The Lake Poets in Prose

Also by Stuart Andrews:

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Connecting Threads

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In affectionate memory of Marilyn Gaull who made this book possible

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PREFACE

Of this collection of 18 essays and a review, 15 were previously published in one of four journals: *The Coleridge Bulletin*, *Romanticism*, *Symbiosis* and *The Wordsworth Circle*. The remaining four unpublished articles were delivered as papers at Coleridge, Southey or Symbiosis conferences. Written over a period of 25 years, they were not intended to grow into a book. There has thus been some pruning to avoid overlap and consequent repetition. Taken together, as the following introduction explains, the essays trace a number of controversial themes or "threads" that connect the Lake Poets—who were of course Somerset poets first. Southey himself was a Bristolian, while in the 1790s both Coleridge and Wordsworth had links with the city.

When in 1994 I attended my first UK Coleridge conference, I found that I was the only historian present. As the three poets were active while Europe was at war from 1792 to 1815 (apart from the uneasy armistice of 1802-3) and were much concerned with the distressing social aftermath of the post-war years, I found I had something new to say. Inevitably, because of my historical background, I have focused here on the poets' prose, which must seem somewhat eccentric. But both Southey and Coleridge relied on income from journalism, while Wordsworth was moved to write a long pamphlet criticizing the British generals' conduct of the Peninsular War—a conflict which Southey would later chronicle in a three-volume history.

I owe a great debt to those of my conference colleagues whose involvement with the Romantic poets has been longer and more conventional than mine. It is invidious to list so many who encouraged me on my late arrival in the field, but I must mention three who sadly must now be remembered as *late* friends. Reggie Watters published the very first of my articles (here reprinted as chapter 4) which appeared in the Spring issue of the *Coleridge Bulletin* in 1996. Richard Gravil, who died in 2019, published the first essay of the present series in the very first number of *Symbiosis* in 1997, and subsequently republished online in 2007 by Humanities Ebooks. But I owe most to Marilyn Gaull, who also died in 2019 and who, in issues of *The Wordsworth Circle* (*TWC)* from Winter 2011 to Summer 2018, found room for eight of the articles that appear here. *Lake Poets in Prose* is dedicated to her memory.

The present editors of the *Coleridge Bulletin* (Graham Davidson), *Romanticism* (Nicholas Roe) and *Symbiosis* (Matthew Scott) go back to my earliest conference days. All three have given permission for the reprinting of my previously published articles—as have the University of Chicago Press, the new publishers of *TWC*. "Works Cited" are linked to each chapter of this volume, reproducing bibliographical details of sources cited at the time of original publication. There are two exceptions. If a second edition of a title has since appeared (e.g. Nicholas Roe's *Wordsworth and Coleridge: The Radical Years*) it is listed among the relevant works cited. (I have also added a combined select bibliography of relevant works appearing since each article's original publication.) And throughout all 18 essays, the University of Maryland's "Romantic Circles" online edition of the *Collected Letters of Robert Southey* (*CLRS*) to the end of 1821 are cited alongside 19th and 20th century collections of previously published correspondence. If only the online edition is cited, the letter does not appear in the earlier published collections. Where the Victorian editions are also cited, omissions or excisions are indicated.

Since the publication of Bill Speck's *Robert Southey: entire man of letters* (2006) and my *Robert Southey: history, politics, religion* (2011), Southey studies have been transformed, not only by the online edition of the correspondence, but by the nine volumes of Southey's poetical works, published by Pickering & Chatto. Although both the letters and poetry have involved a team of editors, the general editors of both projects are Tim Fulford and Linda Pratt. I owe them both a professional and personal debt since the days I was a conference novice. And Carol Bolton's critical edition of Southey's *Letters from England* (Routledge 2016) belongs to the same revival.

Finally, I record my thanks to the staff of Bristol's Reference Library for patiently facilitating my research since the early 1990s.

INTRODUCTION

25 YEARS OF DEBATE

The connecting threads of the title are traced in these eighteen essays over a conference-going period of twenty-five years. The three main divisions—transatlantic context, revolutionary politics, and religion—focus largely on the prose writings of Coleridge, Southey and Wordsworth. That includes (where appropriate) their journalism, correspondence, political and religious controversy and Wordsworth's pamphlet on the notorious Convention of Cintra at the outbreak of the Peninsular War. The final section brings together two Bristol episodes: Coleridge, as viewed by Southey in letters to third parties, and the collected edition of Thomas Chatterton's works (edited by Southey and Cottle) which was still being commended in 1880 in the *Quarterly Review*. And in the 1880s Oscar Wilde described Chatterton as "the founder of the Romantic movement in literature, the precursor of Blake, Coleridge and Keats, the greatest poet of his time." The last two essays in the final section might be seen as recording attempts at "breaking away": Coleridge's escape to Malta and Southey's growing emergence as an historian.

For much of the period covered, at least half of Europe was involved in the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars. But, as the opening chapter makes clear, what happened in Bristol in the 1790s arose, not only from the French Revolution but from the American. Although the American War of Independence ended in the peace Treaty of Versailles in 1783, the Constitution of the United States and the French Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen were both ratified in 1791. So in one sense the two revolutions coincided. In Coleridgean scholarship of the 1990s it was common to deride the Bristol poets' pantisocratic project of settling on the banks of the Susquehanna River in Pennsylvania. Joseph Priestley and his family had already settled in Pennsylvania at the town of Northumberland virtually on the banks of the Susquehanna. Although admirers of Priestley, the poets drew their inspiration from books promoting the idea of emigrating from authoritarian Europe to the supposedly unlimited freedom of the New World. William Cobbett, who disapproved of Priestley, was in America when the Priestleys arrived in New York. Though poles apart in

background, Coleridge tried to copy Cobbett's journalistic methods, and, unbelievably, both held similar socio-political views—though not at the same time!

Southey and Coleridge had been influenced by writers on both sides of the Atlantic who were encouraging European emigrants to settle in America. In particular they knew the works of the Frenchman Jean-Pierre Brissot, the American Gilbert Imlay and the Mancunian Thomas Cooper. Though of different nationalities, all three knew one another, having met in Paris. Cooper would shortly settle in the United States, while Brissot had helped to found the Gallo-American Society in Paris in 1786. He had been in America when the French Estates-General was summoned and so had to hurry back to France in order to take part in the Revolution.

Another misconception of the 1990s was that Coleridge, Southey and Wordsworth were all "Jacobins" in a revolutionary sense. The label was bestowed, in Edmund Burke's Britain, in much the same way as "Communist" was freely applied in Senator McCarthy's America of the 1950s. The brothers-in-law, Coleridge and Southey, challenged the Slave Trade and condemned British support of the major absolute monarchies of Europe (Russia, Prussia and Austria) which by the end of 1795 had between them wiped Poland off the map. The poets opposed the war against Revolutionary France and deplored the impact of war on the lives of the poor. Both men (as Coleridge acknowledged) used invective that was counter-productive and both professed sympathy for Robespierre's aims—though not his methods. But they also shared the humanitarian aims of Thomas Beddoes of Bristol's Pneumatic Institution and revelled in the list of his writings examined here.

Having been labelled "Jacobins" in the 1790s, they were dubbed apostates by William Hazlitt when they abandoned the French revolutionary cause on Bonaparte's invasion of Switzerland in 1798. Yet ten years later, all three poets were (perhaps a little naively) still championing democratic institutions, not merely against Napoleon, but against the *ancien régime* monarchies of Spain and Portugal. And even when those monarchs were restored to their thrones after the final defeat of Napoleon, Southey retained his hope for a democratic Spain, and even envisaged a federal republic incorporating both Spain and Portugal. Not until March 1817, in a letter to his Norwich friend William Taylor, did Southey admit "the utter unfitness of the people for a representative government." He concludes that it is still an insoluble problem: "France ought to have taught me the truth, but I did not learn it till my hopes for the [Spanish] Cortes were disappointed." From then on his hopes for democracy turned to Brazil, the Portuguese colony in South America.

What about the poets' hopes for democratic government at home? If Coleridge, Wordsworth and Southey, in their Bristol and Somerset days, have been made by modern scholars to seem more revolutionary than they really were, in the post-war years their seeming political conservatism has been made to seem more reactionary than it really was. The first part of that assertion was the theme of my first Coleridge lecture in 1995, reproduced in the *Coleridge Bulletin* in 1996 and appearing in this collection at chapter 4. Reggie Watters supported this view and it was since endorsed in Gregory Leadbetter's article in the *Coleridge Bulletin* of winter 2007 (30: 1-16) which arose from his "wish to question the binary opposition of 'radical' and 'conservative' still prevalent in contemporary criticism."

Southey in his own day had particularly come under attack as the author of *Wat Tyler* (finally published in a pirated edition in 1817) for highlighting the social and economic costs of war. In the years after 1815 Southey's target was the social and economic cost of peace. The sudden ending of a war economy, after more than 20 years duration, included a shrinkage in weapon-manufacturing and in the cultivation of agricultural land as self-sufficiency was no longer needed at the end of Bonaparte's blockade. And although agricultural production would have shrunk in any case, the volcanic ash of the Tambora eruption of 1816—"the year without a summer"—ravaged good soil as well as poor. Yet, as Southey constantly insisted, the simultaneous demobilization of thousands of sailors and soldiers had a heavy impact on existing widespread unemployment.

Southey and Coleridge objected to the irresponsibility of the press in fanning an already volatile situation—though Southey's solution of banishment to Australia in cases of sedition seems somewhat draconian. Robert Peel's civil police force was not yet in place, and would not be founded for more than a decade. Meanwhile the military and the militia were untrained in managing the large crowds that assembled in Spa Fields (November 1816) and in St Peter's Field, Manchester (August 1819) where fatalities caused outrage. Coleridge was less ready to impose press censorship, but was equally concerned about the rising tide of sedition, as his *Lay Sermons* (first appearing in December 1816) make clear. He realized that (as he put it) "it is a hard and mournful thing that the Press should be constrained to call out for the harsh curb of the law against the Press." Yet, if we shrank from this "seeming injustice" the result would be to "throw down all fence and bulwark of public decency and public opinion." Already, he writes, "political calumny had joined hands with private slander, and every principle, every feeling, that binds the citizen to his country, the spirit to its Creator, is in danger of being undermined…by

the mere habit of having been reviled and scoffed with impunity" (*LS* 2: 150).

By October 3, 1819 Southey was predicting that "some great mischief may very probably take place, more houses be pulled down, or burnt—perhaps some large manufactory may be set on fire—more constables be murdered, & it is not unlikely that the system of assassination may extend farther." On February 21, 1820, after the assassination of the Duc de Berri, Southey told a correspondent that such an event "would surprise me less in this country than it has done in France." Two days later the Cato Street Conspirators (who had planned to blow up the entire cabinet at dinner) were arrested. Both the government of the day and later historians treated the episode as a farce. It is easy to dismiss the risk when the plot has misfired.

Coleridge's *Lay Sermons*, directed against the political and social dangers of these times of division and confrontation, lived up to their title in being full of Biblical comparisons and references. A more evident development in the literary historiography of the war years lies in the growing recognition that, both as youthful Unitarians and later as defenders of the Established Church, the poets took their religion seriously. The first three decades of the nineteenth century were dominated by the national debate on Catholic Emancipation. The odd coincidence was that Southey and Wordsworth, though only 15 miles from one another in the Lake District, were using the same authorities—notably the Venerable Bede and the seventeenth-century Thomas Fuller—to describe highlights in the history of the English Church from Roman times. Wordsworth was telling the story in his *Ecclesiastical Sketches* (later *Sonnets*) in a hundred sonnets and Southey in prose in his two-volume *Book of the Church* (1824). Coleridge himself, in his *Constitution of the Church and State* (1830), drew a firm distinction between the Established Church, which he saw as a national construct supporting the aims of good government (to which Roman Catholics could be loyal) and was not to be confused with the invisible worldwide Christian Church which was a union of hearts and minds. Coleridge's *Church and State* was sufficiently seminal for the young Gladstone to cite it in 1838 (three years after Coleridge's death), and for B. M. G. Reardon to give his 1995 *Religious Thought in the Victorian Age* the subtitle of *A Survey from Coleridge to Gore*. Southey does not appear in the index.

Southey and Wordsworth were more vituperative about the Catholic Church than Coleridge, who did, however, rather lose patience with the Catholics of Dublin. Southey became embroiled in a literary confrontation arising from the 1800 (effective from 1801) Act of Irish Union. He was

faced by two robust opponents, but had the advantage of having seen the workings of Catholicism on his visits to Spain and Portugal with his uncle in 1796 and 1800. He was vitriolic on monks and friars (not caring to draw a distinction between them) though he would give full credit to the selflessness of the Jesuits in South America when writing his *History of Brazil*, completed in 1819.

Wordsworth, when advertising his *Ecclesiastical Sketches* in 1821, claimed that they were partly provoked by the Emancipation Bill. He clearly rejected the notion of communities of monks or nuns devoted to prayer and the salvation of their own souls, but he was nevertheless sentimental about the ruins of medieval abbeys. Tintern was closest to Bristol as the crow flies, but Jessica Fay recently listed some 40 monasteries that Wordsworth visited—mainly in the north of England, but some abroad—with surprising persistence (*see* Select Bibliography).

I cannot claim that there was no recognition of the importance of religion among debates on *Lyrical Ballads* in the 1990s. But my historical background, which encompasses Methodism, Unitarianism and Irish Catholicism, put me in a strong position to show the importance of religious issues to all three poets. The contrary view is implied in Juliet Barker's *Wordsworth; A Life* (Viking 2000) where she is disappointed at finding a lack of Wordsworth's personal involvement in his *Ecclesiastical Sonnets* (as now known) and comes close to regarding them as a waste of the poet's time. But there is no doubt that a religious emphasis on the poetic, political and social imperatives of the world-view of the three poets has developed in the 25 years covered by these essays. Although not too strong an argument can be based on the titles in a *select* bibliography, the relevant books and articles published since 1995 and listed here are instructive. And chapter 14 on Southey and Coleridge and their interest in the world of Islam, however surprising, brings us back to their Bristol days.

ABBREVIATIONS

For full bibliographical details *see* Works Cited

AR	A*nalytical Review*
AJM	*Anti-Jacobin Review and Magazine*
AJW	*Anti-Jacobin or Weekly Examiner*
BC	*British Critic*
BL	*Biographia Literaria*
BoC	*Book of the Church*
BoRC	*Book of the Roman Catholic Church*
BPW	Byron, *Poetical Works*
C&S	Coleridge, *On the Constitution of the Church and State*
Cabral	Southey's *Journal of a residence in Spain and Portugal*
CCL	Coleridge, *Collected Letters*. 6 vols. Ed. E. L. Griggs
CLRS	*Collected Letters of Robert Southey*. Online ed. pts 1-6
CN	*Notebooks of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*
CPB	Southey, *Commonplace Book*
CPW	Coleridge, *Complete Poetical Works*. 2 vols. 1912
CW	Coleridge, *Collected Works*. 16 vols
EOT	*Essays on his Times* in *CW 3*
ER	*Edinburgh Review*
ES	*Ecclesiastical Sketches* (NB reference at chapter 11)
GM	*Gentleman's Magazine*
HB	*History of Brazil*
HPW	*History of the Peninsular War*
L&C	*Life and Correspondence of Robert Southey*. 6 vols. 1849-50
LS	*Lay Sermons*
LSP	*Letters from Spain and Portugal*. 2 eds. 1797 and 1808
MR	*Monthly Review*
MM	*Monthly Magazine*
NL	*New Letters*
N&Q	*Notes & Queries*
QR	*Quarterly Review*
Ramos	*Letters of Robert Southey to John May*. Ed. C. Ramos
RSLC	*Southey's Personal Library Catalogue*

RSPW	*Robert Southey Poetical Works*. 5 vols.
RSLPW	*Robert Southey Later Poetical Works*. 4 vols.
SL	*Selections from the Letters of Robert Southey*. 4 vols. 1856
WPW	Wordsworth, *Prose Works*
[Wordsworth]	*Letters MY* (Middle Years). *Letters LY* (Later Years)

TRANSATLANTIC CONTEXTS

1. FELLOW PANTISOCRATS: BRISSOT, COOPER AND IMLAY

First published in *Symbiosis: A Journal of Anglo-American literary relations* 1: 1 (April 1997) and subsequently online in 2007 by Humanities Ebooks. Reprinted with editorial permission.

We often dismiss "Pantisocracy"—the class-less, property-less and self-governing community that Coleridge and Southey planned to establish on the banks of the Susquehanna River in Pennsylvania—as a youthful and essentially West-Country aberration. The scheme was originally conceived after the two poets first met at Oxford, where the Bristolian Southey had been reading Rousseau, Goethe and Godwin. Southey followed French republican fashion by attending a formal Oxford dinner with his hair unpowdered. He even considered joining the French Revolutionary army. He also talked of going to America to build a farm "on ground uncultivated since the creation" (*Lamb Letters* 1: 196).

If Southey provided the romantic transatlantic vision, it was Coleridge (winner of Cambridge University's Brown medal for Greek verse) who supplied the vocabulary—"aspheterism" for the sharing of property, and "pantisocracy" for government by all members of the community. Within weeks of their Oxford meeting, Southey could write to his midshipman brother that pantisocracy and aspheterism were "words well understood in the city of Bristol" (*CLRS* 1: 103; *NL* 1: 74; *L&C* 1: 220-1). And it was a Bristol contingent that was expected to make up half the small pantisocratic colony. By September 1794 Southey listed himself and Coleridge, their Bristol brides-to-be (Sarah and Edith Fricker), five other members of the Fricker family, together with Southey's mother and two young brothers. To this Bristol dozen Southey added a number of relatives (some by marriage) and an assortment of school and university friends, making a total of 24 in all.

The faintly ludicrous *Mayflower* echoes, the self-conscious resort to Greek terminology and the collapse of the vision of a transatlantic commune into the bathos of gardening beside the Bristol Channel, have made it easy to ridicule pantisocracy. One can see why Charles Lamb cautioned Coleridge that "you are not in Arcadia when you are in the West of England" (*Lamb Letters* 1: 52). Coleridge would himself later refer dismissively to their plan of "trying the experiment of human perfectibility

on the banks of the Susquehanna" (*CCL* 1: 126). Yet a belief in human perfectibility was central to the Enlightenment's faith in education, and the new American republic seemed to provide a political and social environment in which the ideals of the Enlightenment could be put into practice.

In 1788, the year of Jean-Pierre Brissot's own travels in North America, his companion the Abbé Genty could write that "the independence of the Anglo-Americans is the event most suited to hastening the revolution which must restore happiness on earth" (Chateaubriand 9). And it was a belief that the French Revolution was the result of transplanting American principles to Europe that explains why pantisocratic ideals persisted beyond Robespierre's Terror. Six months after Brissot's death on the guillotine, Southey could still be moved by his reading of William Godwin to exclaim: "I am reading such a book! I am inclined to think that man is capable of perfection" (*CLRS* 1: 55; *NL* 74*; L&C* 1: 182-3). No wonder the Bristol bookseller, Joseph Cottle, described pantisocracy as an "epidemic delusion." He need not have been thinking only of undergraduates (Cottle, *Early Recollections* 1: 7).

It was London rather than Bristol that saw the final formulation of the poets' transatlantic scheme. We know that Coleridge read books by our three pantisocratic sympathizers—Brissot, Cooper and Imlay—when visiting London in September 1794 to find a publisher for *The Fall of Robespierre* (Coleridge *Political and Dramatic Works* 362). What is just as important for the understanding of pantisocracy is that the seemingly ill-assorted trio of authors knew one another. When Captain Gilbert Imlay arrived in Paris in January 1793—the month of Louis XVI's execution—he was carrying a letter of introduction from Thomas Cooper to Jean-Pierre Brissot. Cooper had met Brissot in London in 1787, probably through their shared interest in the abolition of the slave trade. They renewed their acquaintance five years later when Cooper was in Paris to present a fraternal address to the Jacobin Club from the Constitutional Society of Manchester. Cooper and James Watt Junior marched in a Jacobin procession, the one carrying a bust of Algernon Sidney, the other a British flag. And the Jacobins reported to their Manchester sympathizers that the British flag "united and entwined with the three-coloured flag of France and the thirteen stripes of the brave Americans, is suspended from the roof of every patriotic society in France" (Cooper *Reply to Burke* 87). The "entwining" of the flags of Imlay's United States, Cooper's Britain and Brissot's revolutionary France is an apt reminder that pantisocracy was more than a piece of student day-dreaming.

Brissot, as a young man, spent his Sundays reading Locke, Montesquieu and Montaigne, corresponded with D'Alembert, Voltaire and Bentham, and wrote to Madame Roland (after reading *Anson's Voyages*) that he imagined himself "constructing log-huts in the happy isles of Juan Fernandez and Tinian" (Thompson 70). Brissot's Paris circle included not only Cooper and Imlay, but Tom Paine, the American Joel Barlow (author of the *Vision of Columbus*), Helen Maria Williams (who so captivated the young Wordsworth) and perhaps briefly Wordsworth himself. It also included Mary Wollstonecraft, who inspired the rare tribute from Southey that he had "never praised living being yet except Mary Wollstonecraft" (*CLRS* 2: 626; *SL* 1: 180). And it was in Paris that Mary Wollstonecraft became Gilbert Inlay's lover. Indeed Imlay, who claimed to have fought in the War of American Independence, registered Mary as his wife at the United States Embassy, thus giving her American citizenship and the immunity enjoyed by United States citizens in Robespierre's France.

Imlay had come to Paris hoping to persuade the revolutionary government that an expedition to seize Louisiana from Spain was a feasible enterprise. Brissot showed some interest in the scheme but the plan was soon killed off, first by the outbreak of war with Britain and then by Robespierre's ousting of the Brissotins from the National Convention. Before Imlay finally abandoned Mary, he seems to have promised her that they would emigrate to the United States as soon as his business ventures had raised £1000, which Mary considered "sufficient to have procured a farm in America" (Godwin, *Memoirs* 237). Not only had Imlay himself speculated in Kentucky lands, to which he hoped to entice would-be emigrants, but he had played his own part in heightening the general emigration fever through his *Topographical Description of North America* (1792). He also wrote a sentimental novel, *The Emigrants*, published in 1793 soon after he met Mary, and in the writing of which Mary may have had a hand. Mary herself never crossed the Atlantic—though her brother Charles did.

It was Imlay's *Topographical Description* that Coleridge read in London. Describing himself on the title-page as "a Captain in the American Army during the late War, and a Commissioner for laying out Land in the Back Settlements," Imlay disclaimed any intention to entertain: "I have not aimed so much at being agreeable," he wrote, "as to convey information." But the book is not all topography. There is a Rousseauesque flavour in the introductory "letter" or chapter, in which Imlay welcomes the opportunity of "contrasting the simple manners and rational life of the Americans, in these back settlements, with the distorted and unnatural habits of Europeans." Even the topographical descriptions

are romanticized, as when he tells us that, on the plateau above Limestone in the Ohio (about 300 miles downstream from Pittsburgh) "I found nature robed in all her charms." He continues: "Flowers full and perfect, as if they had been cultivated by the hand of a florist, with all their captivating odours. And with all the variegated charms which colour and nature can produce, here in the lap of elegance and beauty, decorate the smiling groves." Well might Imlay add apologetically: "You must forgive what I know you will call a rhapsody, but what I really experienced after travelling through the Allegany Mountain in March" (Imlay, 155, 1, 39, 40).

Among the attractions of the Ohio Valley, Imlay notes that "the native strawberry is found in these plains in the greatest abundance, as are likewise plums of different sorts;" and he decides that "no climate or soil in the world is more congenial to the vine." Later on he lists the common names of plants (with their Linnaean equivalents) and the common animals and birds, together with the latitude where they are to be found. He observes somewhat smugly: "Such errors as Buffon has been drawn into from prejudice, Mr Jefferson has ably confuted." Imlay makes frequent references to Jefferson's *Notes on Virginia* (1784) and appeals to the future President when seeking to explain continental extremes of temperature. Like Jefferson, Imlay comments on political institutions, finding America's new constitution "not less remarkable in the political, than its natural history is in the physical world." And in an extended comparison between America and Europe, Imlay draws a bold contrast:

> We have more of simplicity, and you more of art. We have more of nature, and you more of the world. Nature formed our features and intellect very much alike; but while you have metamorphosed the one and contaminated the other, we preserve the natural symbols of both. You have more of hypocrisy—we are more sincere.

The new republic's laws and government, he concludes, "have for their basis the natural and imprescriptible rights of man" (Imlay, 52, 217, 60, 156, 158).

Despite such political comment, Imlay's *Topographical Description* has as its primary aim the encouragement of transatlantic emigration. He assures his readers that "a log house is very soon erected" and that the fertility of the soil allows the settler-farmer with capital "to increase his wealth in a most rapid manner"—though he prudently adds: "I mean by wealth the comforts of life." When he comes to the season of sugar-making, our author sounds like the pantisocrats at their most visionary: "The season of sugar occupies the women, whose mornings are cheered by

the modulated buffoonery of the mocking-bird, the tuneful song of the thrush, and the gaudy plumage of the parroquet. Festive mirth crowns the evening. The business of the day being over, the men join the women in the sugar groves where enchantment seems to dwell [and] the mildness of the evening invites the neighbouring youth to sportive play" (Imlay, 134-5, 139). Do we hear echoes in Coleridge's sonnet on "Pantisocracy":

> Sublime of Hope I seek the cottage dell
> Where Virtue calm with careless step may stray,
> And dancing to the moonlight roundelay
> The wizard passions weave an holy spell.

It was later that same September, on arriving in Cambridge, that Coleridge enclosed the first draft of the sonnet in a letter to Southey (*Poems* 1993 23).

Imlay offered would-be emigrants practical advice as well as poetic images. Settlers are advised to take "two or three camp kettles," to carry their own tea or coffee, but not (rather obviously) sugar. Apart from the free availability of various fish and "soft turtle" in the rivers, provisions are cheap: "Dunghill fowls are from 4d to 6d each, duck 8d, geese and turkeys 1s." From the various prices he quotes, Imlay is confident that the cost of transporting a family from such ports as Baltimore to the upper Ohio "may be computed with tolerable exactitude." He takes it for granted that emigrants will proceed to regions that are already settled, "as I apprehend no European would be hardy enough to form a settlement in a wilderness" (Imlay, 143-4, 149).

Similarly explicit advice to would-be emigrants is contained in Thomas Cooper's *Some Information Respecting America* published in 1794 and the second of Coleridge's September books. According to Cooper, the transatlantic passage would cost 25 guineas to £30 each, and would take ten weeks from London. Linen should be made up in ten parcels, each containing "two or three shirts, two or three pairs of stockings, two or three handkerchiefs and a towel or two." That is to avoid the necessity of "running to your trunk every time you want to dress yourself." The trunk itself should contain glass, crockery, enough clothes for a year, fruit stones and garden seeds. Libraries must not be forgotten: settlers are advised to get all their unbound books bound before the voyage. Cooper recommends taking "lemons, apples or any other fruit that will keep," and making sure that the ship's captain has "a filtering stone, or some other machine for the same purpose, for the use of cabin passengers;" if water still smelt offensive, "powder of charcoal should be added" (Cooper *Information respecting America* 22, 81-2). That does not

exhaust Cooper's practical advice. He adds appendices containing conversion tables for currency, a list of duties on imported goods, statistics on the volume of exports, and a population census for each state. The tables are supplemented by the text of the United States Constitution and a thirteen-page reprint of Benjamin Franklin's *Information to those who would remove to America* (1784).

Cooper had first made his mark in 1787 at the age of 28 when his *Letters on the Slave Trade* first appeared in *Wheeler's Manchester Chronicle.* He would end his life as President of South Carolina College, stoutly repelling federal attempts to force the southern states to abolish slavery. (He claimed consistency between his youthful defence of the rights of man and his middle-aged championship of the constitutional rights of individual states against federal "consolidators.") President John Adams's dismissive description of Cooper as "a talented mad-cap" hardly does justice to a remarkable transatlantic career. The son of a wealthy industrialist, Cooper combined a training in law with the practice of medicine, and an interest in industrial chemistry with a passion for religious toleration—which is how he became a friend of Joseph Priestley. Like Priestley, Cooper supported the cause of parliamentary reform, and although he did not receive Priestley's accolade of French citizenship, his own fraternization with the French Jacobins led Burke to censure him in Parliament. And as the campaign for constitutional reform at home seemed lost, Cooper crossed the Atlantic to reconnoitre a suitable refuge for those whom Priestley called "the friends of liberty."

Cooper took two of Priestley's sons with him, and *Some Information respecting America* was the result. In the preface Cooper explains that he went to America "expressly to determine whether America, and what part of it, was eligible for a person like myself, with a small fortune and large family to settle in." He admits that he chose the United States partly because of his "political prejudice in favour of the government established there," which (a little later) he characterizes thus:

> There is very little fault to find with the government of America either in principle or practice: we have very few taxes to pay, and those are of acknowledged necessity, and moderate in amount [….] The present irritation of men's minds in Great Britain, and the discordant state of society on political accounts is not known there. The government is the government *of* the people and *for* the people.

Not only do Cooper's words foreshadow Abraham Lincoln's famous phrase in his Gettysburg address, but they show that the Manchester radical already regards himself as an American (Cooper iii, iv, 52-3).

Cooper's pamphlet takes the form of letters from America to a friend in England. In reviewing possible sites for settlement, he dismisses New Hampshire, Connecticut and Massachusetts, where land is too costly, New Jersey because of its "musquitoes and agues," and Georgia and the Carolinas because of both their "parching summers" and "the prevalence of Negro slavery." By contrast, he knows of "very few objections that can be made to the state of Pennsylvania." Philadelphia is "the largest and most flourishing city of America," and there is the added advantage of "numerous projected improvements in roads and canals." To reinforce his point, Cooper quotes in full an advertisement from the Secretary of State's office dated 12 April 1793 and listing no fewer than thirty-one road improvement schemes (Cooper 10, 7, 16, 39-42).

Lack of good communications is one of Cooper's objections to Kentucky, which Imlay had been promoting. His own choice is Loyalsock Creek, about 170 miles from Philadelphia and between the east and west branches of the Susquehanna. Indeed it seems to have been Cooper's book that persuaded the Bristol pantisocrats to choose the Susquehanna for their proposed settlement. Coleridge wrote excitedly to Southey: "By all means read, ponder Cooper, and when I hear your thoughts I will give you the results of my own" (Coleridge *Letters* 1895 1: 91-2). George Dyer, one of the Christ's Hospital men whom Coleridge consulted, seemed convinced that pantisocrats could join the Priestleys' settlement on the banks of the Susquehanna, while Coleridge reported that another Christ's Hospital man "recommends the Susquehannah [*sic*] from its excessive Beauty and its security from hostile Indians." The letter goes on to assure Southey that "literary characters make money there" (*CCL* 1: 99). Joseph Priestley and his wife had arrived in New York with a considerable fanfare in June 1794, the very month in which Coleridge first met Southey at Oxford. The Priestleys settled in Northumberland, the nearest town to the Susquehanna settlement. By the end of 1794 300,000 acres of the Loyalsock lands were being offered for sale in plots of 150, 300 or 400 acres, bearing such names as "Liberty", "Equality", or the names of revolutionary heroes: Washington, Jefferson, Madison, Tom Paine, Dr Richard Price and Brissot himself.

It was Jean-Pierre Brissot who in July 1789, as a representative of the revolutionary commune of Paris, handed the key of the Bastille to Lafayette—thus sending it on its journey to George Washington's home at Mount Vernon, where it still hangs in the hall. That symbolic moment was all the more piquant because, five years before, Brissot (then a 30-year-old lawyer with journalistic aspirations) had himself been briefly imprisoned in the Bastille for allegedly libelling the Queen. He would later acquire

fame as the leader of the Girondin group, first in the Legislative Assembly and then in the Convention, where he failed to match the single-minded ruthlessness of the Jacobins. Wordsworth would later note that the Jacobins "in attack or in defence alike / Were strong in their impiety" (Wordsworth *Selected Poetry*, 228). Southey may have shocked Tom Poole's cousin by claiming that he would rather have heard of his own father's death than news of the death of Robespierre, but he had earlier written of Brissot's death on Robespierre's guillotine: "I am sick of the world and discontented with everyone in it. The murder of Brissot has completely harrowed up my faculties" (*CLRS* 1: 68; *L&C* 1: 189).

Brissot is usually dismissed as one of history's failures, but his importance here lies in the part he played in interpreting the American Revolution to his European contemporaries. Unlike Raynal (*East and West Indies* 1776) Brissot achually crossed the Atlantic. He spent six months in America in the latter part of 1788, and his *New Travels in the United States of America* described his tour. Its publication in 1791, when the French were themselves devising a new constitution, had given the book added topicality. As Brissot remarked at the end of the preface: "Great proposals are opening before us. Let us hasten, then, to make known that people whose happy experience ought to be our guide" (*New Travels* xliii). The *Travels* took the customary form of letters, the first of which were written by Etienne Clavière, a Genevan banker and future Girondin finance minister who had helped to sponsor Brissot's American tour. He did so largely for commercial reasons, but the image of free America supplied the inspiration. Thus in his first letter Clavière writes: "The present state of independent America will, perhaps, give us a glance at the highest perfection of human life we are permitted to hope for"; while Clavière's third letter proposes "A Plan of a Colony to be established in America" (*Travels* 46, 60-1). In outlining his plan, Clavière asks whether those who propose such a colony should be condemned as "having formed an Utopia". He does not think so. On the contrary, he believes that circumstances now favour such an enterprise which "before the American Revolution might have been judged impracticable" (*Travels* ix).

Brissot's preface further emphasizes the attractions of that revolution. He proclaims: "The object of these travels was not to study antiques [antiquities?], or search for unknown plants, but to study men who had just acquired their liberty" (*Travels* ix). From 1786 onwards he had tried unsuccessfully to persuade the French ministry to subsidize his visit to America, once suggesting, somewhat optimistically, that he be appointed "historiographer of the French navy" (*Correspondance et Papiers* 91). Disappointed in those hopes, Brissot temporarily stayed in France and

founded the Gallo-American Society. The Society's other founder members were Clavière, Crèvecoeur (author of the *American Farmer*) and a Lyons barrister, Nicolas Bergasse, who shared Brissot's interest in mesmerism. The society's prospectus, copies of which were sent to Lafayette and Jefferson, affirmed that "France has, by its arms, helped to establish the independence of America" (and stated that the aim of the society was to bring Frenchmen and Americans together, to take note of what is done in America and "to publicise it," and finally "to use the Society's influence to secure useful institutions." Thus, in January 1787, Brissot reported to members that the Duc d' Orleans had agreed to naturalize American trees in French forests (*Correspondance* 115, 118).

Brissot's Orleanist links served once again to make him unpopular at court, and in the summer of 1787 he sought refuge in England. It was the year of Cooper's *Letters on the Slave Trade*, and Brissot's acquaintance with British anti-slavery agitation dates from this visit. On his return to France he would found his own anti-slavery society—*Les Amis des Noirs*. While in England, he wrote (in English) his *Plan of a Society for promoting the emigration from Europe in the United States.* The memorandum spoke of a large number of sober, industrious and healthy Europeans who would be happy to emigrate "if they could find some means to execute it with safety and advantage." Brissot's proposal was that a society should be "possessed in the United States of large tracts of lands they should be glad to sell and clear." There would need to be a European headquarters centrally situated, close to a seaport and "in a free government where his operations should not be liable to be enquired into." The Society would advance money to suitably qualified emigrants, and, when the settlers arrived in America, the Society would arrange for properly ratified contracts to be drawn up for the sale of land—and "after having supplied them with all necessaries, should despatch them to the country where they are to settle" (*Correspondance* 458-9). The similarities to Cooper's Susquehanna venture are striking.

Brissot finally sailed for America in May 1788, armed with a letter of introduction from Lafayette to George Washington. He had hardly arrived when a letter came from his wife telling him of the decision to summon the Estates-General. Madame Brissot evidently still expected to join her husband in America with their children, though she was anxious to have them properly inoculated first (*Correspondance* 205). Brissot, however, cut short his American tour and was back in Paris in time to stand for election to the Estates-General in May 1789. When he failed to get elected, he devoted himself to serving in the municipal government of Paris, editing his own newspaper and preparing his *Travels* for the press. The

book appeared in an English edition of 1792—two years before we can be sure that Coleridge read it. Although the preface points out the book's aptness now that France is experiencing her own revolution, the French edition of the book was written before the Bastille fell.

Brissot's comments on what he found in America centre very much on what any disciple of the Enlightenment would have an eye for. Thus he notes that one of Harvard's professors gives lectures based on the work of a French chemist, while the university library of 13,000 volumes prompts him to exclaim: "The heart of a Frenchman palpitates on finding the works of Racine, of Montesquieu and of the Encyclopaedia, where 150 years ago arose the smoke of the savage calumet." And when he stops at Henderson's Tavern, only twenty-odd miles from the Susquehanna, he finds that the name of the town, Havre de Grace, was "given it by a Frenchman who laid the foundation of the town." More predictably, Brissot is pleased to find that, at most public dinners he attends, a toast is drunk to Lafayette (*Travels* 107, 423). When George Washington receives him at Mount Vernon, Brissot records that "everything has an air of simplicity, which appeals to the Frenchman's republican tastes." It is no surprise to find the founder of *Les Amis des Noirs* discussing slavery with a prudently non-committal Washington; nor to find the founder of the Gallo-American Society taking an interest in the newly invented Franklin stove (designed for economical fuel consumption) or the steamboat with "three sets of oars of considerable force" (*Travels* 429, 291, 236). Brissot concludes that, if the design could be adapted for transatlantic travel, it would "introduce into commerce as great a change as the discovery of the Cape of Good Hope" (*Travels* 429, 291, 236).

Forty-five pages of the *Travels* are devoted to praising the Quakers, whom Brissot applauds for the fact that "Philadelphia has hitherto been preserved from the danger of theatres." There is indeed an un-Voltairean puritanism about Brissot, who reports disapprovingly that, at dinner with the President of Congress, two female guests "had their bosoms very naked." He was "scandalized at this indecency among republicans." Montesquieu's belief in the moral benefits of certain climates is matched by Brissot's belief in the beneficial effects of certain forms of political organization. Maryland would flourish if it abolished slavery, Virginia if it abandoned not only slavery but "idleness and the love of the chase" (*Travels* 409,169. 432, 445).

Like Imlay, Brissot is attracted by the Ohio Valley, though he did not visit it himself and relied instead on what the French naturalist, Saugrain told him about it. Writing of the Ohio, Brissot remarks that "a man in that country works scarcely two hours a day, for the support of himself and his