insurgents. Such as surrendered, or were taken, were sent to the Saints, until arrangements could be made for their final disposition. Gen. Pelage had been sent prisoner on board a frigate to France, for trial.

The army under Baron d'ERLACH, which has effected the late changes in Switzerland, is chiefly compose of the Swiss emigrants who had been in the English service, of deserters from the Helvetic troops, and of the officers and soldiers who, previous to the French revolution, had served in France and Holland. The peasants with whom they are incorporated are extremely numerous; and the funds destined to support them are supposed to be very considerable, principally composed of voluntary contributions. The whole of ERLACH's army is calculated at no less than 30,000 men.

Previous to the Capitulation of Berne, Citizen VERNINAC, the French Minister, was about to quit that City, and return to Paris, but at the instance of several Members of the Government, he consented to remain in Switzerland.

It is stated in a letter from Basle, that the French Government has detached 12,000 men to restore tranquility in Switzerland.

According to intelligence from Ratisbon, the majority of the Deputation of the Empire are determined, in the event of the Imperial Plenipotentiary persisting in his refusal to ratify the *Conclusum* of the 8th ult. to proceed to regulate the Indemnities in conjunction with France and Russia, without communicating with the Minister of His IMPERIAL MAJESTY.

Fashionable World.

No. DXIV.

Lord Chamberlain's Office, October 1, 1802.

Notice is hereby given, that there will be a Levee at St. James's, on Wednesday next, the 6th instant; and a Drawing-Room, on Thursday, the 7th instant.

FASHIONS OF DRESS AT PARIS.

The fashion of dressing the hair to imitate the busts of the age of Titus, no longer prevails. Hair bags are again in favour. The veil is not yet laid aside; and the Savoy handkerchiefs are used just now, more than ever. These last are generally worn with a peruke without front hair, which the hair-dressers name a *Regret*. The *Regrets* are fastened to a part of the native hair, which is combed down on the forehead. Formerly the hair was boiled before being put to use by the perukemakers; but it has its natural appearance in that process, and it is now, therefore, only cleaned with bran. The hats are now of white or rose-coloured satin, and some are ornamented with a smooth feather laid flat at the front. Most of the fashions are white. The richest are of gold and silk stuff, wrought with the needle, or are embroidered with silver. The favourite head-dress is of hair, elevated in the form of a pyramid, frizzled before, concealed behind with a veil, which is fastened by a golden pin. Between the frizzled tuft of hair and the brow appears a red poppy. The veil, being of lace, discovers under it a small golden comb.——The upper extremity of the waist of the gown, falls very low. Some women of fashion wear long shawls of purple cloth, with robes of black crape. Cloth shawls are in general, for the present, the most fashionable. The short tunics are still generally worn. The long sleeves are somewhat less common. Some few wear robes without any train. Two or three Capuchin cloaks have been lately observed.

Some young men wear coats not longer than their vests. Boots with yellow heads, and buck's skin breeches, have come in fashion instead of nankeen gaiters and pantaloons.

Sir CHARLES TURNER lies dangerously ill, at Kirkbatham, with a severe fit of the gout. And Sir H. VANE TEMPEST has been prevented from attending both York and Doncaster races by a confounded *Durham fever*.

Walmer Castle, we are told, is now the centre of *political intrigue*, Mr. PITT being besieged by his numerous friends, the enemies of the present administration, entreating him to come again into active political life, and to support their views. Mr. PITT hesitates, or rather, he refuses. He has, as we have already stated, taken a farm of 300 acres, to which his mind wholly inclines. He stands on this farm, and, looking at France, which is in view, he exclaims with CATO, "*My Base* and *Antidote* are both before me."

A paper of yesterday has given a most extraordinary account of the *row's adders* lately sent from Naples to Lady HAMILTON, which, we trust, will be deemed too idle a care for any daily print.

Lord EARDLEY has quitted Margate for Bowdrey, where, if the society be not so various and amusing, the family recollections are far more agreeable.

In a map engraver's catalogue is the following article:—"A new map of France, *same size as that of europe!*"

Sir SIDNEY has been sinning with great *eclat* at Bath, where having finished her engagement, we trust she will appear in London.

A correspondent, in an article which we shall not insert, writes, that we must send some *fools to Parliament*, otherwise we should not be *faithfully represented*.

The KING has been pleased to appoint JOHN MARTIN LEAKE and JOHN ERSKINE, Esqrs. to be Comptrollers of Army Accounts.

The New York Gazette, of the 20th of August, contradicts the report of the illness of Mr. JEFFERSON, the President.

On Friday Lord KEITH was made free of this City, and received a sword set the value of 100 guineas, for his gallant services.

Since it was known at Margate that *new ground oysters* are recommended to Mr. PITT by Sir WALTER FARQUHAR, they have been extremely scarce, the Citizens of London gobbling them all up, leaving the Ex Premier only the shells.

The LORD CHANCELLOR's Office, it is reported, demands as their privilege the granting *Certificates of Presentations at Court*, and the fees hitherto received at the Secretary of State's Office!!

A few days ago the Marquis TOWNSHEND entertained at dinner at Rainham, the Officers of the Yeomanry cavalry of Norfolk Rangers.

On their way to Yarmouth, Mrs. BILLINGTON and her brother had nearly been *overturned*; but such an accident was not surprising, as it was on *Wrestlers Plain*.

The Duke of RUTLAND has lately been ingratiating himself with the popular interest, amidst the hospitalities of Cambridge.

Lord COVENTRY, Lord and Lady ALMER, Lady DRUMMOND, Sir B. and Lady CHINNERY, Sir W. ASTON, Sir J. SEGARD, Sir J. and Lady SMITH, Lady BARTON, General WALKER, with a long list *of etceteras*, arrived at Bath last week.

Admiral MITCHELL has arrived at Bermuda early in August, in a frigate, being appointed to the command of the British ships of war on the American station.

The burgesses of Plymouth, whom eighteen hours *starvation* could not force to an election of Mayor, would probably deliberate as long as the *Elect* of Ratisbon, had they been entertained with *gud dinners*.

One cannot blame the caution of M. TALLEYRAND, in requiring that English-linen, who demand the honour of an introduction at the Thuilleries, should be *certificated* to have been presented at St. James's. It is very natural that the Ex-Bishop should require *proof* before he can believe that those who have had the opt honour can desire the other.

ORIGINAL POETRY.

"LATE, late yestreen I saw the New Moon,
"With the Old Moon in her arms;
"And I fear, I fear, my master dear,
"We shall have a deadly storm."

BALLAD of SIR PATRICK SPENCE.

DEJECTION.

AN ODE, WRITTEN APRIL 4, 1802.

WELL! if the Bard was wather-wise, who made
The grand Old Ballad of Sir Patrick Spence,
This night, so tranquil now, will not go hence
Unroused by winds, that ply a busier trade
Than those, which mould yon clouds in lazy flakes,
Or the dull sobbing draft, that drains and eases
Upon the strings of this Æolian lute,
Which better far were mute.
For lo! the New Moon, winter-bright!
And overspread with phantom light,
(With swimming phantom light o'erspread,
But rimmed and circled by a silver thread,)
I see the Old Moon in her lap, foretelling
The coming on of rain and squally blast.
And O! that even now the gust were swelling,
And the slant night-shower driving loud and fast!
Those sounds, which oft have raised me, whilst they awed,
And sent my soul abroad,
Might now perhaps their wonted impulse give,
Might startle this dull pain, and make it move and live!

II.

A grief without a pang, void, dark, and drear,
A stifled, drowsy, unimpassioned grief,
Which finds no natural outlet, no relief
In word, or sigh, or tear——
O Lassitude! of this wan and heartless mood,
To all other thoughts by yonder throstle woo'd,
All this long eve, so balmy and serene,
Have I been gazing on the Western sky,
And its peculiar tint of yellow green:
And still I gaze—and with how blank an eye!
And those thin clouds above, in flakes and bars,
That give away their motion to the stars;
Those stars, that glide behind them, or between,
Now sparkling, now bedimmed, but always seen:
Yon crescent moon, as fixed as if it grew
In its own cloudless, starless lake of blue,
A boat becalmed! a lovely sky-group!
I see them all, so excellently fair!
I see, not feel, how beautiful they are!

III.

My genial spirits fail,
And what can these avail,
To lift the smothering weight from off my breast?
It were a vain endeavour,
Tho' I should gaze for ever
On that green light that lingers in the west:
I may not hope from outward forms to win
The passion and the life, whose fountains are within.

IV.

O Lassitude! we receive but what we give,
And in our life alone does Nature live:
Ours is her wedding-garment, ours her shroud!
And would we aught behold, of higher worth,
Than that inanimate cold world, allowed
To the poor loveless ever-anxious crowd,
Ah from the soul itself must issue forth,
A light, a glory, a far luminous cloud
Enveloping the earth—
And from the soul itself must there be sent
A sweet and potent voice, of its own birth,
Of all sweet sounds the life and element!
O pure of heart! Thou needst not ask of me
What this strong music in the soul may be!
What, and wherein it doth exist,
This light, this glory, this fair luminous mist,
This beautiful and beauty-making power!
Joy, virtuous Lassitude! joy, that art given,
Save to the pure, and in their purest hour,
Joy, Lassitude! is the spirit and the power,
Which wedding Nature to us gives in dower
A new earth and new Heaven,
Undreamt of by the sensual and the proud—
Joy is the sweet voice, Joy the luminous cloud—
We, we ourselves rejoice!
And thence flows all that charms or ear or light,
All melodies the echoes of that voice,
All colours a suffusion from that light.

V.

There was a time when, tho' my path was rough,
This joy within me dallied with distress,
And all misery was but as the stuff
Wherewith for many days my sports I wrought.
For hope grew round me, like the twining vine,
And fruits and foliage, not my own, seemed mine.
But now afflictions bow me down to earth:
Nor care I, that they rob me of my mirth,
But O! each visitation
Suspends what nature gave me at my birth,
My shaping spirit of imagination.

[The sixth and seventh stanzas omitted.]

VIII.

O wherefore did I let it haunt my mind,
This dark distressful dream!
I turn from it, and listen to the wind
Which long has raved unnoticed. What a scream
Of agony, by torture, lengthened out,
That lute sent forth! O wind, that rav'st without,
Bare crag, or mountain tairn, or blasted tree,
Or pine-grove, whither woodman never clomb,
Or lonely house, long held the witches' home,
Methinks were fit instruments for thee,
Mad Lutanist! who, in this month of showers,
Of dark-brown gardens, and of peeping flowers,
Mak'st devil's yule, with wild and tangled words!
The bleakness, ruin, and the spouting foam
Thou Actor, perfect in all tragic sounds!
Thou mighty Poet, even to frenzy bold!
What tell'st thou now about?
'Tis of the rushing of an host in rout,
With many groans, of men with smarting wounds—
At once they groan with pain, and shudder with the cold!
But hush! there is a pause of deeper silence!
And all that noise, as of a rushing crowd,
With groans and tremulous shudderings—all is over!
It tells another tale, with sounds less deep and loud—
A tale of less affright,
And temper'd with delight,
As Lemman's self had framed the tender lay—
'Tis tale of a little child,
Upon a lonesome wild,
Not far from home, but she has lost her way—
And now moans low, in utter grief and fear;
And now screams loud, and hopes to make her mother hear.

IX.

"To midnight, and small thoughtes have I of sleep:
Full oft on may my friend such vigils keep!
Visit him, gentle Sleep, with wings of healing,
And may this storm be but a mountain-birth,
And may the stunning of this bitter wind
Stun all the evils! so shall the sleeping earth
Silent, as other years, awake my heart,
With light be heart and my hr rise,
Cry Sister, cheerful eyes,
And ears to hear my voice.
And ears to hear my voice.
O my friend, friend of my devoutest choice,
O traveller from antient days and hour cars,
O maid from antient dread and hour cares,
By the commanness of the good and fair
Which thou and I only where,
Which thou and I only where,
To fits the spirit, joy attunes thy voice,
To fits the spirit, joy attunes thy voice,
To feed on all things live from pole to pole,
To feed on all things live from pole to pole,
Then be the sibling of thy living soul!
Then be the sibling of thy living soul!
O mind, spirit, rescind from above,
O mind, spirit, rescind from above,
O love Paris, full of light and love,
O love Paris, full of light and love,
Protect and friend of my devoutest choice,
Protect and friend of my devoutest choice,
Thou may'st thou ever evermore rejoice!

ESTHESE.

* Tarn, a small lake, generally, if not always, applied to a lake high up in the mountains, and which are the feeders of streams in the valleys. This address to the wind will excite more interest in those who have heard it at night, in a mountainous country.

To the EDITOR *of* THE MORNING POST.

London, Sept 30.

SIR—There is a chasm in the report which I have given of my descent in a Parachute, upon which I have had several questions put to me; it is the explanation of the cause which gave rise to the great velocity with which my Parachute experienced, and which was never so great in the former experiments I made at Paris, in weather equally seasonable with that which I had on the 21st instant. Several persons imagine that an accident had happened to the Parachute; others, and the greater number, thought that I had not ballast enough in my car, which would have preserved the equilibrium, and have made the car gravitate better. I was myself of this latter opinion during the first part of my descent; but a thing may be probable and yet not true. I will endeavour to throw some light upon the subject:—

We must consider, in the experiment of the Parachute, the cause which acts upon the fluid which rests. The experiment of the Parachute is founded upon the elasticity of the air, whose relation is always in a direct ratio with the weight that compresses it; when once the air has been condensed according to the weight that compresses it, it maintains itself constantly in that situation, and cannot depart from it without an addition to, or subtraction from, the compressing force. Hence it follows that a Parachute, which should be perfect in its construction, and which should preserve its state of equilibrium (a thing physically impossible), would remain for ever stationary, upon the column of air which it compressed, without ever ascending or descending. A Parachute therefore cannot descend, but by the evaporation of the air.

The slightest cause may give the first impulse to these evaporations, which, once having taken place, continue in torrents, and with a greater degree of rapidity in proportion as the compressing weight is more considerable. The wind which sits upon the surface of the Parachute, or the slightest movement of posture of the person in the car, or both these causes at once (with or speaking of the imperfection of the Parachute itself), must produce a first inclination, which is soon followed by a second, in an opposite direction, by the effort made by the weight contained in the car, to return to the center of gravity. This first oscillation, once established, is incessantly kept up by the evaporation of the air, and increases as the compressing force, or the weight suspended to the Parachute, excites it to do it with rapidity. The following is the proof which justifies this reasoning:—

When I made my former experiments of descending in a Parachute, I always made use of a Balloon proportioned to the weight which I was to carry up; and I took with me a sack of ballast of only twenty pounds, which I threw out with one hand, whilst I cut the cord of separation with the other. The Balloon being this rim much larger, I wished not to lose of its size and energies to avoid the capacity of my Parachute. I steal of twenty pounds of ballast, I carried upwards of one hundred; I threw out only a small part the moment I was separated from the Balloon, and the oscillations having commenced almost immediately with very great rapidity. I thought that my Parachute was too ill adapted for a sudden breeze. I then extraordinarily relieved, the three hundred I threw out, the more I should diminish the power that tended to restore the equilibrium. I did not at all imagine that the air being compressed by a weight of the greater a mass than in my former experiments, the evaporation would take place with a greater velocity. When I was no more than a few hundred toises high, I saw clearly that I should be able to descend safely, if I touched the ground during the operation of an oscillation. The man that is ill, before he dies, always finds resources which do not exist in the opinion of a man who loses his reason. Nature having favoured me, in this respect, I have always escaped the greatest dangers, during my stay in the army. I saw what was proper to be done, and immediately threw out all that was in the car, even to my barometer, which, by the way, has never been restored to me. The effect justified my expectations, all the violent oscillations ceased in a moment; and those which succeeded were much less rapid, and their excursions positively trifling. I then felt that sensation of the stomach which produced the vomiting I experienced when I got out of the car, after a slight touch.

I infer, from what I have stated above, that the greater the surface of the Parachute is, and the less it is loaded, the lighter the descent will be; and the more uniform, and free from the oscillations, will by the evaporation of the compressed air; the contrary, once caused by a fresh wind, which should rush upon the surface of the Parachute, would be little to be feared. We are furnished with daily proofs by the little parachutes that are made of a piece of paper, which children launch in the streets with wonderful address. The weight they support is nothing almost, when compared with the extent of the surface of the sheet of paper. Hence these little Parachutes take a horizontal course, sometimes for a long time, without oscillation, though the wind even be high, or at least the oscillations they do experience are slow and not violent, and only become considerable when gusts of wind blow at the corners of streets.

I think the reflections I have just made are important to the science of Parachutes, and I consider my last experiment as the most useful of any I have made, and as the one which will render the art more perfect, though it was not certainly the most agreeable one in which I have been engaged.

All that is written upon a new science deserves to be refuted when it proceeds upon false calculations, or inaccurate data. It is on this account that I am compelled, not from a desire to criticise, nor from a spirit of malignity, to complain of the inaccuracy of the reasoning published in *The Oracle* of the 22d. The dimensions which the writer gives to my Parachute are not correct—nobody knows them but myself, and they cannot be procured but by fraud and underhand means. I have my reasons for not communicating them, and no one will think it improper that I reserve to myself, for some time, the exclusive possession of my property. This reasoning, however, is from a skilful hand. *The Oracle* has sometimes resumed on my ascensions in the most silly and laughable manner; every one knows that it has made the verifying of the elevations, which I ascertain from the fall of the mercury in the barometer, to proceed from the skilful maker in Piccadilly, who has surely been a little mortified at *The Oracle*'s having made him play the part of a fool. That gentleman, however, has been revenged, by not discovering to the writer, that the difference which always exists between his calculations and mine, proceeds only from the difference between the English and the French foot.

The Editor of *The Oracle* will not be offended at the justness of my reflections; they must know that, in morals, as in physics, the reaction is always equal to the action; he might have expected that his first attacks, the continuance of his hostilities, and the innocent anecdote he has published upon my father's profession, my education, and the office I filled under the revolutionary government of the execrable Robespierre, would be answered on the day on which the public should pronounce their opinion. *The Oracle* must feel that the interview before a Magistrate, whom I respect, cannot deprive me of a legal justification, and does not deprive me of it. As the communication sent me in writing by one of his writers, who was disappointed at my refusal to participate in any manner in the publication in England of the translation he had made of the account of my imprisonment among the enemies of France, of the action of Manchinenes, notwithstanding the advantageous offer he made me, preferring, as I do, the sacrifice of my interests to the reviving of resentments, which ought to be forgotten in the general peace which has been so happily restored, and which no honest man ought to attempt to disturb, particularly from interested motives. The person to whom I allude ought to have felt that it was bad policy to publish in *The Oracle* a scandalous anecdote, after having furnished me with a written proof of his baseness. If the mania of publishing something relative to me had seized him, he ought to have done it with that delicacy which set out from which a writer who respects himself ought never to depart.

I certainly was employed by the revolutionary government of the execrable Robespierre; but Barrere, Moreau, Jourdan, almost all the members of the National Institute, every man in France who had talents or energy, were employed also; and it was not their fault if, whilst they were absent from the interior, employed in dissolving the coalition against France, monsters filled the bosom of their country with infamy, whilst their united efforts were to free it from the wretches who oppressed it.

Arts and the Belles Lettres are of the same family, and it is afflicting to see them destroying each other. The contest ought not to be prolonged. I have been unjustly defamed and attacked; I have made my legal defence, and things should return to their natural equilibrium, with more reason on my side; because *The True Briton* and *Oracle* have been the dupes of two firebrands. Yet I have a right to require that the periodical veil which conceals these two joyous writers should be torn aside. Nothing ought to shelter them from public indignation and contempt, and to this demand the Editors of the two papers cannot, without compromising themselves, refuse to accede for their own justification. I summon *The Oracle* to declare whether the author of the anecdote respecting my birth, my father's profession, &c. which has been copied into several pamphlets, was not communicated by Francois Soules, as soon as I had desired him to return to France, loaded with benefits, notwithstanding his bad behaviour? This wretch deserves nothing but contempt, and is a fit object for the attention of the police of both countries. I summon *The True Briton* to confess, whether a *certain man who was unable* to support the revolution, and has been a *great speculator* since, be not the author of the indecent questions put to me upon the subject of Louis the XVI. and Madame de Lamballe's death? This man did I save from being arrested in 1793; an event that would infallibly have brought him to the scaffold. It is this indeed that throws an air of improbability upon the insinuations that accuse him of an action which, adding ingratitude to baseness, would lead him with no change of name to that which belongs to the execrable assassins of the Princess Lamballe, who possessed the same cruelty of heart, but less wickedness, than the author of the questions in *The True Briton*.

GARNERIN.

THEATRE,

DRURY-LANE.

On Saturday evening the comedy of *The Jew* was performed at this Theatre. Mr. Collins, from the Theatre, Southampton, made his first appearance on the London stage in the part of *Jubal*, and acquitted himself in a manner fully sufficient to support the prepossession raised in his favour by those who had witnessed his successes in the country. Mr. Collins is above the middle size, his figure is rather thin, but very well adapted to the variety of characters which the line of low comedy presents, and it is only to that we conceive Mr. Collins's powers adapted. He possesses that first essential of stage humour, a complete command of countenance. He has the dry, sarcastic, saturnine retorting of *Jubal*, the half-starved *Jubal* the fulsome effect, and he expressed no less success with the tender and warm feelings of resentment, on learning from the old Jew that he had been insulted.

The part of *Shylock* was well acted by Bannister; but he delivered many of the sentiments in the whining a tone; this old Jew, who has been made ridiculously good natured by the author, is rendered still more ridiculous by this mode of acting. There were a number of the descendants of Abraham in the house, who appeared much pleased with some of the sentiments of a character obviously drawn in vindication of their sect; but they, as well as the rest of the audience, appeared to think that as his benevolence was carried in many instances too far, so it was expressed in a tone of abjectness, which frequently deprived it of part of the honour to which it was in itself entitled. The part of *Frederick Beetroot* was well sustained by C. Kemble; but he showed a most unbecoming indifference when the old Jew came to prevent the duel between him and his friend *Ratcliffe* proceeding to any fatal length.

Mrs. Young's performance of *Eliza* was tender and affecting.

Bannister and Suett gave the humorous little piece of *Sylvester Daggerwood* in the driest manner. The song of *Captain Cuttle* was repeated with great applause.

The entertainment was *Fortune's Frolic*, in which Mr. Collins acted the part of *Billy Rough-head*, with a success which gave a most favourable impression of his comic powers. His humour is certainly original, for there is not any other person on the stage in whom he can be likened. His performance of *Jubal* was more admired, possibly, because the humour of that character is more *piquant*, as well as that irony and sarcasm requires more ability to express them. The general impression was, as we have said, highly favourable to him; he received very great applause, and cannot fail, with one encouragement, of becoming one of the props of the stage.

MARGATE, Oct. 1.

The fineness of this morning attracted the greater proportion of the company remaining here to the bathing-rooms. Above four hundred persons took a salutary plunge in the briny flood; above one hundred whom were from Sayers's. The Duke of Manchester, Duke and Duchess of St. Albans, Lord and Lady Montford, Lady Glenbervie, Lady C. Villers, Mrs. Bradshaw, Mrs. Duff, Colonel Conway, were of the number. The Countess of Jersey uses the hot bath daily.

The Rose in June packet left us this day at one o'clock, with a fair wind, for town. She had on board 87 passengers, the principal of whom were ladies.

The fashionables, this morning, resorted to the Assembly rooms to a concert given there for the benefit of Madame de Tintero, an emigrant lady of distinction, and six children. The concert commenced at half after one, with an overture of Haydn's; a sonata on the harp followed, by Mademoiselle Tinterry, a child of ten years old. Mrs. Atkins sung, *What shall Fate forbids*, from *Deaf and Dumb*. One of the children, a boy of eight years, played a sonata on the harp, which finished the first act. The second act commenced with the overture to *Harlequin Amulet*; a bravura followed by Mrs. Atkins; a French duet by the two children, accompanied by themselves on the harp, concluded this delightful treat to the lovers of harmony. Mrs. Atkins sang charmingly, and, with a liberality which does honour to her feelings, refused to be paid for her services. The tickets were 3s. 6d. each person. Ab ut two hundred persons were present. The concert commenced at half after one, and broke up at three. To the philanthropic Mrs. Shaw (a lady of fashion), we are indebted for the treat; that lady circulated the tickets among all her numerous acquaintances.

We are happy to contradict the report relative to the woman servant said to be run over by the Countess of Jersey's carriage. On inquiry, it appears that the vehicle only went over the girl's foot, and that she is not seriously hurt. Her Ladyship has bestowed every possible attention on the girl.

The fashionables are on the eve of departure. On Tuesday next, the Duke and Duchess of St. Alban's, Lady Heathcote, Mr. and Mrs. Daly, &c. intend setting off together from town.

THEATRE.

On Wednesday evening, *Lovers Vows*, with the farce of *Bon Ton*, were performed for the benefit of the Stone Jetty, on the Parade. The boxes were crowded with fashionables; but the pit and gallery were not so full, owing, it is supposed, to the increase of the prices. In the play, Mr. Bartley, as *Frederick*, was much applauded. Mrs. Atkins sang *Sweet Passion of Love*, and a bravura song, with her usual taste and judgment. Mr. Garner, in the farce, played the part of *Dorsy* in a very respectable manner.

Yesterday the body of an infant, about six weeks old, and bearing some marks of violence, was discovered in a ditch, near Pentonville. From its appearance it must have lain there some days; as soon as a Jury has sat we hope the exertion of the parish officers will prove successful in discovering the perpetrator of this inhuman act.

Ship News.

PORTSMOUTH, *October*1.—Arrived the Starling gun-vessel, from Jersey; she will sail again to-morrow for the same place, with two companies of shipwrights to repair the Pomone. Sailed the Pylades sloop of war, Captain Burrowes, to the Eastward. Came into our roads the Algerian sloop of war, Captain Rynsford, to be paid off. Captain G.B. Drury, is appointed to the Ne, tune, of 98 guns, vice Austen. The Amethyst frigate, Captain Hardy, is appointed to take the Ambassador to Lisbon.

PLYMOUTH, *Sept.* 30.—This morning at nine o'clock, the yellow flag, as the signal for punishment, was hoisted at the fore of the Centaur, of 74 guns, Rear-Admiral Dacres, in Hamoaze; also a signal for a boat from each ship, manned and armed. At ten the procession of boats took place round the fleet, and the Marines of the Albatross, sentenced by the Court to be flogged round the fleet, received the punishment of 300 lashes.

Capt. Inglefield has been appointed to the command of the Hunter, 18 guns, by the Lords of the Admiralty; she is fitting for sea in Hamoaze.—Yesterday the Formidable, 98 guns, Capt. Grindall, was paid off in Hamoaze, and laid up in ordinary. The Audacious, 74 guns, Capt. Pakenham, which sailed for Spithead, put in from a cruize of the easterly wind, and took orders for her to go up the harbour to be paid off here, with the Terpsichore, 98 guns, Rear-Admiral Campbell, now stripping in Hamoaze.

DEAL, *Oct.* 1.—Wind S. E. Variable. Sailed yesterday evening, the Rambler sloop of war, Captain Innes, to the Westward.—Arrived and sailed for the River, the Eliza, Thomas, from Dublin; the Eliza, on the 18th ult. at eleven o'clock, *p. m.* spoke the Young John, Capt. Bowler, for the Cape of Good Hope, the Start bearing N. E. by E. distance three or four leagues. Remain in the Downs, the Savage sloop of war; the William and Diligence store ships, from the Northward, bound to Portsmouth; Trinity Yacht; Swift and Lily try East India Pilots; Judith, Rook, for Leghorn; Jane, Fotheringham, from Hamoaze for the Baltic.

La Consolante, and La Volontaire, French frigates, and Salamander sloop of war, arrived at New York last month, with between 700 and 800 insurgent Blacks, who had been transported from Guadaloupe. The Mayor of New York, on the 19th of August, by a note to the French commodore, expressed his hope that none of these people should be permitted to land, and was answered that they should not; on the 20th following, however, upwards of 600 of them were taken ill, and were sent to the Marine Hospital on Staten Island.—The ships were to be followed by two other frigates, La Concorde and La Renatee, and le Cerf sloop. It was intended to land them at Carthagena, but the Spaniards would not receive them; on which the Commodore stood for America, having dispatched one of his squadron to Guadaloupe for fresh instructions, the receipt of which he is to await at New York. On the arrival at New York, only nine were ill at Philadelphia; at Portsmouth the disorder prevailed more, and considerable alarms existed. Several cases of the yellow fever have occurred in Elizabeth City, North Carolina; eight persons had died there in ten days. The fever is stated to have been introduced there by a vessel from Cape Francois.

Orders have been issued by the Court of Berlin for the Officers absent upon leave immediately to join their respective corps, and several regiments are to be placed upon the war establishment.

A Petition from seven hundred Liverymen, friends to Sir WATKIN LEWES, is to be presented to Parliament, praying, that the late City Election be rendered void, on account of the poll having been irregularly conducted, and of Sir Watkin's friends having been told that the poll was closed when they came to vote.

On 27th ult. Mr. WEST, President of the Royal Academy of London, gave a superb *dejeune* to the most celebrated French Artists, and some of the most distinguished personages of the English now at Paris. Citizen and Madame Lebrun, Citizen Leroy, Lord and Lady Oxford, Miss Williams, Mr. Erskine, Mr. Kemble, and many others whose names we could not learn, were of the party.—Many toasts expressive of a wish for the union of the Professors of the Arts in both countries, as well in war as in peace, were drunk with the warmest enthusiasm. Mr. Erskine's health was drank under the title of the modern Demosthenes, the ardent Defender of the Liberty of the Press. Mr. Erskine replied in a modest and spirited speech.

About eight o'clock on Saturday night a fire broke out in the glass manufactory of Mr. JOSEPH HARDY, No. 287, Strand; at first it occasioned great alarm, as the back of Mr. HARDY's warehouse runs into Holywell street, the greatest part of which consists of old wooden houses; but the timely assistance of the engines prevented its extending to any of the adjoining premises. It was distressing to see the inhabitants of Holywell street running to all directions with their furniture, many not knowing where to carry it for safety. Many of them, we are sorry to add, were plundered by the numerous thieves who assembled on this, as they do on all similar occasions. The fire originated in the back kitchen, or parlour, and but for only that apartment before it was extinguished. From what cause it began is not ascertained.—There were four or five children in the upper part of the house in bed; but they were rescued, and the flames in about half an hour were suppressed.—The damage is chiefly confined to the back part of the premises, in all well-insured.

was talking, and a notice in the *Courier* newspaper of 25 February 1822 advertises just that: 'Mr. Coleridge proposes to devote a determinate portion of each week to a small and select number of gentlemen, not younger than 19 or 20, for the purpose of assisting them in the formation of their minds, and the regulation of their studies. The plan, which is divided between direct instruction and conversation, the place, and other particulars, may be learnt by personal application to Mr. Coleridge, at Highgate' (*EOT* 3.322-23). Whether it be as the bard at the centre of an awestruck audience in *Kubla Khan* or as the sage of Highgate, Coleridge loved being the centre of attention. While he referred to 'newspaper scribes' as 'true Galley-Slaves' he relished that 'what he writes at 12 at night will before 12 hours is over perhaps 5 or 6000 Readers!' (*CL* 1.569). The newspaper provided him with a stage on which he loved to perform.

His relevance to our current media whirlwind environment is indisputable: he would have participated in all of it, all the time. It would have been both heaven and hell for him: heaven because it would have suited his deep urge to go public on just about anything, and hell because his addictive and compulsive personality would have prevented him from knowing when to stop. And as Graham Davidson reminds me, he would certainly not have liked the character limit; he would have unleashed his tweets in threads. I cannot imagine that he would have kept quiet, and we would have 'followed' him in droves. He would have been omnipresent: on Twitter, on various news sites, on podcasts, on talk shows, and in print. I love the idea that we would have been familiar with his voice. I doubt that he would have been very active on Instagram, which would have been a better medium for James Gillray and George Cruickshank. The immediacy of expression would have fitted his mercurial, elastic intellect. Perhaps most importantly and surprisingly, the amount of autobiographical revelation, something we think of as a twenty-first century phenomenon, would have suited Coleridge well. The multiple media platforms of today, and its associated forms of expression, can be related to the range of genres which Coleridge displayed in his newspaper writing for the *Morning Post* and the *Courier*: parliamentary reporting, leading articles about politics and foreign affairs, major poetry, occasional poetry, puffs and reviews, human interest stories, epigrams, short notices, and advertisements.

If only Coleridge were alive today. He would be having a field day. As I felt sorry for myself during the last couple of months, I overdosed on media online, feverishly darting from topic to topic, lacking the sustained attention span for anything in particular but always hungry for more. My worst Covid-stricken days in September 2022 coincided with the death of Queen Elizabeth in September. The aftermath of her death and the preparations for her funeral cast a light on the royal family, the state of the monarchy and, by extension, of Britain and the Commonwealth, in ways which did not differ all that much from Coleridge's turbulent era. Back then, Pitt and Fox provided Coleridge with brilliant material for complex psychological portraits. King George III was descending into madness; the Prince Regent prompted widespread

contempt by his extravagant lifestyle, and his marriage to Caroline of Brunswick was doomed from the start; their only daughter Charlotte gained martyr-like status in the media through her (and her baby's) death in childbirth after a fifty-hour labour. The messy state of affairs within the monarchy and their luxurious lifestyle were common newspaper topics. These articles served both as a distraction from, and as a touchstone for, the contrasting dire poverty of most people, the miseries of endless warfare and the drain this caused on the economy, the ongoing horrors of slavery even after the abolition of the actual slavetrade. One of Coleridge's last newspaper pieces was a Swiftian satirical article on the fate of the 'Bill for the Relief of the Children employed in Cotton Factories'.

Now, King Charles has, at the age of 73, finally embarked on the job he was born for. His sons are quarrelling and waging their own media campaigns on either side of the Atlantic. The King's brother is an alleged sex-offender who relied on his mother's funds to silence his victim through an expensive settlement. The King's wife lived in the shadows as his mistress for a very long time before they finally got married. His first marriage was a disaster, and the media still won't leave it alone. What else is new? Coleridge would have had opinions on all of this. On a larger scale, his writings against slavery suggest that he would have taken an interest in the callous treatment of the Windrush generation, the ever-widening gap between rich and poor, and the royal family's financial associations with highly dubious regimes.

Meanwhile, Larry the Cat is the most reliable inhabitant of Number Ten. The shenanigans enacted in Parliament defy description, and Boris Johnson in particular, a dishonest journalist and unscrupulous media manipulator of the first order, would have provided Coleridge with a goldmine of inspiration for some savage reporting, be it in satirical character sketches or probing leading articles about Johnson's depraved indifference to his country's suffering during the worst of the pandemic. Johnson's elitist, faux-bumbling, self-serving posturing contrasts sharply with the devastating pandemic effects he unleashed on the NHS, the economy, and the population at large. I could easily imagine a psychological portrait of Johnson by Coleridge entitled 'King of his World'.

Poverty, depression, racism, xenophobia are all thriving in Britain's current toxic climate, just as they did during Coleridge's journalistic heyday, when the effects of the relentless wars with France and the ambitions of Napoleon dictated the leaders in the papers. Beyond the shores of 'This Sceptered Isle', tellingly evoked in the current docudrama starring Kenneth Branagh as Boris Johnson, there would be plenty to keep Coleridge occupied as well. Much of Coleridge's newspaper writing focused on the events and the effects of the wars with France and the reign of Napoleon. Fast forward to Europe today: the war in Ukraine has been going on for more than eight months now (with Russia's Napoleonic expansion intentions starting much earlier than that), and the fact that nuclear weapons have even been mentioned points to the failure of international diplomacy. Just imagine contrasting character portraits by Coleridge of Volodymyr Zelenskyy and Vladimir Putin.

The fate of women in many parts of the world, astonishingly, is still worse than it was in Coleridge's early nineteenth-century Britain. The situation in Afghanistan is not far off systematic femicide, and removing your headscarf may kill you in Iran. On a less dramatic scale, women are harassed for breastfeeding in public places, for what they are wearing or not wearing, for insisting on the right to abortion and contraception. Female journalists who dare to expose various forms of abuse and corruption are particular targets: in May 2022 alone, journalists Yesenia Mollinedo, Sheila Johana Garcia, Shireen Abu Akleh, and Francisca Sandoval were all brutally murdered in separate instances. I would like to think that Coleridge would have stood up to defend the rights of female writers like these, just like he supported the Duchess of Devonshire, for feeding her own children, just like he appreciated and respected Mary Robinson, despite her dubious social reputation, as a colleague working for the *Morning Post*.

More so than a retired lyric poet or philosopher, Coleridge was a lecturer, a preacher, a journalist, a talker and writer for the moment, in the moment. He understood the ambiguity of his subjects' motives, the indeterminacy of outcomes, the inconclusiveness of arguments, the impact of psychological motivation, and the impermanence of convictions. But he wrote for the greater good and for making sense, briefly, out of chaos. His newspaper writing is the embodiment of it. And more than anyone he would have understood both the truth and the irony of #hehathstood

STC at 61
William Wagstaff (dates unknown); engraving after a drawing of 1833 by Abraham Wivell (1786-1849); (9 x 8 in.); MP cat. 26

STC at 42
Washington Allston (1779-1843); oil; 1814; (45 x 35 in.)
National Portrait Gallery; MP cat. 15