Nicholas Roe

Coleridge and John Thelwall: the Road to Nether Stowey

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NICHOLAS ROE

Is the Patriot come yet? Are Wordsworth and his sister gone yet? I was looking out for John Thelwall all the way from Bridgewater, and had I met him, I think it would have moved almost me to tears.

—Charles Lamb to S. T. Coleridge, 19 or 26 July 1797

By accident Mr Thelwall as he was travelling through the neighbourhood called at Stowey ... no Person at Stowey nor Mr Wordsworth knew of his coming …

—Tom Poole, 16 September 1797

I am sure I need not request you not to mention my name in your memoirs

—S. T. Coleridge to John Thelwall, 23 April 1801

COLERIDGE AND JACOBINISM

On 1 October 1819 the Monthly Magazine published an anonymous commentary on Biographia Literaria by one of Coleridge’s early associates at Bristol. ‘I cannot conceive what could prompt Mr Coleridge to have written such a farrago’, the writer says:

Speaking of those who knew him about the period to which he alludes, viz. about the years 1794, 5, and 6, he says, “they will bear witness for me, how opposite, even then, my principles were to those of jacobinism, or even democracy.” I, sir, for one, can bear him no such witness; for, on the contrary, I very well remember what his sentiments were, at the time that he, Southey, Lovell, Burnett, and some others, talked of going to America, and there founding a system of Pantisocracy; and I can very well remember, that they were, both by word and writing, positively and decidedly democratic.