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Late one freezing evening in 1798 the writer Samuel Taylor Coleridge was completing a poem. 'Frost at Midnight' begins and ends with a description of the cold winter world outside his Somerset cottage, but at its heart is a discussion of education. Coleridge looks back to his lonely, confined schooldays at Christ's Hospital in London 'in the great city, pent mid cloisters dim', and ahead to an outdoor academy for his baby son Hartley, sleeping at his side.

'But thou, my babe! shall wander like a breeze
By lakes and sandy shores'

he promises. The reality was to be rather different and only a few years later William Wordsworth outlined his anxieties for Hartley:

'I think of thee with many fears
For what may be thy lot in future years'

he wrote in 'To HC Six Years Old', arguably one of the darkest compositions ever addressed to an English child.

This paper suggests young Hartley Coleridge can be seen as a symbol of division, through differing perceptions of the close friends whose co-operative creativity launched English Romanticism. (1) Ironically it was through their movement's manifesto, the *Lyrical Ballads*, that this harvest of dislocation was gathered.

Coleridge's myriad abilities included projecting his emotions onto others. Geography and environment was part of this, and 'Frost at Midnight' is encased in sensitive observations of his immediate surroundings. Outside 'the frost performs its secret ministry' and the young owl calls repeatedly in the still air. Inside he enjoys 'abstruser musings' by the dying fire, including his hopes for his 'Dear Babe, that sleepest cradled by my side'.

Hartley's education, his father speculates, will follow the natural syllabus of the kind Rousseau had outlined in *Emile*, published in 1762. Hence the promised wandering 'beneath the crags/ Of ancient mountain'. Here Coleridge's is fantasising. The North Somerset landscape certainly does not include the 'mountain crags' mentioned in the poem. These were imported from Wordsworth's Cumberland, which Coleridge had not visited at that time.

Such adoption had emerged before, as in his poem 'This Lime Tree Bower My Prison', written in 1797. This refers to a group of friends, including Charles Lamb- an old school friend of Coleridge- enjoying a walk which an accident prevented him from joining. Again there are the unhappy memories of school, from which both Coleridge and Lamb are now released. A linking phrase 'in the great City pent' connects the two poems, and the two men's experience. Among the walkers, Coleridge imagines, it would be Lamb- 'My gentle-hearted Charles!' who would rejoice most:

'for thou hast pined

And hungered after Nature, many a year,
In the great City pent,'

2.

This was news to Lamb, who later protested to Wordsworth about his indifference to 'dead Nature'.

'Separate from the pleasure of your company, I don't much care if I never see a mountain in my life. I have passed all my days in London, until I have formed as many and intense local attachments as any of you mountaineers can have done with dead Nature.' (2)

By 1802, when Wordsworth wrote his poem to Hartley Coleridge, the 'mountaineers' were established in Cumbria; the Coleridges at Greta Hall, near Keswick and William and Dorothy Wordsworth some 13 miles south, at Town End, on the edge of Grassmere. The Wordsworths had known Hartley since he was a baby. He went to live with them, when nearly four, when his mother was expecting Derwent, and again from May 1801, when he was probably attending school in Grassmere. Wordsworth's poem to their young lodger was possibly written on 27 March, 1802 or possibly in June or September of that year. (3)

John Worthen finds the 33 lines 'an extraordinarily ominous and in some ways frightening poem'. He adds: 'The most striking thing of all is the poem's psychological insight... The poem about the child was a kind of coded warning to the father.' On one of the possible dates, Wordsworth did indeed draft his famous line 'the child is father to the man' two days after concluding the 'coded warning' to Hartley's father. (4)

Wordsworth's poem is also a projection, from the 'faery voyager' he watches delighting in discoveries and phrasing them in ambitious language, to the potential adult. Possible, pessimistic roles include being a host to Pain, that has become 'Lord of thy house and hospitality', or the 'uneasy lover' of Grief. Possible causes of such misery include 'O too industrious folly!' and 'O vain and causeless melancholy', of which Wordsworth would be only too aware within the family from which Hartley had been relieved as Wordsworth's guest. Above all, Wordsworth worries about Hartley's vulnerability. The child was 'a dew drop which the morn brings forth' and so 'Ill fitted to sustain unkindly shocks'. These could prove fatal. A 'touch of wrong' could drive such a delicate creation – dew drop or child- 'in a moment out of life'.

Another casualty was imminent, the rupture between Coleridge and Wordsworth over the second edition of the *Lyrical Ballads*. Coleridge persuaded Wordsworth that it should include a Preface, or Advertisement. This, argues Adam Sisman, 'was a manifesto for a new type of poetry' (5). It was intended, said Wordsworth, to 'speak in the real language of men'. So the poems were both a rejection of what Wordsworth dismissed as 'the gaudy and inane phraseology of many modern writers' and, like his projection of Hartley's future, a prophetic warning against negative effects of the Industrial Revolution, including 'the accumulation of men in cities'.

From the start of the *Lyrical Ballads* project, in Somerset, Coleridge tells us it was agreed that Wordsworth would 'propose to himself as his object to give the charm of novelty to things of everyday', while he would contribute 'persons and characters supernatural or at least romantic'. (6)

3.

One such 'character supernatural' was the heroine of Coleridge's poem 'Christabel'. This was written between 1797, in Somerset and 1800 in Keswick, and for all its original 1300 or 1400 lines remained feeling unfinished. Although he admired the poem when Coleridge read it aloud, Wordsworth decided to exclude it from the new edition of the *Lyrical Ballads*. Sisman is among those analysing at length the motives, comments and even excuses behind this omission, but his verdict is devastating. The combination of the domestic and the fabulous, or Romantic, which the *Lyrical Ballads* was intended to illustrate, could not, in Wordsworth's mind, be sustained.

'Increasingly,' Sisman says, 'Wordsworth was concentrating on incidents of everyday life, eliminating from his poems all that was unusual or outlandish. The supernatural had no place in his work. Perhaps he thought that "Christabel" was a piece of ephemeral Gothic, destined not to last'. (7)

Sisman, whose particular focus is on the 'Friendship' between the two poets, argues that the omission proved fatal to Coleridge's poetic ambitions. 'In reality he had suffered a mortal blow; his spirit was broken; he would never be the same man again.' (8) Coleridge, only 28, lamented 'the Poet is dead in me'. Other scholars differ. JCC Mays argues that, despite the 'odd case' of such an obituary at such an early age, Coleridge's 'later poetry' had already begun, continued through his time in Malta and flourished in resurgence in the 1820s (9).

Certainly in 1820 Coleridge was once again engaged with poetry as he used a five line extract from 'Frost at Midnight' to illustrate his devotion to Hartley, whose Fellowship at Oriel College, Oxford was not being renewed. The poetry was included in a letter to the Provost, Edward Coppleston, who remained unmoved. Charged with 'sottishness, a love of low company and generally inattention to college rules' (10) Hartley was advised by the Dean to emigrate to Canada and to seek forgiveness from 'the All-Seeing Judge'. (11)

The child had proved to be the father of the man, his academic brilliance overshadowed by immorality and disorganisation, particularly in a college where 'its tone was tea-drinking and austere'. (12) Hartley Coleridge had therefore fulfilled Wordsworth's dark prophecy rather than his father's optimistic expectations, just as Coleridge's poetic ambitions were deflected when his Gothic fantasy collided with Wordsworth's new realism.

Wordsworth remained in Westmoreland, the early ridicule for his work turning into public acclaim for the eventual Poet Laureate. Samuel Taylor Coleridge, separated from his family, lived latterly in Hampstead, thinking, writing and above all talking against a background of opium addiction; 'an archangel, a little damaged' as Lamb remarked.

Hartley Coleridge remained to his father, Richard Holmes reminds us, 'a reproachful ghost of his own lost youth'. (13) He failed as a schoolmaster, abandoned journalism, and remained unmarried, living off a bequest. After many years of silence his father, the year before he died in 1834, received from Hartley a copy of his poems. It was dedicated to him, and the opening sonnet quoted half a line from 'Frost at Midnight'.

Notes.

1. Hartley was also a shared symbol between the poets, argues their joint biographer, Adam Sisman. 'The figure of Hartley would recur through both men's poetry in the years to come. For them he epitomised a child of Nature, a boy reared wild and free...'. Adam Sisman, *The Friendship: Wordsworth and Coleridge* (HarperCollins: London, 2006), p.219.
2. A.S. Byatt, *Unruly Times: Wordsworth and Coleridge in their Time* (Vintage: London, 1997), pp. 78- 79.
3. John Worthern, *The Gang: Coleridge, the Hutchinsons and the Wordsworths in 1802* (London: Yale University Press, 2001), p.131.
4. Ibid, p. 133.
5. Sisman, (2006), p.308.
6. Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria* (ch. xiv), quoted Margaret Drabble (ed.): *The Oxford Companion to English Literature* (OUP: Oxford, sixth edition, 2000), p. 618.
7. Sisman (2006), p. 322.
8. Ibid, pp. 324- 325.
9. Lucy Newlyn (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Coleridge* (CUP: Cambridge, 2002), p. 89.
10. Richard Holmes, *Coleridge: Darker Reflections, 1804-1834* (Pantheon Books: New York, 1998). p. 512.
11. Ibid, p. 514.
12. Ibid.
13. Holmes (1998), p. 558.