Grasmere 2008

Selected papers from the Wordsworth Summer Conference

compiled by
Richard Gravil

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Grasmere, 2008

Selected Papers from the Wordsworth Summer Conference

compiled by Richard Gravil on behalf of

The Wordsworth Conference Foundation

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First published by *Humanities-Ebooks, LLP,*
Tirril Hall, Tirril, Penrith CA10 2JE

The Ebook is available to individual purchasers exclusively from http://www.humanities-ebooks.co.uk and to libraries from http://www.MyiLibrary.com.

The paperback is available exclusively from Lulu.com

ISBN 978-1-84760-101-8 Ebook

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John Beer

Coleridge's Paradoxical Nature

Coleridge and Wordsworth, especially in the late 1790s, are rather loosely thought of as having been primarily 'nature poets'. I'd like to look into that matter a little further, however, and to question how far their view of nature converged, how far there was—as Coleridge later came to think concerning their views of poetry—a fundamental underlying disagreement. Coleridge was, at that time making his name as a Unitarian preacher; he was thought of as a political and theological writer as much as a poet. It was Wordsworth who thought of him as a devotee of nature, addressing him in *The Prelude* as

> one
> The most intense of Nature's worshippers,
> In many things my brother, chiefly here
> In this my deep devotion

So how far was 'Nature' a subject of their conversations in 1798? We have a tantalizing glimpse in the *Biographia,* where they discuss different kinds of supernatural poetry, and another there in the well-known story by Coleridge of how a spy, sent by Government to monitor their activities, was at first made anxious by hearing them talk about a 'spy nosy' and thought that he had been rumbled until he realized that they were talking about a man who had written a book and lived a long time ago. Apart from mentions by Southey and Wordsworth, the whole story was considered probably apocryphal by many biographers—at least until 1908, when a researcher named Eagleston found documents confirming the record in the Home Office[1], but even then the 'Spy nosy' element in the story was still

1 See his article in *The Twentieth Century* (August 1908) reprinted in Blunden and Griggs (1934).

Monika Class

Coleridge, the Early Mediators of Kant and the Sensuous Departure from the Categorical Imperative

In *Biographia Literaria,* Samuel Taylor Coleridge invoked a moment of mystical conversion to Kantism informing his readers that

> The writings of the illustrious sage of Königsberg, the founder of the Critical Philosophy, more than any other work, at once invigorated and disciplined my understanding. […] the "CRITIQUE OF THE PURE REASON;" of the JUDGMENT; of the "METAPHYSICAL ELEMENTS OF NATURAL PHILOSOPHY," and of his "RELIGION WITHIN THE BOUNDS OF PURE REASON," [*sic*] took possession of me as with a giant's hand.[1]

Coleridge described the impact of Critical Philosophy on him as an instant, ideological transformation. In order to emphasize the importance of this turning point, the poet philosopher singled himself out as the only connoisseur of Kant. According to the *Biographia*, "the *clearness* and *evidence"* of Critical Philosophy was solely apparent to him, whilst the lucidity of Kantian thought would have seemed a paradox to all "those who have taken their notion of IMMANUEL KANT, from Reviewers and Frenchmen" (*Biographia* I, 153). It is the pure abstraction of Kantian thought, his "originality, the depth, and the compression of the thoughts; the novelty and subtlety, yet solidity and importance, of distinctions; the adamantine chain of logic" (*Biographia* I, 153), which Coleridge praises as if he was the only one to have recognized the true qualities of Kantian philosophy. This famous passage obscures the existence of fellow readers as

1 Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria*, ed. James Engell and W. Jackson Bate, 1983, 2 vols., vol. 7 of *The Collected Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge* (London and Princeton: Routledge & Kegan Paul, Princeton UP, 1969–2002) I: 153.

Martina Domines Veliki

Search for Origins: *The Prelude* and *Confessions*

Wordsworth's *The Prelude* and Rousseau's *Confessions* though belonging to different historical, social and cultural backgrounds actually have much in common. In both works, their respective authors show a very strong reverence for Nature, a love of solitude that enables them to contemplate about past events, the need for moral perfection of the self and for the analysis of sensation and emotion, the love of walking and reverie, the love of love itself.[1] Both, Wordsworth and Rousseau, paved the way to modern literature in that they pointed to the gap between one's present and past selves, the gap both writers tried to bridge in their autobiographical endeavours. Though different in form, the first one being a narrative poem in blank verse and the second one being a prose work, their essential goal is the same: that of revealing the self by means of memory. Thus, the purpose of *The Prelude* to present 'the growth of the poet's mind' and that of the *Confessions* to display Rousseau's 'portrait in every way true to nature' are possible only by way of memory, or a return to the past in

1 Duncan Wu states that Wordsworth read Rousseau's "The Social Contract", "Discourse on Inequality" and "Emile" (See entry 214 in Duncan Wu, *Wordsworth's Reading 1770—1799*. Cambridge, New York, Oakleigh: Cambridge UP, 1993) There is no evidence that he had ever read "Confessions" but I believe that one can speak about the influence of an unread text and there is no doubt that "Confessions" exerted a powerful influence on "The Prelude". W. J. T. Mitchell says that Rousseau was the first 'modern man', the first secular autobiographer, the first priest of the cult of sensibility, of natural religion, the rights of man, and the basic assumption of human equality. My argument is in line with his belief that "no one had to read Rousseau to be 'influenced' by him; simple literacy was enough". The circle of Wordsworth's acquaintances in the early 1790s would have made him fully aware of the emotional and personal side of Rousseau's work. (See W. J. T. Mitchell. "Influence, Autobiography, and Literary History: Rousseau's *Confessions* and Wordsworth's *The Prelude*". ELH 57 (1990) pp. 643–664

Laurent Folliot

The White Doe of Rylstone: Wordsworth's National Poetics

Wordsworth's touchiness as a poet may be aptly illustrated by the lofty ire with which he responded to Lamb and Coleridge's insufficient enthusiasm for *The White Doe of Rylstone*, a first version of which had been read aloud to the poet's friends in March 1808. Indeed, Lamb's irreverence must have been unnerving; shortly before that fateful visit, he wrote:

> Wordsworth the great poet is coming to town... He says he does not see much difficulty in writing like Shakspeare, if he had a mind to try it. It is clear then nothing is wanting but the mind (Marrs 1976: 271).

As Kristine Dugas has noted, this lukewarm reception would generate a lasting rift within the Wordsworth circle (*WDR* 1988: 12–13 and 24–28). The question which arises, then, is: why was the rift occasioned by this particular poem? We know that *The White Doe* would continue to elicit special care from its author, keeping him busy for the entire second phase of the Napoleonic Wars. In 1815, he would finally publish it as a separate quarto—a decision he would later justify by his wish to "show the world his opinion of it" (Reed 1975: 602) as "in conception the highest work [he] had ever produced" (C. Wordsworth 1851: II, 313). What this paper would like to suggest is that Wordsworth's concern largely stemmed from the work's particular relevance to the relationship between poetry and nationhood, a relationship in which he became more and more interested during those years. A displaced romance but also a displaced epic, *The White Doe* betrays surprising affinities with *The Convention of Cintra*—essentially, in its reaching for an ideal national imagination in which both nationhood and the poetical imagination

Yu Xiao

Habit and Moral Enhancement in 'The Old Cumberland Beggar'

Memory studies have identified two forms of memory: recollective memory and habit memory. While the former is 'memory as the power to recollect and to recognize specific things', habit memory is memory as the 'retention of language and skills'.[1] Unlike recollective memory, it recovers the past not through the memory-images which recall them, but through the re-enactment of coordinated body movement.[2] Compared with recollective memory, there has been markedly less critical attention given to habit memory in Wordsworthian studies. This essay will explore habit memory in 'The Old Cumberland Beggar' and how Wordsworth thinks it helpful in addressing the problem of social division in his time and in achieving universal humanity.

I will start with Avishai Margalit's binary concepts of 'thick' and 'thin' relations introduced in *The Ethics of Memory*, a contemporary philosophical work dealing with the relations between different ethnic groups.[3] Thick relations are 'our relations to the near and dear'. Thin relations are 'our relations to the stranger and the remote'. They are 'backed by the attribute of being human' (7). Memory is inherent among thick relations. 'We usually care about our parents, children, spouses, lovers, friends, and by extension about some sig-

1 *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. by Max Deutscher, 10 vols (London: Routledge, 1998), VI, 296.

2 Henri Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, trans. by Nancy Margaret Paul and W. Scott Palmer (London: G. Allen & Unwin, 1950), pp. 92–3.

3 Avishai Margalit, *The Ethics of Memory* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2002), p. 7. Margalit's terms of thick and thin relations are derived from Gilbert Ryle's thick and thin descriptions. Thick descriptions move beyond neutral observation in order to capture the layers of meaning and implication inherent in a speech or gesture. They are culturally bound and historically sensitive. Thin descriptions are more context-independent.

Mandy Swann

Biblical allusion and Pagan myth: Wordsworth's Visions of the Sea.

Classical and biblical sea images, with their inherent cosmogonies and belief systems, are an inherent part of Wordsworth's vision of the sea. Wordsworth's poetic seas are often embedded in personal experience but the classics and the Bible are crucial to the way Wordsworth imagines that experience. Wordsworth's seas are fundamentally haunted and contrary places. They are seas which, like their biblical forbears, routinely usher in piteous death and act as emblems for human suffering and loss: they are also seas which, like their classical forebears, symbolise the eternal processes of pure soul born to the pain of mortality. In this essay I add to current interpretations of the Romantic perception of the ocean by examining the portrayal of the sea in two of Wordsworth's most widely studied poems: "Elegaic Stanzas, Suggested by a Picture of Peele Castle in a Storm, Painted by Sir George Beaumont" (1807) and "Ode: Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood" (1807)—poems which are also among his most famous and best loved. I respond to, and offer complicating poetic readings for recent discussions of the Romantic sea which observe that by the nineteenth century in England, classical and biblical representations of the sea as that unfathomable, repulsive chasm had been transformed into Romantic portrayals of its immense appeal.

Alain Corbin's *The Lure of the Sea: the Discovery of the Seaside in the Western World 1750–1840*, published in English in 1994, has become a base text for critics exploring perceptions of the sea in this period and has largely replaced W. H. Auden's printed lecture series of 1951, *The Enchafed Flood, or the Romantic Iconography of the Sea* (though Auden's book is still regularly cited). For Corbin, pre-

Patrick Vincent

Sleep or Death? Republicanism in *The Convention of Cintra*

In his account of a meeting with the Lake Poets at Grasmere in October 1810, the Franco-American travel writer Louis Simond wryly notes that after having planned to emigrate to America,

> At present, these gentlemen seem to think that there is no need of going so far for liberty, and that there is a reasonable allowance of it at home. Their democracy is come down to Whiggism, and may not even stop there.[1]

Simond, in the words of Thomas De Quincey, 'was a thorough knowing man of the world, keen, sharp as a razor, and valuing nothing but the tangible and the ponderable'. Married to the niece of John Wilkes and related to Swiss historian Jean-Charles Simonde de Sismondi, Simond was a committed liberal, with little patience for poetry or for political romanticism, as may be gathered from his brief conversation with Wordsworth during a walk to Easedale Tarn: 'They met, they saw, they interdespised.'[2] Commenting on the Lake Poets' views on the Peninsular War, Simond is particularly taken aback by what he sees as a case study in political accommodation:

> But it is remarkable, that this strange Spanish cause is one of the watch–words of party, to which I have alluded to before. By a strange perversion of the human mind, those liberal and independent opinions in matter of government, which one of the parties pro-

1 Louis Simond, *Journal of a Tour and Residence in Great Britain in the years 1810 and 1811*, London: Longman, 1815, volume 1, p. 350.

2 Thomas De Quincey, 'Lake Reminiscences from 1807 to 1830', *The Works of Thomas De Quincey*, Gen. Ed. Grevel Lindop, London: Pickering and Chatto, 2003, vol. 11, pp. 187–189.

Timothy Michael

The State of Knowledge in *The Convention of Cintra*

Fourteen years before composing *The Convention of Cintra* (1809), Wordsworth wrote to his Cambridge friend, William Matthews, who had recently visited the Iberian Peninsula. Wordsworth asks: 'What rema[rks] do you make on the Portuguese? in what state is knowledge with them? and have the principles of free government any advocate there? or is Liberty a sound, of which they have never heard? Are they so debased by superstition as we are told, or are they improving in anything?' (Letter to William Matthews, 17 February, 1794).[1] Wordsworth would assume a more forgiving tone regarding Portuguese superstition in *Cintra*, but his interest in the 'state of knowledge' with them, and with British statesmen, would remain undiminished. The state and status of knowledge are, I argue, at the center of Wordsworth's political pamphlet ('state,' with its senses of both 'condition' and 'body politic,' and 'status' share, of course, an etymological root [L, *status*, 'condition'], which would also give rise to 'estate'). The immediacy with which Wordsworth inquires into the Portuguese state of knowledge, and the question's contiguity with a question about the 'principles of free government,' is telling. The argument of *The Convention of Cintra* is premised on an intimate connection between knowledge and liberty ('Wherever the heaving and effort of freedom was spread, [mental] purification must have followed it' [2577–78]).[2] The pamphlet defines knowledge in such a way as to justify a militaristic defense of freedom.

1 *The Early Letters of William and Dorothy Wordsworth (1785–1805)*, ed. Ernest de Selincourt (London: Oxford University Press, 1935), p.110

2 William Wordsworth, *The Convention of Cintra* in *The Prose Works of William Wordsworth*, Vol. I, ed. W. J. B Owen and Jane Worthington Smyser (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1974), p.293; *The Prose Works of William Wordsworth*, Vol. I (Humanites-Ebooks, 2008) lines 2577–78. .

Angela Esterhammer

Translating the Elgin Marbles: Byron, Hemans, Keats

Every day, visitors come to London's British Museum and contemplate a remarkable collection of sculptures created in Greece some twenty-four centuries ago. The series of events that translated these ancient artworks into an English context took place at the beginning of the nineteenth century, when Thomas Bruce, seventh Earl of Elgin, had the sculptures detached from the Parthenon in Athens, shipped them in several boatloads to England, and sold them to the British government, which installed them in the British Museum under the name of the Elgin Marbles. If, by now, the Marbles are implicated in a globalized debate over the treatment of cultural patrimony, in Romantic Europe they were surrounded by an even more animated controversy that manifested itself in politics, periodicals, and poetry.

Taking into account the responses of John Keats and Felicia Hemans, I would like to re-examine the treatment of the Elgin affair by Lord Byron, focussing on its significance for the rhetorical form of *Childe Harold's Pilgrimag*e and the social-cultural processes that were at work among Byron's nineteenth-century audience. Byron asks his readers to compare the seizure of treasures from occupied Mediterranean countries to the ancient Roman practice of seizing trophies and celebrating their arrival in the imperial capital with public triumphs. Invoking this paradigm repeatedly in *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* and in his annotations to the poem, Byron characterizes Elgin's activities as a debased version of it. *Modern* trophies, epitomized by the Elgin Marbles, are obtained by negotiation and bribery, commodified as souvenirs or museum pieces, and publicized through modern media practices. While opposing the removal of antique ruins and seeking to offer an alternative aesthetic experience by way of his

Kasahara Yorimichi

Byron's Dying Gladiator within Its Context

Stephen Larrabee's pioneering work on poems on the statuary of the Romantic period, *English Bards and Grecian Marbles* (1943), marvellously unravelled and traced the genealogy of Byron's tale of the love-sick French maiden in *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, Canto IV, Stanza 162 (hereafter *CHP*, and quoted by canto number followed by stanza number), who fell in love with the marble Apollo Belvedere and died of the love she bore towards the statue, back to Henry Hart Milman's 1812 Newdigate Prize poem 'Belvidere Apollo', and also down to Barry Cornwall's 1823 story of Eva, the girl of Provence, in 'The Girl of Provence' (Larrabee 262, 267–68). Yet when it comes to the stanzas on the statue of the Dying Gladiator (hereafter DG), although he enumerates Newdigate poems from 1810 to 1817 and 1826 including Chinnery's 'The Statue of the Dying Gladiator' for 1810 (261), he curiously refrains from making any clear statement as to the source of Byron's passage. In fact Larrabee further complicates matters by carelessly quoting (259) Samuel Chew's 1913 article in *Modern Language Notes*, thus allowing much scope for free speculation on the part of the reader that Byron had seen and been influenced by Croly's poem in his passage on the statue of the DG.[1] Grant Scott's essay on 'Felicia Hemans and Romantic

1 The thesis of Chew's essay is to show how *CHP,* IV is indebted to Croly's *Paris in 1815*, and by citing stanzas on Belvedere Apollo, the DG, and Venus de Medici, he concludes, 'it is evident that Byron read with approval Croly's poem at the same time that he was at work upon the last canto of *Childe Harold*'. The problem with Chew, in short, is that he does not make any distinction between the 1817 edition and the 1821 edition, and carries on his thesis on the assumption that both the First Part and the Second Part were published in 1817. The truth is the 1817 edition does not contain any stanzas describing the DG. It is in the Second Part published in 1821 that the DG passage is first published. If only Chew had consulted the 1817 edition himself, he would not have made such a statement. Or had he opened the pages of the 1821 edition himself, he

Madeleine Callaghan

"This soul out of my soul": The Trial of the Hero in Shelley's *Grkru{ejkfkqp*

My concern in this paper is with Shelley's treatment of the poetic self as hero in *Epipsychidion.* It is a fraught subject. In part, this is because Shelley's poetry questions the role of the hero and challenges the process of self-mythologising as much as it endorses these things. The resulting vacillation exemplifies the productive tensions that unite the second-generation Romantics. Chaos and control become central to Shelley; he lays bare the stresses and strains involved in the topic of heroism for a Romantic poet. The Shelleyan hero self-consciously negotiates a passage between recalcitrant and productive chaos and the urge to control and order the verbal universe. The exploration of this pursuit becomes the central trial of the Shelleyan hero in the created and creative universe.

The hope of creating a hero who will exist in a purely verbal universe encounters immediate problems that Shelley openly displays in his poetry. The four-way relationship between the poet, the hero, Emily, and the text is the poem's dominant preoccupation. Before trying to establish the nature of the hero in *Epipsychidion,* Shelley first requires the reader to consider the identity of the poet. The Preface to *Epipsychidion* presents the reader with a patently false history of the poem. The Preface purports the author to be a dreamer, who sought to create "a scheme of life, suited perhaps to that happier and better world of which he is now an inhabitant, but hardly practicable in this,"[1] and the reader is asked for pity. In an antithetical gesture to his audience, Shelley indulges in an aristocratic condemnation

1 Percy Bysshe Shelley, Preface to *Epipsychidion*, *Percy Bysshe Shelley: The Major Works,* ed. with introd. and notes by Zachary Leader and Michael O'Neill, Oxford World's Classics (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2003), 512.

Anthony John Harding

Harriet Martineau's Anti-Romanticism

On 23 May 1850, exactly a month after the death of William Wordsworth, there was a violent spring thunderstorm over Thirlmere and Helvellyn. Watching the spectacle from Ambleside, a few miles away, Harriet Martineau wrote to her friend Fanny Wedgwood, describing the storm, and continuing: "Cannot you fancy what it is to think of Wordsworth as knowing nothing of these things,—lying under the sod,—vacating his place among these shows of nature?—It was time, we all felt and saw: but the feeling remains as fresh as it was that sunny afternoon, when the news spread that he was gone, and every body on the road looked grave, and the blinds were down in his cottage … ." (*Letters to Fanny Wedgwood*, 105).

At this time, Harriet Martineau was within a few days of her forty-eighth birthday—she was born on 12 June 1802—and a well-established, if controversial, writer. She was linked to the Wordsworths and their circle by many ties of friendship, as well being a neighbour. William Wordsworth advised her on the design of her garden at her Ambleside house, The Knoll. Her friend Fanny was the daughter of Sir James Mackintosh; Fanny had married Hensleigh Wedgwood in 1831. Like so many of her contemporaries, Martineau had to deal with the death of Wordsworth at an emotional as well as an intellectual level. "Wordsworth," she wrote to Elizabeth Barrett in 1845, "was an educator of infinite value to me" (*Selected Letters*, 110). She recognises that his death marks an epoch ("It was time"), but she also feels it as a personal loss. Wordsworth had spoken for the "shows of nature" as no-one else ever would. This remark to Fanny Wedgwood shows, then, how much romanticism there still was in Martineau—how much of her writerly DNA, so to speak, was shared with Wordsworth and his generation– along with a slight sense of relief that the epoch was now over.

Judith Thompson

A Shadow in Profile: John Thelwall in the Lake District

I. Burned by History

A highlight of any literary tour of England is pastoral Grasmere, home of Wordsworth's Dove Cottage and its neighbouring library in the elegant new Jerwood Centre. There, one can find many Romantic archival treasures, including the Stanger autographs, a "veritable cultural index of life in the Lake District" gathered by Mary Stanger, the niece of Wordsworth's friend and patron Raisley Calvert, whose timely legacy was so crucial to the poet's development.[1] Among the 1200 notable hands represented in the Stanger collection are several drawings that are part of the lost legacy of another poet, equally original, but almost completely unknown, in part due to his failure to find such faithful friends and descendants. Rather curiously labeled "done with a piece of burnt paper," these sketches are all portraits, in profile, like silhouettes but with some shading and detail, like caricatures but with some depth and realism. In their style, then, as well as their medium, they aptly represent the man who produced them, a man burned by history whose profile is now little more than a shadowy outline. That man is John Thelwall, known today (if at all) as neither a poet nor an artist, but as a political figure and a friend of Wordsworth and Coleridge's "radical years."

"Citizen Thelwall" rose to notoriety in the 1790s as a democratic orator, leader of the London Corresponding Society and vocifer-

1 Robert Woof, *Treasures of the Wordsworth Trust* (Grasmere: Wordsworth Trust, 2005).

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