

The Charles Lamb Bulletin

The Journal of the Charles Lamb Society

January 2001

New Series No. 113

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Caroline, Lamb, and Swellfoot

By JOHN GARDNER

LOOKING BACK TO THE TRIAL of Queen Caroline, Hazlitt writes,

It was the only question I ever knew that excited a thorough popular feeling. It struck its roots into the heart of the nation; it took possession of every house or cottage in the kingdom; man, woman, and child took part in it, as if it had been their own concern. . . . it spread like wildfire over the kingdom; the public mind was electrical. So it should be on other occasions; it was only so on this.¹

The return of Caroline to claim her place as Queen after the death of George III in January 1820, and the subsequent repercussions associated with her demands, captivated the attention of the public and press. It seemed that the political moment of Caroline challenging George IV for her rights might be enough to bring down George and his ministers, such was her popular support.

The public were polarised. In a letter to Barron Field in August 1820 Lamb even asks, ‘Pray are you King’s or Queen’s men in Sydney?’² Much of the fight was carried out in the press; thousands of pamphlets were sold for and against the Queen’s cause. More volumes of verse were published in 1820 than in any other year between 1812 and 1832 (321 volumes against an average of 223). The *Times* continually featured the proceedings from her trial on its front page and its circulation soared to 20,000 copies a day. Pamphleteers and pornographers also seized upon the affair, releasing accounts and illustrations of the king and queen in various amorous situations. And yet interest in the Caroline affair was not only confined to the hacks, opportunists and radicals; the literary elite too decided that the affair was worthy of their attention: Byron featured Caroline in his *Don Juan*, Shelley in his *Swellfoot the Tyrant* and even Lamb added his voice in a series of poems printed in John Thewall’s paper *The Champion*.

In this paper I am going to confine myself to Lamb’s and Shelley’s response to the Caroline affair. Both broadly support Caroline’s cause, yet they hope for quite different outcomes. Lamb is a true supporter of Caroline who wishes to see her rights secured, whereas Shelley has no real sympathy for her, but recognises that she may be used to bring down the monarchy and the government.

Interest in the relationship between Caroline and George was not a sudden phenomenon; it had steadily been building since their marriage. In the course of twenty-five years, George and Caroline had become inseparable from their representations in thousands of caricatures, squibs and press reports. They had, as it were, been replaced by their public images.

Caroline of Brunswick was 27 when she married her cousin George, Prince of Wales, in 1795; it was not a love match. As a young man George acquired the expensive habits of gambling, drinking, taking on extravagant building projects and acquiring a succession of costly mistresses. Horace Walpole wrote that at age eighteen the prince, along with the Duke of York,

¹ Hazlitt, *Common Places*. First printed in *The Literary Examiner* 15 November 1823. From *The Complete Works of William Hazlitt Volume Twenty*, p. 136. Edited by P. P. Howe, (London, 1930).

² Letter to Field, 16 August 1820, *The Letters of Charles Lamb*, Ed. E.V. Lucas, (Dent, 1935).

‘drank hard, swore, and passed every night in brothels. . . . He passed the nights in the lowest debaucheries, at the same time bragging of intrigues with women of quality, whom he named publicly.’³ His most infamous early attachment was to Mrs. Robinson, an actress who played Perdita in the *Winters Tale*. By 1794 the Prince had accumulated debts of almost 3/4 of a million pounds. There was no one who would loan him the significant amounts of money that he needed to cover his lifestyle. He and his brother, the Duke of York, even ruined a Jewish banking firm at the Hague by refusing to repay a loan of 350,000 guilders.⁴ The only way to increase his income was to marry. William Hone describes the Prince’s situation in his *The Queen’s Matrimonial Ladder*⁵:

In love, and in drink, and o’ertopped by debt;
With women, with wine, and with duns on the fret.

DECLARATION

The Prodigal Son, by his perils surrounded,
Vex’d, harassed, bewilder’d, asham’d, and confounded,
Fled for help to his Father, confessed his ill doing,
And begged for salvation from stark staring ruin;
The sire urged -“The People your debts have twice paid,
“And to ask a third time, even Pitt is afraid;
“But he shall if you’ll marry, and lead a new life, -
“You’ve a cousin in Germany-make her your wife!”

One inaccuracy here is that George III did not advise his son to marry Caroline, but he was pleased with his choice even though he was normally opposed to marriages within the family.

There was, however, one major problem: the Prince was already married,⁶ secretly in 1785 to Maria Fitzherbert, a twice widowed Roman Catholic, with whom he is thought to have produced ‘at least one child, and possibly two’.⁷ The Prince was also, as Sheridan put it, ‘too much every lady’s man to be the man of any lady’, and was currently involved with Lady Jersey and an actress called Mrs. Crouch who had played Polly Peachum in *The Beggars Opera*.

Despite his secret marriage and numerous affairs, George was perceived as the most eligible prince in Europe, yet he was constrained in who he could choose to be his wife by the Royal Marriages Act of 1772, which stated that no member of the royal family could marry without the King’s approval, and the King’s approval would only be given if George married a princess from a good Protestant family. In effect, George’s choice was limited: he had to find himself a German princess.

³ Cited by E. A. Smith, *A Queen on Trial*, (Sutton, 1994), p. 1.

⁴ Cited by Christopher Hibbert, *George IV*, (Longman, 1972), i, p. 127.

⁵ William Hone, *The Queen’s Matrimonial Ladder*, (Hone, Ludgate-Hill, 1820, 43rd. ed.).

⁶ The marriage between George and Mrs. Fitzherbert would not have been considered legal due to the Royal Marriages Act. The marriage would have been recognised in canonical law as it was officiated by the Reverend John Burt and a marriage certificate was issued.

⁷ See Saul David, *Prince of Pleasure*, (Abacus, 1999), p. 75.

Caroline of Brunswick was the daughter of Prince Charles William Ferdinand, Duke of Brunswick and Augusta, sister of George III. At twenty-seven Caroline was already perceived as having been left on the shelf, and had a rather dubious reputation when the Prince of Wales sent Malemsbury to propose to her on his behalf - without ever having seen her himself. By all accounts their first meeting was not a happy one; Caroline found the Prince 'very fat, and nothing like as handsome as his portrait'.⁸ In the first plate by Beechey we find a flattering portrait of George in the uniform of the tenth light dragoons.



Plate 1: A portrait of George
(later George IV) by Beechey

In the following plate we see a portrait of George aged twenty-eight by Gilray, *A voluptuary under the horrors of digestion*.⁹ Littered around the prince are the paraphernalia of his surfeit; food, drink, cures for syphilis, and his already massive girth barely contained by his expensive clothing.

⁸ Thea Holme, *Caroline*, (Hamilton, 1979), p. 23.

⁹ This illustration was copied by Cruikshank for Hone's *The Queens Matrimonial Ladder* of 1820.



Plate 2: *A Voluptuary Under the Horrors of Surfeit* by Gilray

George was similarly unimpressed by Caroline; he found her manners and want of personal hygiene repellent enough to call for brandy on their first meeting.¹⁰ However, the marriage went ahead, with the Prince of Wales being practically carried up the aisle crying and drunk. The couple supposedly spent only two nights together as husband and wife; Caroline claimed to Lady Charlotte Campbell that George ‘passed the greatest part of his bridal-night under the grate, where he fell, and where I left him’, whereas George complained to Malmesbury that Caroline was not a virgin: ‘there was no appearance of blood’ and her manners were not those of a novice’.¹¹ They did manage to produce a child together, Princess Charlotte, who died in 1816. But the next twenty-five years saw the royal couple warring with each other.

In 1796 they separated; Caroline retreated to Montague House, Blackheath, the Prince of Wales to Carlton House and Brighton. By 1806 George was determined to get rid of his wife and instigated the ‘Delicate Investigation’, a commission set up to investigate the conduct of the Princess of Wales. The bases of the inquiry were allegations provided by Lady Charlotte and Sir John Douglas that Caroline had given birth to an illegitimate child, William Austin. A number of spies were sent out to report on Caroline’s actions. Unfortunately for George the case was unfounded; but it did highlight Caroline’s enjoyment of the company of young men. The investigation’s findings were published in 1807 and reprinted in 1813 as *The Book or The Genuine Book*. In 1811 George became Regent after his father finally descended into the madness which had sporadically haunted him since 1763. On becoming Regent, the Prince was expected to place his friends, the Whigs, in power and appoint a Whig ministry. Instead, George broke his promises to the Whigs and retained Perceval’s Tory administration. Lamb wrote the following poem for the occasion:

¹⁰ Thea Holme, *Caroline*. 22-23.

¹¹ Saul David, *The Prince of Pleasure*, p. 2.

EPIGRAM.

(1812)

I

Princeps his rent from tinneries draws,
 His best friends are refiners;-
 What wonder then his other friends
 He leaves for under-*miners*.

II

Ye Politicians, tell me, pray,
 Why thus with woe and care rent?
 This is the worst that you can say,
 Some wind has blown the wig away,
 And left the hair apparent.

Lamb is referring to the Prince's title as Duke of Cornwall and the rents he draws from the Cornish tin mines. The Prince deserts his friends and transfers his support from the Whigs or 'wigs' to the Tories.

In 1814, lonely and isolated, Caroline left for the continent accompanied by William Austin, and spent the next five and a half years travelling in Europe. From the outset she was followed by spies sent by the Prince, who was determined to make a case against her. The result was the Milan commission of 1818, headed by Sir John Leach. The Commission's main remit was to prove that Caroline had committed adultery with Bartolemeo Pergami, her courier.

On the death of George III in January 1820, Caroline returned to England to claim her rights as Queen. George immediately instituted divorce proceedings on the grounds of adultery to prevent her taking her place alongside him and had her name removed from the Anglican liturgy, preventing her from being crowned. The evidence against Caroline was contained in 'the Green Bag', a fairly common container in a court case. This green bag however, captured the public imagination. People were desperate to find out its contents. A motion in the Commons to keep Caroline's name in the liturgy was defeated by 310 to 209 votes and George was crowned without her. Lamb wrote the following verse for the occasion.

SONG FOR THE C---N.¹²

Roi's wife of Brunswick Oëls!
 Roi's wife of Brunswick Oëls!
 Wot you how she came to him,
 While he supinely dreamt of no ills?
 Vow! but she is a canty Queen,
 And well can she scare each royal orgie.---
 To us she ever must be dear,
 Though she's for ever cut by Georgie.---

¹² 'Song for the Coronation'.

Roi's wife, &c. Da capo.

R. et R.

Caroline, an already unwell woman, made a last stand by turning up at the Abbey on July 19 1821, but she was refused entry and died a few weeks later.

All of this was going on against a backdrop of civil unrest. As E.P. Thompson writes: 'The Wars ended amidst riots . . . During the passing of the Corn Laws (1815) the Houses of Parliament were defended with troops from menacing crowds. Thousands of disbanded soldiers and sailors returned to find unemployment in their villages.'¹³

Even the Tory Mrs. Arbuthnot, friend of Castlereagh and Wellington concedes in her Journal that in 1819 '10 000 able and willing workmen were starving in one town (Glasgow) for want of work, & every other manufacturing town suffering in a like degree.'¹⁴

Repression of the people had increased, culminating in the Peterloo massacre in August 1819 where unarmed civilians waiting to hear orator Hunt at St. Peter's in fields in Manchester were charged by the local Yeomanry who cut their way through the crowd in an attempt to arrest Hunt. This event split the nation. Sidmouth forwarded the Prince's congratulations to the Yeomanry who carried out the slaughter, while from the other side came a flood of protest. Barely six months later a plot to murder Castlereagh and his colleagues, the Cato Street Conspiracy, was uncovered and its leader Arthur Thistlewood and four other men were executed in May of 1820.

At the end of 1819 the 'Six Acts' had been introduced. These measures were particularly oppressive. Unauthorised military drilling was banned; justices were allowed to search houses without warrants. Meetings in excess of fifty people were prohibited; newspapers and periodicals were taxed almost out of existence, causing radical papers like the *Medusa* to go out of business and taking others to the brink of bankruptcy. The fifth and sixth acts extended the powers of the authorities to the extent that a second conviction for libel meant banishment from the British Empire. The level of government control can be gauged from the fact that Robert Carlile and his employees spent a total of 200 years in prison for publishing works like *Queen Mab*, and *The Rights of Man*.¹⁵

The gap between rich and poor had probably never seemed so wide. The post-war years had been difficult, yet displays of wealth and power were rife. Despite the poor summer of 1816 and the grim economic situation, the gold standard was adopted and the use of paper money extended. The Strand Bridge was opened by the Regent sailing on a 'crimson and scarlet'¹⁶ barge and Brighton Pavilion was swallowing up enormous amounts of money. By 1818 all properties on the expanding Regent Street had been taken, and coal gas enabled the more exclusive streets, shops and houses to be lit. As Eric Hobsbaum states, 'Britain thus developed the characteristic combination of a revolutionary social base and . . . an apparently traditionalist and slow-changing institutional superstructure.'¹⁷ Cobbett puts the situation a little more aggressively in his *Rural Rides*:

¹³ E. P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class*, (Penguin, 1979), p. 660.

¹⁴ *The Journal of Mrs. Arbuthnot*, ed. Francis Bamford and The Duke of Wellington, (London, 1950), p. 139.

¹⁵ See Michael Scrivener, *Radical Shelley*, (Princeton, 1982), p. 55.

¹⁶ See Arthur Bryant, *The Age of Elegance*, (Collins, 1950), pp. 378-9.

¹⁷ Eric Hobsbaum, *Industry and Empire*, (Penguin, 1969), iii, p. 17.

I reflected that in spite of all the malignant measures that had brought so much misery upon England, the gallant French people had ridded themselves of the tyranny which sent them to the galleys for endeavouring to use without tax the salt which God sent upon their shores. . . . When, great God! When shall we be allowed to enjoy God's gifts in freedom, as the people of France enjoy them?¹⁸

So Lamb and Shelley were writing at a time when conspicuous evidence of affluence sat unfeelingly alongside starvation and poverty, and it was a period during which Lamb, much more effectively than Shelley, established himself as one of those who shaped the public perception of George and his government. One of Lamb's best-known lampoons on George, 'The Triumph of the Whale', has close ties with the work of the pamphleteers:

THE TRIUMPH OF THE WHALE.

Io! Pæan! Io! sing
 To the finny people's King.
 Not a mightier whale than this
 In the vast Atlantic is;
 Not a fatter fish than he
 Flounders round the polar sea.
 See his blubbers---at his gills
 What a world of drink he swills,
 From his trunk, as from a spout,
 Which next moment he pours out.
 Such his person---next declare,
 Muse, who his companions are.---
 Every fish of generous kind
 Scuds aside, or slinks behind;
 But about his presence keep
 All the Monsters of the Deep;
 Mermaids, with their tails and singing.¹⁹
 His delighted fancy stinging;
 Crooked Dolphins, they surround him,
 Dog-like Seals, they fawn around him.
 Following hard, the progress mark,
 Of the intolerant salt sea shark.
 For his solace and relief,
 Flat fish are his courtiers chief.
 Last and lowest in his train,

¹⁸ *Rural Rides 1*, 3 September 1823.

¹⁹ Adapted from Donne's 'Go and catch a falling star':
 Teach me to hear mermaids singing,
 Or to keep off envy's stinging,

Ink-fish (libellers of the main)
 Their black liquor shed in spite:
 (Such on earth the things that write.)
 In his stomach, some do say,
 No good thing can ever stay.
 Had it been the fortune of it,
 To have swallowed that old Prophet,
 Three days there he'd not have dwell'd,
 But in one have been expell'd.
 Hapless mariners are they,
 Who beguil'd (as seamen say),
 Deeming him some rock or island,
 Footing sure, safe spot, and dry land,
 Anchor in his scaly rind;
 Soon the difference they find;
 Sudden plumb, he sinks beneath them;
 Does to ruthless seas bequeath them.
 Name or title what has he?
 Is he Regent of the Sea?
 From this difficulty free us,
 Buffon,²⁰ Banks,²¹ or sage Linnæus.²²
 With his wondrous attributes
 Say what appellation suits.
 By his bulk, and by his size,
 By his oily qualities,
 This (or else my eyesight fails),
 This should be the Prince of Whales.

This poem marks the expiry of the one-year limitation on the powers of the Regent in February 1812. It was first published in the *Examiner* on March 15 1812, signed R. et. R., usually meaning Rex et Regina, but perhaps standing here for Romulus and Remus. It was after all a poem in which Lamb revealed himself as a wolf rather than a Lamb. Lamb leans on the grotesquely obese image of George, which the caricaturists had already fixed in the public imagination:

Not a fatter fish than he
 Flounders round the polar sea.
 See his blubbers--at his gills
 What a world of drink he swills,

²⁰ Buffon, George Louis le Clere, (1707-1788). French naturalist.

²¹ Banks, Joseph, (1743-1820). Naturalist, president of the Royal Society 1777-1820.

²² Linnæus, or Von Linne, Carl, (1738-1783). Swedish naturalist. Inventor of a method separating plants and animals into classes.

George's appetite for food was legendary: Venetia Murray reprints some of his extensive menus in her *High Society*.²³

George's ministers are portrayed as 'monsters of the deep' and his current mistress, the marchioness of Hertford, who was reputed to be influencing his political decisions, is alluded to in the line 'Mermaids with their tails and singing. / His delighted fancy stinging'. Lamb inverts Donne's song on the inconstancy of women, 'Teach me to hear mermaids singing, / Or to keep off envy's stinging', and applies it to George and his reputation for promiscuity. Lamb also refers to George's occasional habit of being sick in company as a result of his gluttony, 'In his stomach, some do say, / No good thing can ever stay'. George is such a strange beast that he defies classification, the most celebrated naturalists Buffon, Banks and Linnaeus cannot define him. 'This (or else my eyesight fails), / This should be the Prince of Whales'. In plate three, *The Prince of Whales or the fisherman at Anchor* by George Cruikshank, published in *The Scourge* two months after Lamb's *Triumph of the Whale* in May 1812, we can see Lamb's squib taken up by the popular press.



Plate 3: *The Fishermen at Anchor* by George Cruikshank

The Scourge, however, is conscious of Lamb's influence on Cruikshank and is anxious not to be seen stealing from *The Examiner*, and so claims that 'the idea of the caricature is taken from Milton's description of the mariners casting anchor on the scaly rind of the huge Leviathan.'²⁴ But Lamb's influence is obvious. In the centre of the picture we see George, an enormous whale, swimming in the sea of politics while Lady Hertford, a mermaid, plays her lyre to him. Behind her is Lord Hertford, her husband, the cuckold, sporting antlers. Lord Eldon is featured as a rat (Cruikshank repeats this imagery many times through the years), and Sheridan is portrayed as a rhinoceros. In front of the Prince we see Maria Fitzherbert, his abandoned first wife. Through

²³ Venetia Murray, *High Society*, (Penguin, 1999).

²⁴ Cited by Robert L. Patten, *George Cruikshank's Life Times, and Art*, (London, 1992), i, p. 103. I am also indebted to Patten for his reading of Cruikshank's illustration.

George's nose is an anchor from Spencer Perceval's boat, bearing the inscription 'Delicate inquiry', and out of which emanate two fountains: 'The Liquor of Oblivion', which falls on the Whigs; and 'The Dew of Favour' which falls on the Tories. Piercing the Prince's side a swordfish (McMahon the Privy Purse) bleeds sovereigns.

In another of Lamb's squibs, 'The Godlike', we find that the future defender of the faith is divine after the manner of the pagan rather than the Christian Gods.

THE GODLIKE.

In one great man we view with odds
 A parallel to all the gods.
 Great Jove, that shook heaven with his brow,
 Could never match his princely bow.
 In him a Bacchus we behold:
 Like Bacchus, too, he ne'er grows old.
 Like Phoebus next, a flaming lover;
 And then he's Mercury---all over.
 A Vulcan, for domestic strife,
 He lamely lives without his wife.
 And sure---unless our wits be dull---
 Minerva-like, when moon was full,
 He issued from paternal skull.

George begins as Jove, but is immediately reduced to a drunken Bacchus, before becoming 'Mercury - all over' - doses of mercury were the commonest treatment for syphilis. Then he's Vulcan, a comparison which suggests that Lamb accepts the fact that Caroline has cuckolded him, and finally he is Minerva, not because of his wisdom, but because he emerged, like Minerva, out of the skull of his father—George's father was, of course, insane.

But Lamb's animosity is not only confined to the Prince; it also extends to his government.

THE UNBELOVED.

Not a woman, child, or man in
 All this isle, that loves thee, C---ng.
 Fools, whom gentle manners sway,
 May incline to C---gh,
 Princes, who old ladies love,
 Of the Doctor may approve,²⁵
 Chancery lads do not abhor
 Their chatty, childish Chancellor.²⁶
 In Liverpool some virtues strike,
 And little Van's²⁷ beneath dislike.

²⁵ Sidmouth, Henry Addington, Viscount, (1757-1844). Secretary of state for the home department 1812-1822.

²⁶ John Scott, Earl of Eldon, (1751-1838).

Tho, if I were to be dead for 't,
 I could never love thee, H---t:²⁸
 (Every man must have his way)
 Other grey adulterers may.
 But thou unamiable object,---
 Dear to neither prince, nor subject;---
 Veriest, meanest scab, for pelf
 Fastning on the skin of Guelph,
 Thou, thou must, surely, loathe thyself.

On the death of George III, Caroline wished to return to England to claim her rights. She was met at St. Omer by Alderman Matthew Wood, twice mayor and now MP for London. Caroline then stayed at his home and he became her chief advisor. In 1820 Lamb wrote the following sonnet addressed to Wood:

SONNET to Matthew Wood, Esq., Alderman and M.P.

Hold on thy course uncheck'd, heroic Wood!²⁹
 Regardless what the player's son³⁰ may prate,
 Saint Stephens' fool, the Zany of Debate---
 Who nothing generous ever understood.
 London's twice Prætor! scorn the fool-born jest---
 The stage's scum, and refuse of the players---
 Stale topics against Magistrates and Mayors---
 City and Country both thy worth attest.
 Bid him leave off his shallow Eton wit,
 More fit to sooth the superficial ear
 Of drunken Pitt,³¹ and that pickpocket Peer,³²
 When at their sottish orgies they did sit,

²⁷ Nicholas Vansittart, Baron Bexley, (1766-1851). Chancellor of the Exchequer.

²⁸ Thomas Taylour, Marquis of Headfort, (1757-1829).

²⁹ Matthew Wood, (1767-1843) Lord Mayor of London 1815, returned in 1816. Thereafter MP for London. The son of a Serge manufacturer, Wood became a chemist, then a hop merchant in London before being elected mayor for London in 1815. In 1816 Wood saved the lives of three Irishmen sentenced to be hanged on false evidence provided by three policemen: Brock, Vaughan and Pelham. Wood was an active supporter and adviser to Caroline.

³⁰ The reference is to George Canning (1770-1827), born in Dublin, only child of George Canning of Garvah, a barrister who had published a volume of poems, and Mary Anne, daughter of Joseph Costello. George Canning the elder's father considered this a bad marriage and disinherited him. After George Canning the elder's death in 1771, Mrs. Canning went on to the stage, although she received some financial support from her husband's younger brother Stratford, a merchant and banker in London. This enabled young George to go to Eton where he edited the *Microcosm* and became Captain of the school. Thereafter Canning went to Christ Church where he won the *inter alia* Latin Verse Prize. Canning became MP for Newport at age twenty-three (the seat was offered by Pitt). Married Joan Scott in 1800 (the marriage reputedly brought him 100 000). MP for Talee in 1803. Fought a duel with Castlereagh in 1808. Prime Minister in 1827.

³¹ William Pitt the younger, (1759 - 1806). Tory prime Minister 1783-1801 and 1804-06.

³² Melville, Henry Dundas, Viscount (1742-1811). As first lord of the admiralty he was impeached for embezzling money. Dundas was acquitted, but was proven to be negligent of his duties.

Hatching mad counsels from inflated vein,
Till England, and the nations, reeled with pain.

The ‘player’s son’ is Canning, whose mother went on to the stage after the death of his father. Of all the Tory ministers, Canning was the most sympathetic to Caroline, eventually resigning over the removal of her name from the Prayer Book. But Lamb may have been aware that Canning was widely and probably, correctly, reputed to have been one of Caroline’s ‘lovers’. His behaviour on her return to England—he immediately left for Paris to get himself out of the way—must have seemed in stark contrast to Wood’s staunch support. But Lamb’s attack may betray an old grudge against a man who had lampooned him as early as 1798 in the *Anti-Jacobin* in the poem *The New Morality*:

Couriers and Stars, Seditious Evening Host,
Thou *Morning Chronicle*, and *Morning Post*,
Whether you make the Rights of Man your theme,
Your Country libel, and your God blaspheme,
Or dirt on private worth and virtue throw,
Still blasphemous or blackguard, praise LEPEAUX
And ye five other wandering Bards that move
In sweet accord of harmony and love,
C___DGE and S___th_Y, L___D, and L___BE and Co.
Tune all your mystic harps to praise LEPEAUX.
Praise him each Jacobin, or Fool, or Knave,
And your cropp’d heads in sign of worship wavel
All creeping creatures, venemous and low,
PAINE, W__ll__MS, G__DW__N, H__LC__FT; praise LEPEAUX.”

In the Gilray illustration that accompanies this poem the ‘Jacobins’ named are portrayed as ‘All creeping creatures, venemous and low’, with Coleridge, Southey and Godwin as donkeys, Paine as a crocodile, (a role that was later taken by Lord Eldon) and Lloyd and Lamb as a pair of frogs.³³ Maybe Lamb had a long memory.

Shelley, in common with Lamb, broadly supports Caroline’s cause, but he is not quite so generous toward her as we can see from a letter to Peacock dated July 12, 1820:

Nothing, I think, shows the generous gullibility of the English nation more than their having adopted her Sacred Majesty as their heroine of the day, in spite of all their prejudices and bigotry. I for my part, of course wish no harm to happen to her, even if she has, as I firmly believe, amused herself in a manner rather indecorous with any courier or baron. But I cannot help adverting to it as one of the absurdities of royalty, that a vulgar woman, with all those low tastes which prejudice considers as vices, and a person whose habits and manners everyone would shun in private life, without any redeeming virtues should be turned into a heroine, because she is queen, or, as a collateral reason, because

³³ See Richard Cronin, *The Politics of Romantic Poetry*, (MacMillan, 2000), pp. 62-63.

her husband is a king; and he no less than his ministers, are so odious that everything, however disgusting, which is opposed to them is admirable.³⁴

So much for Shelley's opinion of Caroline. However, it is the closing line indicating that everything opposed to George and his ministers 'is admirable' that we should bear in mind when we find Shelley apparently writing for Caroline's camp in *Swellfoot the Tyrant*.

Swellfoot was begun at the Baths of San Giuliano near Pisa in August 1820 and published anonymously. Mary Shelley writes that Percy Shelley got the clue for his poem on 24 August 1820 whilst reading his *Ode to Naples* to her and Lady Mountcashell, (Mrs Mason), when they were disturbed by the 'grunting of a quantity of pigs brought for sale to the fair held in the square beneath [his] windows.' This interruption reminded him of the scene in Aristophanes where Dionysus, rowing Charon's boat to the underworld, is angered by the sound of croaking frogs; thereby giving us the first scene of *Swellfoot*. Of course Shelley is also thinking of Burke's 'Swinish Multitude'. However, it is clear from Shelley's letter to Medwin on 20 July 1820 that he had already largely formulated the plot for his poem before this event:

I wonder what in the world the Queen has done. I should not wonder, after the whispers I have heard, to find that the Green Bag contained evidence that she imitated Pasiphae, and that the Committee should recommend to Parliament a bill to exclude all Minotaurs from the succession.³⁵

Swellfoot the Tyrant is written on the premise that the Caroline affair could be enough to provoke an uprising. In Shelley's play, Swellfoot's subjects are famished pigs who have all but forgotten that they were once proud bulls. In order to rise they must be transformed and become conscious of their position in society. *Oedipus Tyrannous* or *Swellfoot the Tyrant* is a play concerned with translation and transformation. Shelley announces this by juxtaposing the English and Greek titles of the play. On the first page we find Oedipus Tyrannous alongside its literal translation Swellfoot the Tyrant, and in the last scene we find that the Ionian Minotaur is John Bull. But this is also a play that marries 'high' literature with the popular radical pamphlet, a poem that combines the classical with the caricatures of the radical press.

As Gary Dyer points out, *Swellfoot the Tyrant* 'depicts Queen Caroline's accusers in terms that were common in the pamphlets Hone and others were publishing that year'.³⁶ Sophocles and Aristophanes come together with the caricatures of Cruikshank, Rowlandson, Heath and Gilray.³⁷

George as Oedipus is obviously not the good king Oedipus of Sophocles: he is quite literally Oedipus: 'Swollen foot', alluding to George's gout. His excessive appetites are a stark contrast to the condition of the famished pigs. It is a representation that shows Shelley, like Lamb, drawing on the work of Gilray and Cruikshank and the radical pamphleteers. Shelley's Swellfoot

³⁴ *The Letters of Percy Bysshe Shelley*, (London, 1909), pp. 801-2.

³⁵ *Ibid.* p. 806.

³⁶ Gary Dyer, *British Satire and the Politics of Style, 1789-1832*, (Cambridge, 1997), p. 76.

³⁷ Richard Cronin states that Shelley's temporary renunciation of the classical in *The Mask of Anarchy* causes him to speak in a voice 'not his own' as he attempts to ally himself with the oppressed of Peterloo. However, by the time Shelley writes *Swellfoot* we find his own voice once again, but mingled with the politics and the caricatures of the political pamphlet.

reminisces about being in the ‘arms of Adiposa oft’, alluding to George’s love of large women, a vice frequently seized upon by the caricaturists of the day as we can see in the following Marks illustration, (published by Benbow; see plate 4).



Plate 4: *Sultan Sham* by Marks (pub. Benbow)

Shelley utilises a stock, easily identifiable image of George in his *Swellfoot*, which required no classical training in his anticipated audience.

Lord Eldon as Dakry, literally ‘Teary’, was similarly a man made public property by the caricaturists. Shelley, who had blamed Eldon for the loss of custody of his children, follows the pamphleteers in identifying Eldon by his penchant for crying when passing sentence, as in *The Mask of Anarchy*:

Next came Fraud, and he had on,
Like Eldon, an ermined gown;
His big tears, for he wept well,

Turned to mill-stones as they fell,

The identity of Castlereagh as Purganax is more subtle. Shelley mocks the garbled prose of Castlereagh's speeches, but more positively identifies him by his reference to Ireland.

A spot or two on me would do no harm,
 Nay, it might hide the blood, which the sad Genius
 Of the Green Isle has fixed, as by a spell,
 Upon my brow - which would stain all its seas,
 But which those seas could never wash away!
 (II,ii,78-81)

William Hone was one of those who had insistently identified Castlereagh with the savage British repression of Ireland. In plate 5 from Hone's *A Slap at Slop*, Cruickshank depicts Castlereagh exercising the scourge on a prisoner, tied to a triangular framework, and standing on a sharp point, dripping blood. Hone called Castlereagh 'Derry Down Triangle' after this method of flogging.

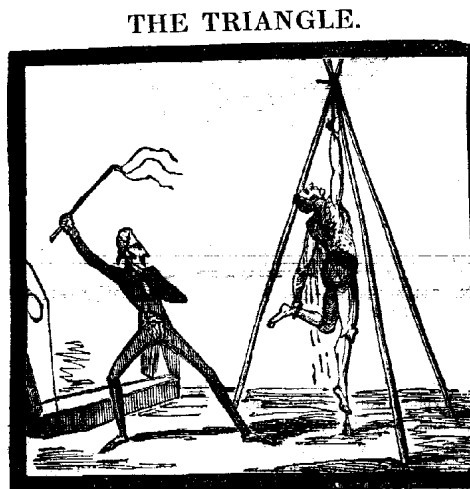


Plate 5: *Derry Down Triangle* by George Cruikshank

As Chief Secretary for Ireland between 1797 and 1801, Castlereagh was responsible for the putting down of Irish rebels during the ill fated rising of 1798. Cruikshank, Hone and Wooler pursued him mercilessly until his death for the methods he employed putting down the rising. In plate 6 from *The Men in the Moon* (A loyalist pamphlet illustrated by Cruikshank, who had no conscience about taking money from the other side), we see Castlereagh again at work, only this time whipping William Hone, flanked by Sidmouth and Canning.

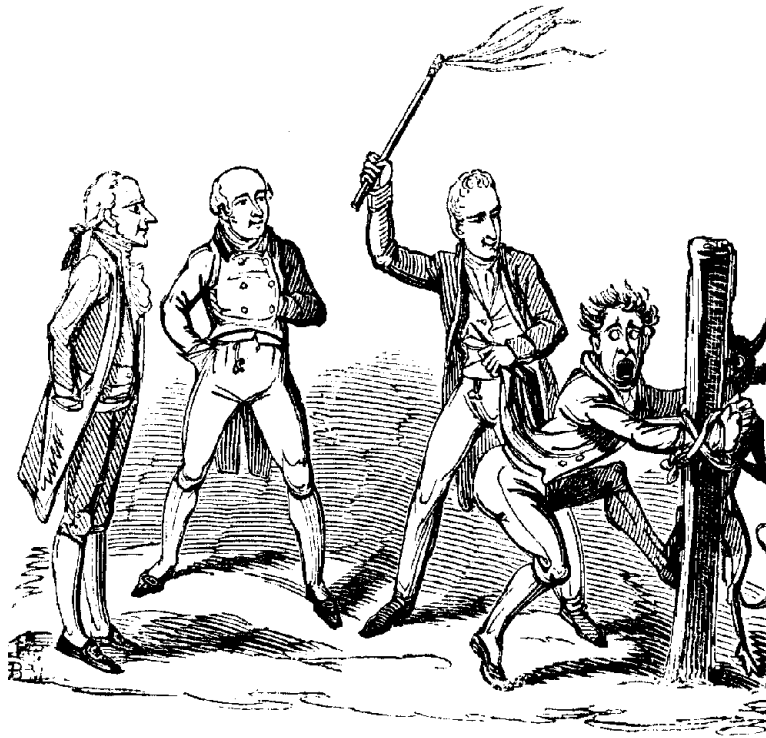


Plate 6: *A Printer and his Devil Restrained* by George Cruikshank

Also featured in *Swellfoot* is Wellington, represented by Shelley as Laoktonos, ‘people slayer’. Liverpool is Mammon and Leech is Sir John Leach, the Vice Chancellor who organised the Milan commission, transformed into a blood-sucker.

Arthur Bryant says of the Caroline affair, ‘Revolution now seemed certain. Night and day the streets resounded with shouts of “No Queen, No King!”’;³⁸ in *Swellfoot* Shelley certainly seems to move leftward away from reform toward revolution:

‘Boeotia, choose Reform or civil war!
 When through the streets, instead of hare with dogs,
 A Consort Queen shall hunt a King with hogs,
 Riding on the Ionian Minotaur.’
 (I.113-16)

Steven Jones in his *Shelley’s Satire* claims that the ‘suggestion seems to be that the nation must “choose” its future *at the signal of the Queen’s hunt*’.³⁹ I agree with much of what Jones says here; the people do have to choose between reform or rebellion. But if rebellion is chosen then it is always at the bidding of the people, not at the signal of the Queen. If we look back to Shelley’s *Prometheus Unbound*, we find that it is Demogorgon (literally ‘People Monster’) who announces the moment of revolt. Prometheus is asked by Mercury when the time will come to

³⁸ Arthur Bryant, *The Age of Elegance*, p. 393.

³⁹ S.E. Jones, *Shelley’s Satire*, (Northern Illinois University Press, 1994), p. 142.

rebel against Jupiter, yet he refuses to say, despite his name meaning ‘fore knowledge’. It is Demogorgan who announces the time for revolt, in response to Asia’s questioning:

Asia. One more demand; and do thou answer, did it know
 As my own soul would answer, did it know
 That which I ask. Prometheus shall arise
 Henceforth the Sun of this rejoicing world:
 When shall the destined hour arrive?

Demogorgan. Behold!

(II,iv)

The Green Bag

In *Swellfoot* the transformation of the pigs into the empowered ‘man bull’ takes place when the goddess Liberty intervenes in the trial of Iona Taurina:

Remit, O Queen! Thy accustomed rage!
 Be what thou are not! In voice faint and low
 FREEDOM calls *Famine*, - her eternal foe,
 To brief alliance, hollow truce. - Rise now!
 (II,ii)

Iona then empties the green bag of evidence, meant for her over Swellfoot:

[Purganax, after unsealing the Green Bag, is gravely about to pour the liquor upon her head, when suddenly the whole expression of her figure and countenance changes; she snatches it from his hand with a loud laugh of triumph, and empties it over Swellfoot and his whole Court, who are instantly changed into a number of filthy and ugly animals, and rush out of the temple.
 (II,ii)

Here we see the Green Bag of evidence, which is supposed to expose Caroline, transform George and his ministers into baser animals than his subjects. This scene has an exact parallel in Hone’s *The Queen’s Matrimonial Ladder*, as we can see in plate 7.

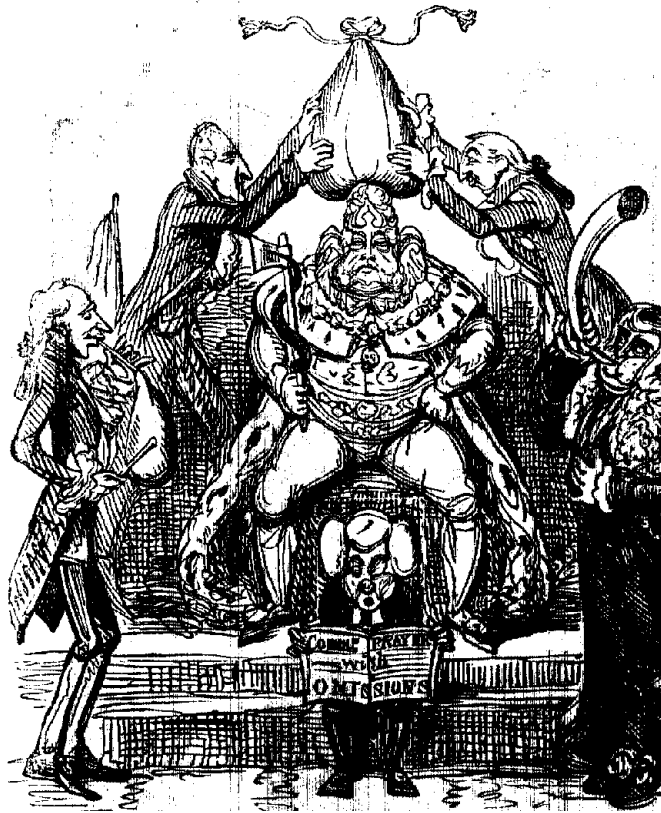


Plate 7: *The Green Bag* by George Cruikshank

He call'd for the crown-and
They gave him the *Bag!*'
Exposed thee, for all men to see!

Famine then arises, taking a similar role to that of Demogorgan. Bringing bread, she announces the period of Swellfoot's misrule.

All those who EAT the loaves are turned into BULLS,
. . . The image of FAMINE sinks through a chasm in the earth, and a MINOTAUR rises.
(II,ii)

The Minotaur then announces himself:

Minotaur. I am the Ionian Minotaur
. . . which by interpretation,
Is JOHN; in plain Theban, that is to say,
My name's JOHN BULL;
(II,ii,103-111)

John Bull then invites the Queen to ride on his back and hunt down Swellfoot and his ministers.

And if your Majesty will deign to mount me,
 At least till you have hunted down your game,
 I will not throw you.
 (II,ii)

I want to conclude by asking why such a broad range of radicals and reformers, a group that includes people as different as Cobbett, Benbow, Hone, Brougham, Catnach, Lamb and Shelley, should have offered their support to Caroline. Why, as E. J. Evans writes, support ‘a queen who was profligate, unattractive, lazy and vulgar against a king who was merely profligate, unattractive and lazy’?⁴⁰ The answer seems to be that it was a cause in which, however temporarily, even those of very different political sympathies could unite; Lamb and Shelley for example. Lamb found a cause that excited his sense of fair play, a cause that focused his hatred of the Regent’s unprincipled corruption, and also a cause in which he could display all his relish of the vitality of the popular press with its grotesque caricatures and lampoons. For Shelley, on the other hand, the affair was of interest because it promised to bring nearer a political revolution of the kind that would never have been countenanced by Lamb. If we go back to II, ii of *Swellfoot* we find the lines:

At least till you have hunted down your game,
 I will not throw you.
 (II,ii)

As Paul Foot⁴¹ suggests, the Queen is merely a tool to bring down the monarchy. Caroline is only useful until George and his lackeys have been ‘hunted down’; then she will be thrown.

In the anonymous poem ‘The Queen of Hearts Or John Bull’s best Trump is Caroline’, the aims of the more radical of the Queen’s supporters are still more explicit:

John Bull, one day
 At cards to play,
 A pack lay on the table, O;
 And well he knew
 The knavish crew
 Would cheat him were they able O.

They cut for deal, when faith it fell
 On John who is a man of parts;
 He dealt around - with joy he found
 His trump it was the Queen of Hearts;
 Though cards of Court were thrown about,
 And Aces, Knives, and Kings did shine,
 To win the game, and stamp his fame,

⁴⁰ Evans, *The Forging of the Modern State*, (Longman, 1983), p. 186.

⁴¹ Paul Foot, *Red Shelley*. (London, 1980) pp. 51-53.

John play's his trump, Queen Caroline!
 Queen Caroline!
 Queen Caroline!
 John Bull's best trump is Caroline!

Caroline, for this group of her supporters, is only a card in the political game that they are playing. As Ian McCalman asserts:

Caroline provided a 'rallying point' for metropolitan popular radicalism when the movement was badly fractured as a result of the Six Acts and post-Cato Street dragnet.⁴²

This was no secret at the time of the affair; John Wilson Croker had anticipated such an event happening in a letter to Peel in November 1817: 'the public is in . . . rather a sulky humour, waiting for any fair or unfair excuse to fly into a passion . . . If there should arise any division in the Royal Family, it will be the match to fire the gunpowder . . .'.⁴³

However, by the end of 1820 the Caroline affair was dead, as she was herself less than a year later. Caroline was forgotten and the fight moved on to Catholic emancipation, reform and Chartism. But Lamb remembered her, as we can see from a letter to Bernard Barton written in late 1827: 'strolling to Waltham Cross the other day, I hit off these lines. It is one of the crosses which Edwd. caused to be built for his wife at every town where her corpse rested between Northamptonshr. and London.'

A stately Cross each sad spot doth attest,
 Whereat the corpse of Elinor did rest,
 From the Herd by fetch'd - her spouse so honour'd her-
 To sleep with royal dust at Westminster.
 And, if less pompous obsequies were thine,
 Duke Brunswick's daughter, princely Caroline,
 Grudge not, great ghost, nor count thy funeral losses:
 Thou in thy life-time had'st thy share of crosses.⁴⁴

⁴² Ian McCalman, *Radical underworld*, (Cambridge, 1988).

⁴³ *The Croker Papers 1808-1857*, ed. Bernard Pool (London, 1967), p. 39.

⁴⁴ The poem was first printed in *The Englishman's Magazine*, September 1831, in the following form:

LINES

Suggested by a Sight of Waltham Cross
 (1827)

Time-mouldering CROSSES, gemm'd with imagery
 Of costliest work, and Gothic tracery,
 Point still the spots, to hallow'd wedlock dear,
 Where rested on its solemn way the bier,
 That bore the bones of Edward's Elinor
 To mix with Royal dust at Westminster.
 Far different rites did thee to dust consign,
 Duke Brunswick's daughter, Princely Caroline.
 A hurrying funeral, and a banish'd grave,
 High-minded Wife! Were all that thou could'st have.

It is a little poem that suggests that Lamb, unlike Shelley, felt a real sympathy for this ill-used Queen.

On 26 June 1830 George too died, but there was no Lamb to mourn his passing. Instead, *The Times* published this piece the day after his funeral:

. . . there never was an individual less regretted by his fellow creatures than this deceased King. What eye has wept for him? What heart has heaved one throb of unmercenary sorrow? Was there at any time a gorgeous pageant on the stage more completely forgotten than he has been, even from the day on which the heralds proclaimed his successor? . . . If George IV ever had a friend - a devoted friend - in any rank of life, we protest that the name of him or her has not yet reached us. An inveterate voluptuary, especially if he be an artificial person, is of all known beings the most selfish. Selfishness is the true repellent of human sympathy.⁴⁵

University of Glasgow

Grieve not, great Ghost, nor count in death thy losses;
Thou in thy life-time had'st thy share of *crosses*.

⁴⁵ *The Times* 16 July 1830.

Echoes of “the Cave” in Wordsworth’s “New” Religion: Platonic Philosophy and “Tintern Abbey”

By MICHAEL P. GRAHAM

“And now, I said, let me show in a figure how far our nature is enlightened or unenlightened.” — Plato, from the allegory of “the Cave”¹

WITH THE COMPOSITION AND PUBLICATION OF *Lyrical Ballads*, Wordsworth’s early interest in the contemporary political revolution in France had been translated in part into a literary endeavor that sought to inspire a new ideal for poetry. Wordsworth distilled this vision into prose in his first Preface to *Lyrical Ballads*, published with the second edition (1800). Yet, amid all the interest in political and poetic revolution that surrounds this time in his career, Wordsworth also appears to argue for what many critics, and perhaps even the poet himself, see as a new form of religion. Following his eventual disillusionment with the French Revolution, Wordsworth’s confidence began to turn away from the political and toward the religious. In January 1801, the poet sent a letter to William Wilberforce, accompanied by the second edition of *Lyrical Ballads*. This letter attests to Wordsworth’s religious agenda: “In your treatise these religious truths [Wilberforce’s] are developed, & applied to the present state of our religion; I have acted on them in a less awful department, but not I trust with less serious convictions.”² This statement would seem to affirm H. W. Piper’s argument that during this early period, Wordsworth “needed to find a religious system in which to believe,” and that he was attempting to “elaborate [. . .] his theories into a quasi-religion.”³

In particular, among the poems Wordsworth published in *Lyrical Ballads*, “Tintern Abbey” reveals the poet’s zeal for new religious ideals. Brian Barbour sees Wordsworth’s intention in the poem as “certainly religious”⁴: “he [Wordsworth] chose to celebrate [a] new religion [. . .] ‘Tintern Abbey’ is irrefragably a religious poem in which Wordsworth sought to define and defend a realm of the autonomously spiritual.”⁵ Nancy Easterlin also finds that the poem “dramatizes the highest level of religious experience.”⁶ Indeed, although Coleridge asserted that Wordsworth was a “semi-atheist,”⁷ we find in “Tintern Abbey” that the poet exhibits his belief in the existence of an animating “presence” (l. 95), and asserts that the final stanza of the poem may actually function as a “prayer.”⁸ The work’s full title itself places it in a religious context: “Lines Composed a Few Miles

¹ Plato, *The Republic*. Trans. Benjamin Jowett. (Cleveland: World Publishing Co., 1946) 249.

² Cited in R. L. Brett, *Faith and Doubt*. (Macon, GA: Mercer UP, 1997) 6.

³ H. W. Piper, *The Active Universe*. (New York: Althone, 1962) 75.

⁴ Brian Barbour, “Between Two Worlds: The Structure of the Argument in ‘Tintern Abbey.’” *Wordsworth Circle* 5 (1974): 147.

⁵ Barbour 151-52.

⁶ Nancy Easterlin, *Wordsworth and the Question of “Romantic Religion.”* (Lewiston, PA: Bucknell UP, 1996) 50. For additional critical discussion on the presence of religion/spirituality within “Tintern Abbey,” see, among others, Brett 21-36; Albert O. Wlecke, *Wordsworth and the Sublime*. (Berkeley: U of California P, 1973) 1-10; Carl Woodring, *Wordsworth*. (Boston: Houghton, 1965) 59-64; and Peter A. Brier, “Reflections on ‘Tintern Abbey,’” *Wordsworth Circle* 5 (1974): 5-6.

⁷ R. D. Havens, *The Mind of a Poet*. vol. 1. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1941) 201.

⁸ All citations from “Tintern Abbey” are from *Lyrical Ballads, and Other Poems, 1797-1800*, eds., James Butler and

above Tintern Abbey." Curiously, in a poem which, traditionally, has come to be referred to only as "Tintern Abbey," the ruins of the structure itself do not appear in the body of the piece, even though Wordsworth employs religious language within the poem. Although Carl Woodring argues that "Tintern Abbey" "has unluckily come to be called after the ruin mentioned in its title," and that "[t]he Abbey is so mentioned [only] to identify the stretch along the Wye pertinent to the poem,"⁹ the presence of the ruins in the title should not, perhaps, be dismissed so swiftly.

By mentioning the ruins of a Christian monastery in the title, Wordsworth places a powerful image in the minds of his readers, emphasizing the decay and fall of traditional Christian religion in Western Europe, first in the face of the Reformation, and then the Enlightenment. Woodring is correct in asserting that "the lines are not in any sense *directly* concerned with Tintern Abbey."¹⁰ The lines, however, *indirectly* concern the abbey in that they conspicuously exclude any reference to the ruins after they had been mentioned so prominently in the title. Wordsworth moves through the body of his poem without even the slightest allusion to the ruins, choosing, instead, to describe the natural surroundings in minute detail. He also is careful to report at the outset that these lines were composed "Above Tintern Abbey," creating the illusion of a spatial hierarchy with the Christian ruins placed markedly below or behind the elevated or advanced natural scene which the speaker unfolds within the poem's body. This careful structural dialectic reflects the religious shift insinuated by the poet: what is found in the poem is actually Wordsworth's method for what approaches a new religion, one which might take its place above traditional Christianity.

Despite all the apparent newness that has been attached to the beliefs Wordsworth puts forth in "Tintern Abbey," this "new" religious sensibility can be seen as owing much to the ancient "pagan" philosopher Plato and his theory of Forms, particularly to those concepts he explained in the *Republic* through the allegory of "the Cave." It is unlikely that Wordsworth consciously had Plato's *Republic* in mind when composing "Tintern Abbey," and it is also unlikely that the poem borrows intentionally from Plato. However, the process of mental and spiritual growth through which the speaker of "Tintern Abbey" progresses evinces such striking similarities to the process experienced by the released prisoner in Plato's allegory of "the Cave" that it will prove rewarding to explore whether Wordsworth may have been exposed to the ideas present in "the Cave," and whether they influenced him as he composed his religious poem. As will be shown, the parallels between these two works are striking, especially in the correspondence in reasoning through which each work argues the validity of transcendental vision and insight.

As most readers will recall, the allegory of "the Cave" is the last of three similes: Sun, Line, and Cave. These illustrations closely follow Plato's explanation of the role of the "philosopher-rulers" of his ideal city, the nature of knowledge, and the relation of both to morality. Like much of Wordsworth's poetry, Plato's composition of the *Republic* was probably instigated in part by the philosopher's own disillusionment with politics. During Plato's formative years, his democratic home of Athens was bitterly struggling against oligarchic Sparta in the Peloponnesian War. Over the course of the conflict, democratic Athens "excelled in [. . .] stupidities and atrocities [. . .]. Reading Thucydides' account of the war, one is [. . .] reminded of the worst excesses of the French

Karen Green (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1992), pp. 116-120; numerals reflect line references; subsequent references will be indicated parenthetically (ll. #).

⁹ Woodring 59.

¹⁰ Woodring 59, current author's emphasis.

Revolution."¹¹ In his later youth, Plato became a devoted follower of Socrates, and when his beloved mentor was put to death by the democracy of Athens, "Plato's disillusionment with politics was [. . .] complete."¹² Following Socrates's execution, Plato dedicated all of his energies to developing a philosophy which emphasized a knowledge of, and focus on, that which manifests unity, stability, and eternity.

In the allegory of "the Cave," Plato attempts to illustrate how one may be able to move toward this type of knowledge. In "the Cave," we see that human "souls" are trapped on an earth that is essentially false, as they experience it. In his depiction of the cave, Plato unfolds a scene wherein people are chained in darkness with their heads facing forward, away from the mouth of the cave; all they see are "shadows cast by the fire on to the cave wall" (241). These shadows are, of course, mere impressions of the artifacts carried by unnamed individuals between the fire and the backs of those trapped in the cave. Eventually, if a prisoner were released and led from the cave, he would find it difficult to see the real world at first, but gradually his eyes would adjust and "he'd be able to see the actual things themselves" (242). From this point, the prisoner would

at last [. . .] be able to discern and feast his eyes on the sun – not the displaced image of the sun in water or elsewhere, but the sun on its own, in its proper place [. . .]. After that, he'd start to think about the sun and he'd deduce that it is the source of the seasons and the yearly cycle, that the whole of the visible realm is its domain, and that in a sense everything which he and his peers used to see is its responsibility. (242)

In this allegory, the prisoner, immediately upon his release, is able to perceive only "shadows [. . .] and reflections of people and so on in the water" (242); these are allegorical of the "illusions" which humans perceive with their senses and take to be the ultimate reality. However, after adjusting his eyes to the light, the prisoner can focus on the "actual things themselves," allegorical representations of the various Forms inhabiting the intelligible world along with the Form of the Good. Finally, after focusing on the "actual things themselves," the prisoner soon will come to apprehend the sun, which represents the Form of the Good, that which acts as the prime animator of the universe in Plato's theory.¹³

It is difficult to demonstrate, with certainty, that Wordsworth had actually come into contact with the allegory of "the Cave," or the ideas on Forms, the soul, knowledge, and reality as found in the *Republic* prior to composing "Tintern Abbey." The poet recalls a strong affection for the classics in his childhood, "I read Virgil [. . .] Ovid [and] Homer," but he fails to mention any early reading of Plato.¹⁴ His classical education at Hawkshead would have provided exposure to Plato,¹⁵ but it is

¹¹ Plato, *Republic*. Tr: Robin Waterfield. (New York: Oxford UP, 1993) xii. Unless otherwise indicated, all textual citations from *Republic* are from Waterfield's translation; subsequent citations to this text will be indicated parenthetically (page #).

¹² Waterfield xiii.

¹³ R. C. Cross and A. D. Woozley, *Plato's Republic: A Philosophical Commentary*. (New York: St. Martin's, 1964) 230-31.

¹⁴ Mary Moorman, *William Wordsworth: A Biography*. 2 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon, 1957-65) 1:67.

¹⁵ Lane Cooper asserts that Wordsworth's first literary allusion ever (found in "Lines Written as A School Exercise at Hawkshead, Anno Aetatis 14) is an allusion to Plato (499).

unclear which works he would have read and to what extent they would have been explicated. Douglas Bush, however, claims that "Wordsworth was a reader of Plato,"¹⁶ and Richard Clancey's research¹⁷ indicates that Wordsworth was likely to have studied the *Apology* during the course of his Hawkshead years, but not the *Republic*.¹⁸ His education at Cambridge, "the home of Platonic and Neoplatonic studies,"¹⁹ presumably would have exposed him to Plato once again, but Ben Ross Schneider has found that during Wordsworth's time at Cambridge, Plato was not emphasized.²⁰ Wordsworth's lackluster academic record at Cambridge again makes it difficult to speak with certainty on the knowledge he might have gained, but this may have been the result of his unwillingness to compete academically as well as his dissatisfaction with the university examination system in general.²¹ He did read voraciously while there, and his performance on examinations indicates that he did indeed study the classics seriously during his collegiate years.²²

The most plausible hypothesis for Wordsworth's exposure to Platonic thought, and specifically the *Republic*, must inevitably involve his friendship with Coleridge. Melvin Rader claims that "[t]here can be no doubt that Coleridge communicated to his friend many Platonic conceptions."²³ In *Natural Supernaturalism*, Abrams tells us of Coleridge's respect for the *Republic*.²⁴ Keith Cunliffe finds that "the influence of Platonic thought on Coleridge is felt in almost every area of his work," and he convincingly demonstrates that Coleridge was composing poetry with the allegory of "the Cave" in mind almost two years prior to Wordsworth's composition of "Tintern Abbey."²⁵ He notes lines 19-23 in Book II of *The Destiny of Nations* (composed in 1796), which bear a similarity to the allegory of "the Cave" too strong simply to be mere coincidence:

one mighty alphabet
For infant minds; and we in this low world
Placed with our backs to bright Reality,
That we may learn with young unwounded ken
The substance from its shadow. (qtd. in Cunliffe 215)

Rader also sees these same lines as an "adaptation of Plato's parable of the cave."²⁶ Later, Coleridge praises the writings of Plato as "poetry of the highest kind" in chapter fourteen of the *Biographia Literaria*.²⁷ He also urged Wordsworth to compose a great philosophical poem; he "longed to make Wordsworth the king of philosophers as well as poets."²⁸ It is natural to think that the two would

¹⁶ Douglas Bush, "Wordsworth and the Classics," *University of Toronto Quarterly* (1933) 364.

¹⁷ Richard Clancey, *Wordsworth's Classical Undersong*. (New York: Macmillan, 2000).

¹⁸ Duncan Wu, *Wordsworth's Reading*. 2 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1993-95) 1:165-66.

¹⁹ Lane Cooper, "Wordsworth's Knowledge of Plato," *Modern Language Notes* 33 (1918) 499.

²⁰ Ben Ross Schneider, *Wordsworth's Cambridge Education*. (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1957) 230n1.

²¹ Clancey 53-54.

²² Wu 1:166 and Clancey 54.

²³ Melvin Rader, *A Philosophical Approach*. (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1967) 71.

²⁴ M. H. Abrams, *Natural Supernaturalism*. (New York: Norton, 1971) 359.

²⁵ Keith Cunliffe, "Recollection and Recovery: Coleridge's Platonism," *Platonism and the English Imagination*, eds., Anna Baldwin and Sarah Hutton (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1994) 207.

²⁶ Rader 31.

²⁷ Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria*. 2 vols. (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1983) 2:14.

²⁸ Moorman 1: 585-86.

have discussed Plato in their conversations on philosophy. Finally, it is likely that Wordsworth read a copy of *The Cratylus*, *Phaedo*, *Parmenides*, and *Timeus* owned by Coleridge, which eventually came to reside in the Wordsworths' library.²⁹

Wordsworth was certainly incorporating Platonic thought into his poetry by 1802, when he began composing his "Ode." There has been much speculation on the presence of Plato's notion of the immortality of the soul in this work.³⁰ Wordsworth himself associated the two in dictation to Isabella Fenwick:

a pre-existent state has entered into the popular creeds of many nations, and among all persons acquainted with classic literature is known as an ingredient in Platonic philosophy [. . .]. [W]hen I was impelled to write this Poem on the "Immortality of the soul" I took hold of the notion of pre-existence.³¹

However, A. W. Price finds that "there is no proof that at the times of writing the Ode (March and June 1802, and early 1804) Wordsworth had any direct acquaintance with any work by Plato."³² Yet, four years after composing "Tintern Abbey," one finds Wordsworth definitely crafting poetry with Platonic philosophy at least partly in mind.

In later years, Wordsworth's knowledge of and appreciation for Plato appear to have increased. He claimed that the sonnet "I heard (Alas! 'twas only in a dream)" (composed around 1817) "was suggested by the *Phaedo* of Plato."³³ Price praises this sonnet as exhibiting "a precision and condensation" of Platonic thought that the Ode lacks.³⁴ In 1844, Wordsworth spoke to Caroline Fox of his respect for those works of German literature which had "much of Plato in them [. . .]. The English, with their devotion to Aristotle, have but half the truth; a sound philosophy must contain both Plato and Aristotle."³⁵ Indeed, when his executors conducted an auction of Wordsworth's estate, they listed "a considerable number of books on Platonism" within his library.³⁶ It is clear that Wordsworth had read some of Plato's works, especially later in his life. Ultimately, the question of Wordsworth's fluency in Platonic philosophy, and specifically his knowledge of the *Republic* and the allegory of "the Cave," cannot be answered with certainty; however, a close reading of "Tintern Abbey" strongly suggests that Wordsworth's proposal for a "new" religion may have been influenced by the ancient spirituality of "the Cave."

²⁹ Wu 1:167-68.

³⁰ See, among others, Robert Langbaum, "The Evolution of Soul in Wordsworth's Poetry," *PMLA* 2 (1967) 265-72; Douglas Bush; A. W. Price, "Wordsworth's Ode on the Intimations of Immortality," in Baldwin and Hutton; and Paul H. Fry, "Wordsworth's Severe Limitations," in George H. Gilpin, ed. *Critical Essays on William Wordsworth* (Boston: Hall, 1990): 55-83.

³¹ William Wordsworth, *The Fenwick Notes of William Wordsworth*, ed. Jared Curtis (London: Bristol Classical P, 1993) 61.

³² Price 217.

³³ P. Bagchi, "A Note on Wordsworth's Sonnet, 'I heard (alas! 'twas only in a dream).'" *Notes and Queries* 218 (1973) 44.

³⁴ Price 217n.

³⁵ Cooper 498.

³⁶ Rader 40.

The first major similarity between "Tintern Abbey" and "the Cave" is found in each work's respective focus on a problem Wordsworth succinctly sums up in the first line of his sonnet, "The world is too much with us."³⁷ The world that Wordsworth refers to here deals only with the industrialized society that had begun to encroach on nature, ever increasingly, in the late eighteenth century, rather than the entire physical world, as found in Plato. We see a very similar brand of distaste for the industrialized "world" and favor for nature in "Tintern Abbey," a poem composed at least five years earlier than this sonnet. In "Tintern Abbey," the speaker contrasts nature's "forms of beauty" with his usual surroundings — "in lonely rooms, and 'mid the din / Of towns and cities [. . .] In hours of weariness" (ll.26-28). Again, in "Tintern Abbey," we find the present world of the speaker to be a dreary one; it is an "unintelligible world" (l.41) one whose pursuits are "the fretful stir / unprofitable" (ll. 53-54). In fact, it is an unhealthy environment, filled with "fever" (l.54); even the daylight is "joyless" (l. 53). For the speaker, the world is a "heavy [. . .] weary weight" (l.40) from which he desires to escape.

In his desperation to escape from the "burthen" (l.39) of his surroundings in the so-called civilized world, the speaker has but one recourse — to take refuge from his present reality by mentally focusing on and recollecting nature's "beauteous forms." These natural forms appear most clearly in the first stanza and lead into the speaker's process of reflection in the second stanza. They are set in stark contrast to the world the speaker usually inhabits and imbue him with a sense of calm wonder. The water flows with a "sweet inland murmur" (l.4); the "steep and lofty cliffs / [. . .] connect the landscape with the quiet of the sky" (ll.5-8). The scene offers "repose" (l.9) and "silence" (l.19). There is no trace of the city here; the landscape is "wild" (l.15), with only "pastoral farms" (l.17) and "houseless woods" (l.21). The first stanza ends with the image of a Hermit as he "sits alone" (l.23), reinforcing the kind of quiet, solitary reflection associated with this realm of natural forms, in direct opposition to the "din" of the "unintelligible world" the speaker describes in the next two stanzas.

The speaker's reflection on nature's "forms of beauty" allows him to escape his present environment; they provide him with "sensations sweet" (l.28), which begin in his physical person, but soon pass into his "purer mind / With tranquil restoration" (l.30-31). It is only in this "blessed mood" (ll.38, 42) that the speaker is able to feel some of the weight of the world removed. He also has feelings of "unremembered pleasures" (l.32), which inspire him toward "acts / Of kindness and of love" (ll.35-6). This "blessed mood" reflects the calm, majestic tranquility and inherent goodness of the natural environment which allowed it to arise; it is "sublime" (l.38) and "serene" (l.42). The ultimate effect of this state of mind is a virtual escape from the human body:

Until, the breath of this corporeal frame,
And even the motion of our human blood
Almost suspended, we are laid asleep
In body, and become a living soul. (ll.44-47)

Finally, by achieving this state, by becoming a "living soul," we are able to acquire a new form of vision: "We see into the life of things" (l.50).

It must be stressed that the condition achieved by the speaker of "Tintern Abbey" is, above all, a

³⁷ William Wordsworth, *Selected Poems and Prefaces*, ed. Jack Stillinger (Boston: Houghton, 1965) 182.

mental and spiritual state, not a mere physical one. Although this state begins with "sensations sweet, / Felt in the blood, and felt along the heart" (ll.29-30), only after these sensations pass into his "purer mind" does the speaker become a "living soul." A continued priority of the mental over the physical begins with this view of the mind as "purer" than the blood and heart. The speaker's description of the evolution of his own youthful love of nature re-emphasizes that physical appreciation of nature is a nascent state of human development which must be followed by purer, mental reflection. Here we see the speaker not in the state of calm, mental reflection, but rather, animal-like, and in the midst of frantic physical exertion, "glad animal movements" (l.75). He describes himself as "a roe" (l.68) who "bounded o'er the mountains, by the sides / Of the deep rivers, and the lonely streams, / Wherever nature led" (ll.69-71). To him, there was nothing beyond the immediate physical aspects of nature; it was "all in all" to him (l.76). Clearly, the speaker had placed physical enjoyment of nature first in his youth. His possession of a knowledge of the animating "presence" as an adult is the result of a gradual process which began with his exposure to, and sometimes painful enjoyment of, nature as a youth.

However, Wordsworth denigrates such physical appreciation of nature in youth without concomitant mental movement toward apprehension of the animating "presence." The delights gained are referred to as "coarser pleasures" (l.74), fraught with emotions that the youthful speaker finds himself unable to control. The wild excursions of the youth through nature are more akin to those of "a man / Flying from something that he dreads, than one / Who sought the thing he loved" (ll.71-73). This impression of fear is echoed by the speaker's youthful perception of the "sounding cataract" (l.77) which "[h]aunted [him] like a passion" (l.78). In fact, the youthful experience of nature actually bears a striking similarity to the speaker's present-day reactions to the civilized world. The sickness and disorientation found in the "fever" of the "unintelligible world" are reflected by the "aching joys" (l.85) and "dizzy raptures" (l.86) that accompanied the speaker's youthful experience with nature. However, Wordsworth never depicts the city offering any of the pleasures that mix with pain in the youth's experiences with nature. Despite the negative aspects which accompanied his experiences, the youthful speaker still vigorously pursued them with "[a]n appetite" (l.81). He lacks the capacity to see beyond his physical hunger; ultimately, he is a "thoughtless youth" (l.91), and this is the overarching problem found in the speaker's early encounters with nature. He feels only this "appetite" for nature's physical pleasures and, therefore, at this point, is unable to move beyond the physical and become "a living soul" in his mature, reflective adulthood.

In moving past his youthful stage, the speaker is able to discover something beyond the mere physical presence of nature. No longer is nature "all in all" (l.76) to him; he actually becomes aware of

A presence that disturbs me with the joy
Of elevated thoughts; a sense sublime
Of something far more deeply interfused,
Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,
And the round ocean, and the living air,
And the blue sky, and in the mind of man,
A motion and a spirit, that impels

All thinking things, all objects of all thought,
And rolls through all things. (ll.95-103)

Here we see the speaker realizing the existence of a "presence" that is not directly attached to the particulars of nature, but still participates not only in nature, but in all else as well. The dwelling place of this "motion and spirit" is not in particular objects such as "the tall rock, / The mountain, [or] the deep and gloomy wood" (ll.78-79); these immediate aspects of nature are those which impress the "thoughtless," youthful speaker. The spirit that he now perceives resides in far more remote locations, places which seem less easily, or even completely inaccessible, physically, to human beings, and, therefore, requires the intense reflection of the "purer mind." These places are the "light of setting suns," the "round ocean," the "living air," the "blue sky," and the "mind of man," places which recall the "mystery" of line 39, and the "[t]houghts of more deep seclusion" that begin the poem. Wordsworth shows the importance of the mind as dwelling place for this "presence" by placing "the mind of man" at the end of the catalogue, and following this catalogue with lines emphasizing that this spirit animates, first and foremost, "[a]ll *thinking* things, all objects of all *thought*" (emphasis mine). So, the "spirit" that the speaker is now aware of animates all things, not just nature; it is a spirit which appears distant, but does in fact dwell in the "mind of man" and participates, principally, in thought.

Although pure physical appreciation of or "appetite" for nature has been shown to be an impediment to the thought and the reflection needed to achieve knowledge of and communion with the animating "spirit," Wordsworth nonetheless proceeds to remind us that it is on nature alone which human beings must first properly reflect in order to achieve awareness of the "presence." The speaker recognizes

In nature and the language of the sense,
The anchor of my purest thoughts, the nurse,
The guide, the guardian of my heart, and soul
Of all my moral being. (ll.109-12)

Human beings originally encounter nature, of course, through sensual perception and the process of "half creat[ion]" (l.107) which accompanies these initial encounters. Just as the youthful speaker was "led" (l.71) by nature, so might all human beings also be led. What nature, our "nurse" and "guide," has the potential to lead us toward, should we allow it to do so, is the achievement of that mental capacity for reflection necessary to apprehend the distant animating "presence."

Just as nature first guided the speaker, he too hopes to take on the role of guide in leading his sister, his "dearest Friend" (l.116), toward achieving his own type of "sober pleasure" (l.140). He sees his own wild, youthful "appetite" for nature in his sister:

in thy voice I catch
The language of my former heart, and read
My former pleasures in the shooting lights
Of thy wild eyes. Oh! yet a little while
May I behold in thee what I was once. (ll.117-21)

The speaker offers his experiences, as recorded in the poem, as a model for his sister; he urges her to

remember "these my exhortations!" (l.147). In addition to announcing his educational goals, this final stanza also serves to emphasize the separation which the speaker has achieved from his former self; his sister acts as a foil in conjunction with his description of his former self. Here we begin to see the emergence of Wordsworth's notion of himself as "poet-prophet," a figure who will lead his people by serving as an example of an individual who has attained a knowledge of the animating "presence" through reflection on nature's "forms of beauty."

As the poem draws to a close, Wordsworth introduces a preponderance of religious language, clearly showing that the transcendental process described in the poem exhibits religious characteristics. Prior to his direct address of his sister, the speaker does not employ any exclusively religious terminology in his examination of the animating "presence." The words "spirit" and "soul" do appear, but these are not generally restricted to a religious context, nor does Wordsworth appear to place them in such a context. However, in the final stanza, the concentration of the words "prayer" (l.122), "faith" (l.134) "worshipper" (l.153), and especially "holier" (l.156), clearly insinuate the presence of a religious theme. Nature approaches the level of deity in this stanza as Wordsworth conspicuously capitalizes the word when he refers to himself as a "worshipper of Nature" in line 152. At this point, Wordsworth argues for what some maintain approaches a new religion, one whose followers achieve a "holier love" through a worship of nature, a method of mental reflection which ultimately leads beyond any simple physical appreciation of natural beauty, and, finally, to an apprehension of the animating "presence." And here we begin to see especially the relation of "Tintern Abbey" to "the Cave."

The process needed to attain this "new" Wordsworthian spirituality does indeed bear numerous resemblances to the process of enlightenment experienced by the prisoner in Plato's allegory of "the Cave." In "Tintern Abbey," the inhabitants of the cities and towns are comparable to those prisoners found in the cave; both kinds of dwellers must look past their negative environments in order to achieve an understanding of what constitutes ultimate reality. The towns and cities found in "Tintern Abbey" are described in unfavorable terms, similar to the cave, whose inhabitants are tied down and do not possess any freedom of movement. The "lonely rooms" (l.26) in which the speaker of "Tintern Abbey" dwells could pass for a cell. The cave is also dark, recalling the time the speaker of "Tintern Abbey" spends "[i]n darkness" in the city (l.52); the "shapes / Of joyless day-light" (ll.52-53) that the city offers to the speaker strongly resemble the shadows on the wall of the cave. The dwellers of the cave are ignorant and their intelligence dim, a situation reflected by the darkness in which they live; in "Tintern Abbey," the description of towns and cities as the "unintelligible world" (l.41), characterized by their "din" (l.26), parallels the unenlightened condition of the prisoners.

By focusing on the "actual things themselves" (analogous to "Forms" in Platonic philosophy), however, the prisoners of the cave may be able to free their minds; this concept finds a corollary in Wordsworth's idea that focusing on nature's "forms of beauty" can release humans from "the heavy and the weary weight" of urban life. The actual presence of the word "forms" in "Tintern Abbey" could very well be nothing more than a coincidence, but it certainly suggests the Platonic concept. In the poem, a continued focus on the "forms of beauty" eventually leads to the speaker becoming "a living soul," which recalls another Platonic concept, that of the soul. Plato believed that the soul and the body are two separate entities; the soul's natural dwelling place to be the world of Forms (also commonly referred to as the world of Being or "the intelligible world"). It has been seduced from its original home and trapped here on earth (the world of Becoming or "the sensible world"). In order to

return to its natural residence, a soul trapped in a human body must focus on Forms. Failure to achieve this focus ensures that a soul will merely move into another body after the death of the present body in the process known as metempsychosis or the transmigration of the soul. In the allegory of "the Cave," the prisoner's focus on the "things themselves" represents a focus on forms.³⁸ The freedom gained from the cave by its prisoners is allegorical of the soul's being freed from the sensible world. In "Tintern Abbey," the speaker's acquisition of the ability to "see into the life of things" (l.50), resembles Plato's idea of the soul awakening upon the realization of the existence of the true world, the world of Forms, and escaping the world of Becoming through a focus on Forms. By the end of their respective processes, both the speaker of "Tintern Abbey" and the prisoner in the allegory of "the Cave" have gained a special vision.

The feelings of "unremembered pleasure" which accompany the speaker as he is "laid asleep" and becomes "a living soul" can also be related to Plato's theory of Forms and his concept of the soul. According to Plato, human beings lose their memory of the world of Forms; it has been wiped away at birth, but through a "devotion to the forms," an individual eventually experiences a "reminiscence of the Forms."³⁹ As stanza two of "Tintern Abbey" begins, the speaker contends that "Though absent long / These forms of beauty have not been to me, / As is a landscape to a blind man's eye" (l.23-5). This assertion, combined with the concept of "unremembered pleasure" (l.32), clearly recalls the Platonic idea of a "reminiscence" of the world of Forms. It is during the "blessed mood" that the speaker becomes aware of the animating "presence" (l.95) or "spirit" (l.101), as well as the "unremembered pleasure." Wordsworth connects his recollection of what is "unremembered" to the "presence," just as Plato believed that "reminiscence" leads a soul to reunion with the "Good" in the world of Forms.

In describing how one "become[s] a living soul," Wordsworth emphasizes a separation of the mind from the body in a manner suggesting a Plato view:

The breath of this corporeal frame,
And even the motion of our human blood
Almost suspended, we are laid asleep
In body, and become a living soul. (ll.44-47)

The body almost seems to fall away as the speaker achieves the "blessed mood," and the mental takes clear precedence over the physical. Plato's belief that our souls must escape our bodies to achieve enlightenment and return to the world of Forms is recalled in these lines. However, this is only the beginning of Wordsworth's separation of the physical from the mental.

The stages of pain and enlightenment through which the speaker of "Tintern Abbey" advances, parallel the prisoner's stages of progression in "the Cave." The "aching joys" and "dizzy raptures" felt by the youthful speaker in "Tintern Abbey" remind us of the prisoner's feelings of "pain and distress" (l.242) as he exits the cave. In "Tintern Abbey," these painful experiences of the speaker are directly linked to his being enamored of a purely physical enjoyment of nature. True enlightenment can only be achieved by the youthful speaker after he has transcended these more shallow appreciations in favor of apprehending the "spirit, that impels / All *thinking* things" (l.101-

³⁸ Cross and Woosley 196-231.

³⁹ R. Hackforth, ed., *Plato's Phaedrus* (New York: Liberal Arts, 1952) 85.

02, emphasis is current author's). Eventually, both the prisoner and the speaker of "Tintern Abbey" achieve a higher level of understanding; the freed prisoner apprehends the importance of the sun after focusing on the "actual things themselves" (representing Forms), and the speaker comes to realize the existence of the animating "presence" following his reflection on nature's "forms of beauty." Although both experiences were accompanied by difficulties, both also lead to the eventual discovery of a higher level of existence. The key to their respective discoveries lies in the ability of the speaker and the prisoner to look past the physical world, and apprehend something of greater worth beyond.

One final similarity between the two works requires attention: both Wordsworth and Plato assume a pronouncedly didactic stance in their respective works. We should recall that in the allegory of "the Cave," the prisoner must be led out of his ignorant state. He is freed from his chains by someone else and told "that what he's been seeing all this time has no substance"; in fact, when he is reluctant to endure the pain, he is "forced" and "dragged forcibly [. . .] until he's been pulled out" (1.242). Plato envisioned philosophers as those individuals able to drag the prisoner from the cave. The speaker in "Tintern Abbey" assumes a role similar to this through his emphatic attempt to show his sister how to achieve an apprehension of the animating "presence." He asks her to "remember [him]" (1.146) when she encounters difficulties; his achievement will serve as an example. The vehemence of the cave is echoed by the speaker's characterization of his lines as "my exhortations!" (1.147); this description recalls the need to drag the prisoner from the cave. Again, we see Wordsworth placing himself in the role of "poet-prophet," a role which carries over into his proselytizing for his "new" religion.

Among the numerous similarities between these two works, two are most significant. The first is the role of "half creat[ion]" in "Tintern Abbey." Wordsworth did not agree with much of what the Enlightenment had to say about the mind and the senses. His notion of "half-create," later distilled into the "creative sensibility" of *The Prelude*, emphasizes the mind's ability to determine its own process of perception, whereby it encounters reality. The mind must not be passively affected by nature; to "become a living soul," one must use his/her mind and act upon what one senses. The effort required by this mental action is equal to that espoused by Plato in the allegory of "the Cave." In Platonic thought, the mind must also engage in an act of creation, looking past the falseness of the physical world and apprehending the world of Forms. Both Wordsworth and Plato call for a *creative* mind.

Of equal significance is the equation of Wordsworth's concept of "poet-prophet" with that of Plato's hope for the role of philosophers. "Tintern Abbey" serves as Wordsworth's "exhortation" not only to Dorothy, but to the general populace as well. In the Preface, Wordsworth emphasizes that his is a popular poetry:

The principal object then which I proposed to myself in these Poems was to chuse incidents and situations from common life, and to relate or describe them, throughout, as far as was possible, in a selection of language really used by men.⁴⁰

⁴⁰ Butler and Green 743.

He later states that poetry's "object is truth" (l.751), and that "Poets do not write for Poets alone, but for men" (l.754). Although Wordsworth may see urban life as something undesirable, his audience may not be so inclined. It is his duty as poet to relate this truth to his popular audience, and to lead them to an apprehension of the "blessed mood," and allow them to "become [. . .] living soul[s]." Like Plato and those ancient philosophers who would drag the ignorant prisoners from the darkness of the cave into the light, Wordsworth hopes to urge those who dwell "mid the din/ of towns and cities," away from "the heavy and the weary weight of all this unintelligible world," and allow them to "see into the life of things." Wordsworth's hope to function as religious "poet-prophet" of nature rivals Plato's vision of the ancient philosophers as enlighteners, liberators, and "philosopher-rulers."

Wordsworth and Plato had both suffered early disillusionment with the politics surrounding democratic ideals. Each sought to move forward from this disillusionment by independently developing his own quasi-religious method through works which emphasize the need to look beyond our immediate physical surroundings and focus upon that which is unifying, eternal, and transcendent. Although it may prove impossible, ever, to discern, conclusively, the extent of Wordsworth's knowledge of Platonic philosophy (especially *The Republic* and the allegory of "the Cave"), one may argue, with confidence, that something akin to the Platonic theory of Forms and concept of the soul can be found within "Tintern Abbey." In light of this correspondence, the "new" spirituality which Wordsworth espouses in this poem is not so revolutionary as some might argue. Wordsworth may have come into contact with Platonic ideas through his classical education, his voracious appetite for reading, or scholarly conversations with friends such as Coleridge, and exposure to such ideas would have influenced Wordsworth's ideas about religion. Still, Wordsworth's disillusionment with the political turmoil of his day may have simply produced the same yearning for unity and stability that Plato felt in the light of his own disenchantment with the political environment surrounding Athens' democracy. Whatever the case, what we can be certain of is that the "new" religion which Wordsworth argues for in "Tintern Abbey" calls for a creative mental process reminiscent of Plato's focus on Forms, and Wordsworth's own vision of himself as benevolent "poet-prophet" echoes the philosophic tradition of Plato and his concept of the "philosopher-ruler."

John Carroll University

Reviews

SAMUEL TAYLOR COLERIDGE. *Poems*. Ed. John Beer. 4th ed. London: David Campbell Publishers, Ltd., 1999. Pp. lxi + 589. ISBN 1-85715-027-9. £10.99 cloth.

John Beer's continuing editorial work on this anthology has, once again, yielded excellent results. Important revisions and additions to the 3rd edition of 1991 include

- Adding 31 events to the already extensive chronology, particularly in the category of 'Historical Events'
- Including a number of secondary sources, especially five significant works completed during the 1990s
- Changing the type face so that the entire anthology is much more readable
- Including the Crewe MS of *Kubla Khan*
- Adding the 1798 text of *The Ancient Mariner*
- Compiling an extended commentary, 'Coleridge and His Critics'

Certainly, the concise, yet comprehensive, discussion of the origin and context of *Kubla Khan* is especially interesting, and, now, with the Crewe Manuscript and 'the more elaborate 1816 version' of the work set on alternating pages, this edition can be used for some textual as well as critical uses. Similarly, adding the 1798 text of *The Ancient Mariner*, on facing pages with the later 1828 version, provides for careful comparison of a work that, as Beer points out, Coleridge 'constantly revised'. Moreover, extending the existing chronology to broaden and deepen the reader's understanding of the degree to which Coleridge's life, in relation to the events of his time and to his contemporaries, informed his thinking and writing, is also especially noteworthy. Further, the inclusion of the section, 'Coleridge and His Critics', offers significant insight into the frequent frustration, on both sides, in the poet's relationship with a good deal of the critical establishment of his time. Beer's own thoughtful reflections cap off this section nicely; indeed, his commentary helps the reader to consider the contemporary critical landscape rather more broadly, beyond the recent critical absorption with cultural and historical contexts that has marked, in particular, the end of the twentieth century.

This edition is highly successful in more fully illuminating the work of STC, whose emotional, intellectual, and imaginative temperament remains as provocative among critics as ever. Although the three volume Bollingen edition of Coleridge's *Poems* is scheduled for publication in May of this year, Beer's volume will surely remain a standard edition for all but the most scholarly explication.

Richard S. Tomlinson

Society Notes and News From Members

NOTES AND NEWS FROM MEMBERS

FROM THE MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY

We welcome the following new members who have recently joined the Society: François Baud, Pamela Coxon, Daniel Hahn, Sylvia Montgomery, Tommy Morgan, Professor M.S.C. O'Neill, University of Vermont (Guy W. Bailey Howe Library), Diana Young.

FROM THE CHAIRMAN

On 9 December 2000 an audience of some 70 members and friends gathered at St. Sepulchre's Church, Newgate Street, for a performance of *Lamb's Tale, of My Gentle-hearted Charles*. This one-man play was written and performed by Society member Leslie Irons. The north aisle of the church with the wooden paneling of the vestry was transformed by Leslie's production team into Bay Cottage, Edmonton. Here we watched and heard Lamb reminiscing to the imaginary figure of Edward Moxon (located somewhere near the front of the audience). With the aid of sundry props, including an album of personal memorabilia, Leslie Irons sustained the role of Lamb through two acts of some forty-five minutes each, holding the audience spell-bound. During the interval refreshments were served and our host, the Rev. Peter Mullen, conducted a party on a tour of St. Sepulchre's itself. It was a splendid experience to see Leslie Irons in the role of Lamb and to attend the first London performance of *Lamb's Tale* at this location — just along from the site of Christ's Hospital and, indeed the Salutation and the Cat! The Society's grateful thanks are due to the Rev. Peter Mullen but above all to Leslie Irons himself and his team of helpers.

Some Noteworthy Dates in the History of the Romantic Period

January-March

January

- 2 January 1815 – Byron marries Annabella Milbanke
- 7 January 1807 – Coleridge writes last major poem, "To William Wordsworth"
- 21 January 1793 – Louis XVI sentenced to death

February

- 5 February 1805 – Wordsworth's brother, John, dies at sea
- 7 February 1812 – Dickens born in Portsmouth
- 10 February 1775 – Charles Lamb born in London's Inner Temple
- 12 February 1809 – Charles Darwin born in Shrewsbury
- 17 February 1792 – Paine, *Rights of Man, II*
- February 1809 – *Quarterly Review* founded
- February 1811 – Prince of Wales made Regent

March

- 8 March 1778 – Wordsworth's mother dies
- 24 March 1814 – Shelley marries Harriet Westbrook
- 25 March 1811 – Shelley expelled from University College, Oxford, for pamphlet, *The Necessity of Atheism*
- March 1807 – Abolition of slave trading in British ships