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**ROBERT SOUTHEY AND BRITISH ROMANTICISM
IN THE CONTEXT OF EMPIRE**

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of The
Nottingham Trent University for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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Abstract

This thesis engages with texts from the British Romantic period (1780-1830) and particularly with the poetry of Robert Southey (1774-1843) in order to position his writing within its original context of journalism, political commentary and travel narratives, during a period of large-scale exploration and colonial settlement. While critical studies have often examined Romantic poetry in the context of the social and political conditions of Britain and Europe, this thesis argues that because there was a massive increase of empire during this period, events in the wider geo-political arena need to be taken into account. My aim is therefore to restore Southey to the canon in an historicised manner that demonstrates the relationship of Romantic writing to imperial politics.

The particular focus of my study is the use that Southey made of foreign cultures in his writing in order to define what he considered to be correct British values, thereby contributing to an early form of nationalism. It considers particularly the poetry Southey wrote that reflects his responses to foreign cultures and colonial politics during the years between 1794 and 1810. It also examines Southey's journalism – where he discussed contemporary political events within his own country and abroad – in order to provide a historical context for his poetic representations. Each chapter of my thesis is organised around a geographical or thematic structure but also conforms to a chronological development through Southey's life and literary career. It thereby delineates a narrative of progression from political radicalism to conservatism that encompasses his developing aspirations for the British Empire.

Acknowledgements

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Declaration

Part of Chapter Two of this thesis has been published as an article, entitled 'Taking Possession – Romantic Naming in Wordsworth and Southey', in *Silence, Sublimity and Suppression in the Romantic Period*, eds. Fiona L. Price and Scott Masson (Lewiston, Queenston, Lampeter: The Edwin Mellen Press, 2000), pp. 149-68.

Some sections of Chapter Two and Chapter Three have been delivered as conference papers at British Association for Romantic Studies conferences held at Durham University (1999) and Liverpool University (2001), as well as seminars at Nottingham Trent University and Birmingham University.

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Abbreviations

The following frequently cited texts appear in parentheses by the following abbreviations:

- BCPW* Lord George Gordon Byron, *The Complete Poetical Works*, ed. Jerome J. McGann, 7 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993)
- C* Mary Russell Mitford, *Christina, The Maid of the South Seas* (London: F.C and J. Rivington, 1811)
- CK* Robert Southey, *The Curse of Kehama* (London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme and Brown, 1810)
- CPW* Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *The Complete Poetical Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, ed. E. H. Coleridge, 2 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1912, Revised 1975)
- LC* Robert Southey, *The Life and Correspondence of Robert Southey*, ed. C. C. Southey, 6 vols. (London: Longman, Brown, Green, and Longmans, 1850)
- Lects 1795* Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *The Collected Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge: Lectures 1795 on Politics and Religion*, eds. Lewis Patton and Peter Mann (London and Princeton: Routledge and Kegan Paul and Princeton University Press, 1971)
- Madoc* Robert Southey, *Madoc* (London: Hurst, Rees & Orme, 1805)
- NL* Robert Southey, *New Letters of Robert Southey*, ed. Kenneth Curry, 2 vols. (New York and London: Columbia University Press, 1965)
- P* (1797) Robert Southey, *Poems* (Bristol: Joseph Cottle, London: G.G & J. Robinson, 1797)
- P* (1799) Robert Southey, *Poems. The Second Volume* (Bristol: T. N. Longman and O. Rees, 1799)
- PI* James Montgomery, *The Pelican Island and Other Poems* (London: Longman, Rees, Orme, Brown and Green, 1827)

- PW* Robert Southey, *The Poetical Works of Robert Southey Collected By Himself*, 10 vols. (London: Longman, Brown, Green and Longmans, 1837-8)
- RSJM* Robert Southey, *The Letters of Robert Southey to John May 1797-1838*, ed. Charles Ramos (Austin, Texas: Jenkins Publishing Company, 1976)
- SL* Robert Southey, *Selections from the Letters of Robert Southey*, ed. J. W. Warter, 4 vols. (London: Longman, Brown, Green and Longmans, 1856)
- Thal* Robert Southey, *Thalaba the Destroyer*, 2 vols. (London: T. N. Longman and O. Rees, 1801)
- WPW* William Wordsworth, *The Poetical Works of William Wordsworth*, eds. E. de Selincourt and Helen Darbishire, 5 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1940-9)

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- Map 3. 'British Expansion in India 1757-1818' (Lawrence James, *Raj: The Making and Unmaking of British India* (London: Little, Brown, 1997), p. 75)

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- Figure 2. *The Abolition of the Slave Trade*. Cartoon, London, 1792 (Clare Midgeley, *Women Against Slavery: The British Campaigns 1780-1870* (London and New York: Routledge, 1992), p. 21)
- Figure 3. 'The mutineers turning Bligh and his accompanying officers adrift' (Trevor Lummis, *Life and Death in Eden: Pitcairn Island and the Bounty Mutineers* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1999), Illustration 1)
- Figure 4. 'An engraving of a painting by Captain F. W. Beechey of the interior of Pitcairn Island, showing John Adams with children and women roasting a pig' (Trevor Lummis, *Life and Death in Eden: Pitcairn Island and the Bounty Mutineers* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1999), Illustration 5)
- Figure 5. 'The Garden of Aloadin', (William Hawkes Smith, *Essays in Design Illustrative of the Poem of Thalaba the Destroyer* (Birmingham, 1818))



Figure 1. Robert Southey 1774~1843

Introduction

Robert Southey was one of the most influential writers of the Romantic period. His poetry (and his position as Poet Laureate after 1813), his journalism, histories and biographies, all contributed to his reputation as a 'man of letters'. Southey discussed his role in an article he wrote for the *Annual Review* of 1807:

For whom however is the purest honey hoarded that the bees of this world elaborate, if it be not for the man of letters? The exploits of the kings and conquerors of old serve for nothing now but to fill story books for his amusement. It was to delight his leisure, and stimulate his admiration that Homer sung, and Alexander conquered. It is to gratify his curiosity that adventurers have traversed deserts and savage countries and explored the seas from pole to pole. The revolutions of the planet which he inhabits are but matters for his speculation, and the deluges and conflagrations which it has undergone, the sport of his philosophy, He is the inheritor of whatever has been discovered by persevering labour, or created by genius; the wise of all ages have heaped up a treasure for him which rust doth not corrupt, and which thieves cannot break through and steal.¹

The 'man of letters' is seen as the central repository for all the 'treasure' of knowledge in the world. Southey allocates himself a position of supreme importance.² The 'exploits' of history are for his 'amusement' and for his benefit 'adventurers' explore the world. Even planetary events are for his 'speculation'. Southey provides an idea of the vastness of the world and then puts himself, as metropolitan reviewer, at its centre. This view of the world influenced Southey's writing on foreign cultures and societies. In his texts Southey took a global scope within his grasp, but only to bring it home to a domestic centre where he could divulge its true importance and relevance to his readers. The fact that Southey describes himself as an 'inheritor' of all the knowledge of the world suggests that he saw himself in a powerful position of trust. It also implies a further transmission to those after him who will inherit this knowledge.

This transference of information however relies on the addition of Southey's own values to it. What he brought to this knowledge and his anticipation of how future generations would inherit it is the concern of this thesis.

The increasing knowledge of the world that Southey identifies – and especially that of other countries and cultures – was of huge influence during the Romantic period, due to Britain's growing empire all over the world. In the past critical studies have been concerned to focus more narrowly, in geographical terms, on the social and political conditions of Britain and Europe as a context for Romantic poetry. But this was a period of large scale exploration and massive increase of empire, as Tim Fulford and Peter Kitson point out in *Romanticism and Colonialism* (1998) – a collection of essays that is 'concerned with returning Romantic texts to the context of the material, colonial processes contemporaneous with their imagined versions of colonized people and places'.³ In fact a brief glimpse at events in Britain's colonial history during this period reveals just how important the wider geo-political arena was:

The history and politics of the years 1785-1830 were marked not just by the French Revolution, but by the loss of the American colonies, the impeachment of Warren Hastings (the Governor of Bengal), the transportation of convicts to Australia, the campaign to abolish the slave-trade, the acquisition of new colonies in the Mediterranean and Africa, the development of Canada and the administration of older colonies in India, Africa and Ireland.⁴

This research project therefore engages with texts from the British Romantic period (1780-1830) that reflect these world events – but particularly with the poetry of Robert Southey whose writing is beginning to receive more critical attention now, especially in the context of nation and empire-building.⁵ This thesis aims to restore Southey to the canon in an historicised manner that illuminates the relationship of Romantic writing to politics of empire. It is concerned with placing his writing within

the original contexts of journalism, political commentary and explorers' narratives, during this period of extensive colonial expansion and settlement. A direct link is made between the political and the personal – between the travel narratives and colonialist discourses of the Romantic period and the creation of literature from this source material. This thesis also demonstrates that while Southey's writing was a product of the time in which he lived, his increasingly dominant position as a member of the literati meant that his ideas were transmitted through other writers.

My methodology, it follows, comes primarily from the fields of new historicism and post-colonialism, in order to examine the relationship of the avowedly aesthetic discourse of Romanticism to the explicitly imperialist discourses of the period in which Britain acquired its second empire.⁶ At its base is the recognition that literary texts are embedded in their socio-political history and that this history itself is not a homogenous and completely stable 'background' of events. My aim is to show that in this period of British imperial history there was not necessarily one unified voice or opinion on colonial matters. This period of study before a more formalised Victorian imperialism came into place is considered a watershed in British colonial history when there was not necessarily a common, governing, dominant ideology, just as there was never only one style of discourse.

While Edward Said has demonstrated that the Western fascination with Oriental images is part of 'a Western style for dominating, restructuring and having authority over the Orient',⁷ which can be seen as one example of the notion of the 'Other' in alien cultures, in fact post-Said, post-colonial theorists like Homi Bhabha and Gayatri Spivak question the solid distinctions laid out in *Orientalism* (1978).⁸ Critical analysis by John Barrell and Nigel Leask of Romantic texts, for instance, have shown that the literature of this period was imbued with ambiguities and

contradictions, mirroring the fragmented and diverse British colonies, rather than forming a concretised image of empire – such as that constructed through the literature of the Victorian period.⁹ This thesis therefore focuses upon ‘anxieties and instabilities rather than positivities and totalities’ to discover a productive dialectic.¹⁰ As Bhaba points out one of the reasons for these ‘instabilities’ was that writers such as Southey discussed foreign cultures in terms of their own society and so while ‘othering’ them, also attempted to domesticate them.¹¹ This was especially true of colonial societies, where Southey, who was fascinated by different cultural practices, nevertheless often considered them to be moral aberrations that needed to be extinguished by correct (British) models of government and society. It was his desire to use the exotic strangeness of foreign cultures in order to make his poetry more exciting, but also to assimilate them by making them ‘like’ Britain, that created much of the ambiguity in his texts.

Southey’s development as a writer was synchronistic with his own awareness of his role as a social and moral watchdog. Southey felt it his duty to comment on society’s mores in order to inculcate what he considered to be a correct moral rectitude in the British public. Southey’s poetry (with its impossibly virtuous heroes) was designed to inspire a moral response in his readers. His articles for periodicals such as the *Annual Review* and the *Quarterly Review* were written to instruct the public in a correct ethical code and to criticise those that Southey felt had strayed from it. Even in Southey’s biographies and histories, the discussions of his subjects’ actions contribute to this code of values. That Southey was trying to define such qualities as ‘British’ can be seen in his *Life of Nelson* (1813) with its ‘eulogy of our great naval hero’.¹²

Southey's desire to instil in the British public his own moral code – that encouraged qualities such as decency, duty, piety and purity – had its roots in his radical youth. In 1794 when Southey met Samuel Taylor Coleridge at Oxford, the two men defined a system by which they could live their lives governed by the democratic principles that they embraced. Their plan to found a new society – named Pantisocracy – set out their egalitarian ethos; based on abolishing private property, and giving all community members equal rights. Though Southey felt later that the 'mania of man-mending' (*LC*, I, p. 317) as he referred to it, had passed away with his youth, it was in fact to mark his writing for the rest of his life. While the political content of his manifesto changed, his ethical values never did and this was what he aspired to impose on the British public. Assuming that his readers also shared his 'British' values Southey discussed other cultures and societies abroad in order to provide examples of the difference between 'them' and 'us'. This demonisation of other cultures was intended to demonstrate to Southey's readers proper forms of behaviour, but also to teach them to value their own government and society, which reinforced these values.

The Romantic period was an important era in colonial history 'because there was at this time no fully formed single version of imperialism, and no fully crystallised stereotype about the peoples who were subjected to empire'.¹³ Because Southey used his depictions of other cultures in order to define correct British values, they are crucial for tracing the origins of modern racial stereotypes. This thesis considers Southey's responses to the inhabitants of those territories that were subject to exploration and colonial development during the Romantic period. Each chapter is therefore organised around a geographical location that played an important role in the imperial politics of the period and was also depicted by Southey in his writing.

The chapters also conform to a chronological development through Southey's life and literary career, thereby delineating a narrative of progression from political radicalism to conservatism that encompasses his developing aspirations for the British Empire. My thesis considers particularly the poetry Southey wrote that reflects his responses to foreign cultures and colonial politics during the years between 1794 and 1810. It also examines Southey's journalism – where he discussed contemporary political events within his own country and abroad – in order to provide a historical context for his poetic representations.

Some of Southey's earliest poetic output was on the subject of the African slave trade, which he vehemently opposed. Britain's first dealings in the trade had taken place in the sixteenth century and since then it had gained commercial dominance among its European counterparts so that by the 1780s, as Debbie Lee claims, it had 'reached its peak' almost at the 'exact moment that the British also began to dominate abolition efforts'.¹⁴ Southey's formative years were spent in Bristol, one of Britain's largest slave-ports in the eighteenth century. There was much evidence of the transatlantic slave trade in Southey's youth and much of the city's wealth had historically depended on this trade, or more recently on the purchase and processing of goods produced by slave labour in the West Indies. It is argued in Chapter One of my thesis that Southey's exposure to the presence of the African slave trade in the city, as well as to the humanitarian debate that surrounded it, had a fundamental impact on his espousal of radical politics in the 1790s. The 'Jacobin' tendencies of Southey and Coleridge at this time underpinned their collaborative writing of a *Lecture on the Slave Trade*, which Coleridge delivered to a Bristol audience in 1795. In Southey's poems on the African slave trade that he published in *Poems* (1797) he also employed the language of radicalism to oppose slavery. This

early, virulent opposition to the slave trade therefore combined with his rejection of the British polity.

However Southey's later poetry and reviews (particularly after abolition) sought to construct Britain as a source of justice and morality – the saviour of the African nations. My argument is that Southey's subsequent concern to protect Britain's moral health and the welfare of British subjects (rather than emancipated slaves) arose from his growing conservatism. Similarly his reviews in the late 1820s prioritised British interests abroad by positing a future for Africa and the West Indies as British colonies – in which the latter would benefit from a loyal African workforce, 'civilized' by an English education and Christian religion. The fact that the subject of African slavery provided such an important focus for Southey's writing reflects how this colonial issue dominated British politics during the period. But Southey's changing position on the subject also shows how such 'foreign' affairs were as much impelled by British concerns over domestic politics, as humanitarian impulses to alleviate African suffering.

As British expansion incorporated 'new' and unfamiliar territories all over the globe, written accounts of these regions and their inhabitants were brought back to an enthusiastic reading public. Many of Southey's opinions on colonial politics were formed by his reading of these narratives. In fact accounts of the territories of Britain's 'first empire' in America – lost to Britain after the American War of Independence (1775-83) – had great impact on Southey's emigratory scheme of 1794. Several descriptions of the American colonies were written to encourage British settlement of these territories. The success of such accounts can be seen in the huge numbers of Britons who travelled to live in America during this period. P. J. Marshall estimates that in the fifteen years before the outbreak of the revolution 'some 55,000

Protestant Irish, 40,000 Scots, and 30,000 English people had emigrated to settle in North America'.¹⁵ Reports of colonial life from travel accounts certainly influenced Southey and Coleridge in their aspirations to emigrate to America and 'take possession' of new lands in the name of Pantisocracy. Chapter Two claims that Southey's long narrative poem, *Madoc* (1805) – that depicts the institution of a Welsh colony in America – replicates the Pantisocrats' radical aspirations to emigrate to Pennsylvania and form a new society based on their philosophical principles. In this chapter the 'new world' of America is shown to be an imaginative solution to the problems of Britain in a period of revolution, war and change for Southey, and also his fellow writer, William Wordsworth. My claim is that both poets replicated the language, tropes and techniques employed by writers of American travel narratives, to 'take possession' of the landscape in their poetry. In particular travel writings of the period show how explorers and settlers, by naming features from their own value system, eradicated native American names, silencing any prior claim to the land. It is argued that Wordsworth's emotional 'colonisation' of his native Lake District in 'Poems on the Naming of Places' (1800) attempts to negate the claims of economic ownership in that region and this process is compared to the colonial appropriation of land in North America.

Southey's political idealism spurred him on in his plan to emigrate to America and also compelled him to create a similar social experiment in *Madoc*. But this chapter argues that while Southey wrote *Madoc* in the spirit of Pantisocracy, his vision founders in the poem because he also imported into it the 'frontier' conflicts and aggression of the travel narratives he had read. In *Madoc* Southey's colonial dream is shown to disintegrate into imperial paranoia in a way that prefigures developments in the British Empire. In order to reinforce this argument,

Wordsworth's depiction of American colonial life in 'Ruth' (1800) is examined to demonstrate that his design in writing this poem was to undercut the idyllic depictions of American life in the travel accounts he read – and that were such an influence on Southey and Coleridge – pointing out the limits of escapism provided by exaggerated tales of an ideal existence.

Another geographical location that Southey perceived as an ideal setting for human society in the 1790s was the South Pacific. This area became of great importance to Europeans in the second half of the eighteenth century, when travellers such as Louis Bougainville and Captain James Cook made their first exploratory journeys there in the 1760s and 70s.¹⁶ Published accounts of voyages to the South Pacific, such as those from Cook's expeditions, incorporated newly acquired botanical, zoological, geographical, and anthropological knowledge of the islands and made a huge impact on the British reading public as Bernard Smith shows in *European Vision and the South Pacific, 1768-1850* (1960).¹⁷ In his youth Southey's reading about Polynesia in travel accounts led him to perceive the island life that explorers described in terms of Jean Jacques Rousseau's discussion of the advantages of savage society. Rousseau had advocated in his *Discourse Upon the Origin and Foundation of the Inequality among Mankind* (1755)¹⁸ the benefits of primitive values, living in a state of nature, that contrasted strongly with enfeebled civilized society.

The third chapter of this thesis examines Southey's writing on the South Pacific, and particularly his articles on the Polynesian missions for the *Annual Review* and the *Quarterly Review*.¹⁹ It considers how his initial enthusiasm for a Rousseauesque vision of the 'noble savage' was eroded by reports of excessive female sexuality in the Polynesian islands. Southey's reviews therefore reflect these

issues but I also argue that his denunciation of Polynesian sexual practices is related to his primary concern for the sexual mores of his own society. This chapter considers the texts of three other British writers in order to demonstrate the important influence of Southey's views during this period. A poem that Southey admired by the little known writer P. M. James, entitled 'The Otaheitean Mourner' (1808), is first considered and then Mary Russell Mitford's long narrative poem, *Christina, Maid of the South Seas* (1811). This text reveals Southey's influence, as does Lord Byron's poem *The Island* (1823), which I claim was written in opposition to Southey's own Polynesian vision, but which nevertheless conforms to aspects of it. Each of these writers reflects Southey's own position in their texts, as well as providing their own responses to South Pacific travel narratives. Their writing, which incorporates independent and sometimes conflicting voices, demonstrates the dialogic quality of aesthetic responses to colonial discourses during the period.

The central event around which all these poems are structured is the mutiny led by Fletcher Christian on *HMS Bounty*. This event I suggest represents the conflict between European visions of liberty – for which sexual freedom is a synecdoche – and the repressive forces of naval and government authority. Southey was imaginatively attracted to the islands (as were James, Mitford and Byron) for their detachment from the European political arena and the return to the idyllic 'Golden Age' that they represented. But Southey's opposition to Polynesian sexual practices obfuscated this vision and contributed to his demand that the islands should have the Christian religion and British systems of government and education imposed upon them. This process of change therefore parallels Southey's abandonment of his radical politics and adoption of establishment values at home. Such views in Southey's later journalism are then compared to James Montgomery's evangelical ambitions for

Polynesia, depicted in his poem *The Pelican Island* (1827). It is argued that because Montgomery's text portrays the Pacific islanders as 'ignoble' savages, his poem reflects and also reinforces the ideological change that has taken place in European attitudes towards the South Pacific – evident in Southey's own writing.

As Southey became more conservative in his politics as well as more censorious of foreign cultural practices and religious beliefs – as is shown to be the case in his reviews of accounts of the South Pacific – he brought this critical spirit to other regions of the globe. Unlike these farther flung, newly 'discovered' antipodean territories, Europe had had a long history of trade and conflict with Middle Eastern cultures, and particularly with the dominant Ottoman Empire. Towards the end of the eighteenth century the Mediterranean region became strategically important in French and British foreign policy. As a result the arena of the Napoleonic Wars (1799-1815) expanded into the Levant, due to Napoleon's imperial aspirations to possess Egypt and curtail British expansion in India. The British trade routes to India were maintained by retaining a British presence in the Mediterranean with the possession of Malta (1802), and British interests in the Middle East were preserved through diplomatic appointments to the courts of Persia, Albania, Constantinople, and Egypt.²⁰ European interest in the Middle East during the Romantic period is reflected in the large amount of Western travellers to the region – ambassadors, administrators, explorers and tourists – who provided accounts of their travels.

Such accounts influenced Southey to write *Thalaba the Destroyer* (1801), his long narrative poem set in the Middle East. This poem, which is discussed in Chapter Four, is ostensibly set in Arabia, but reflects the hybrid nature of many of Southey's poems in its incorporation of travel accounts from several disparate territories of the Middle East – so that *Thalaba* is shown to be a strange amalgamation of all Southey's

sources. It is an Orientalist fantasy (such as those found in the *Arabian Nights*) but is underpinned by Southey's reading of the Koran. Southey's hero embarks on a divinely ordained Muslim mission against superstition and magic, but the poem incorporates many conventional Christian aspects, because Southey combined his knowledge of Islam with his own religious precepts. The chapter links Southey's religious beliefs during this period to his political convictions because one manifestation of Southey's earlier anti-establishment stance was his rejection of the Anglican Church, and particularly its institutional hierarchy.

In the late 1790s Southey was looking for inspiration from other religions and made a study of the Koran. This fed into his portrayal of Islam in *Thalaba* – a complex representation that divides into two facets. Southey champions a private and personal religion which is portrayed as the ancient Islamic faith based on the 'Covenant of Ishmael', but is in fact a projection of the aspects of Quakerism that he values. His second representation of Islam is a modern corrupted version that he denigrates, equating it to sorcery, superstition and Oriental tyranny. In this bifurcation Southey reflects the political and religious ambivalence he felt at this period in his life. Islam is presented as a repository for the moral and spiritual values Southey wished to uphold – this is also the faith of the 'noble', exemplary, egalitarian Bedouin Arabs that he depicts in *Thalaba* – therefore providing a political and religious paradigm that challenges British models. But it also represents *itself* and for Southey, as for many other Europeans, it is an 'other' religion to Christianity based on the teachings of its 'false' prophet, Mohammed. The ambiguous nature of the poem arises from Southey's appropriation of a 'foreign' culture to oppose those aspects of the British political and religious establishment that he disliked, but also because he was

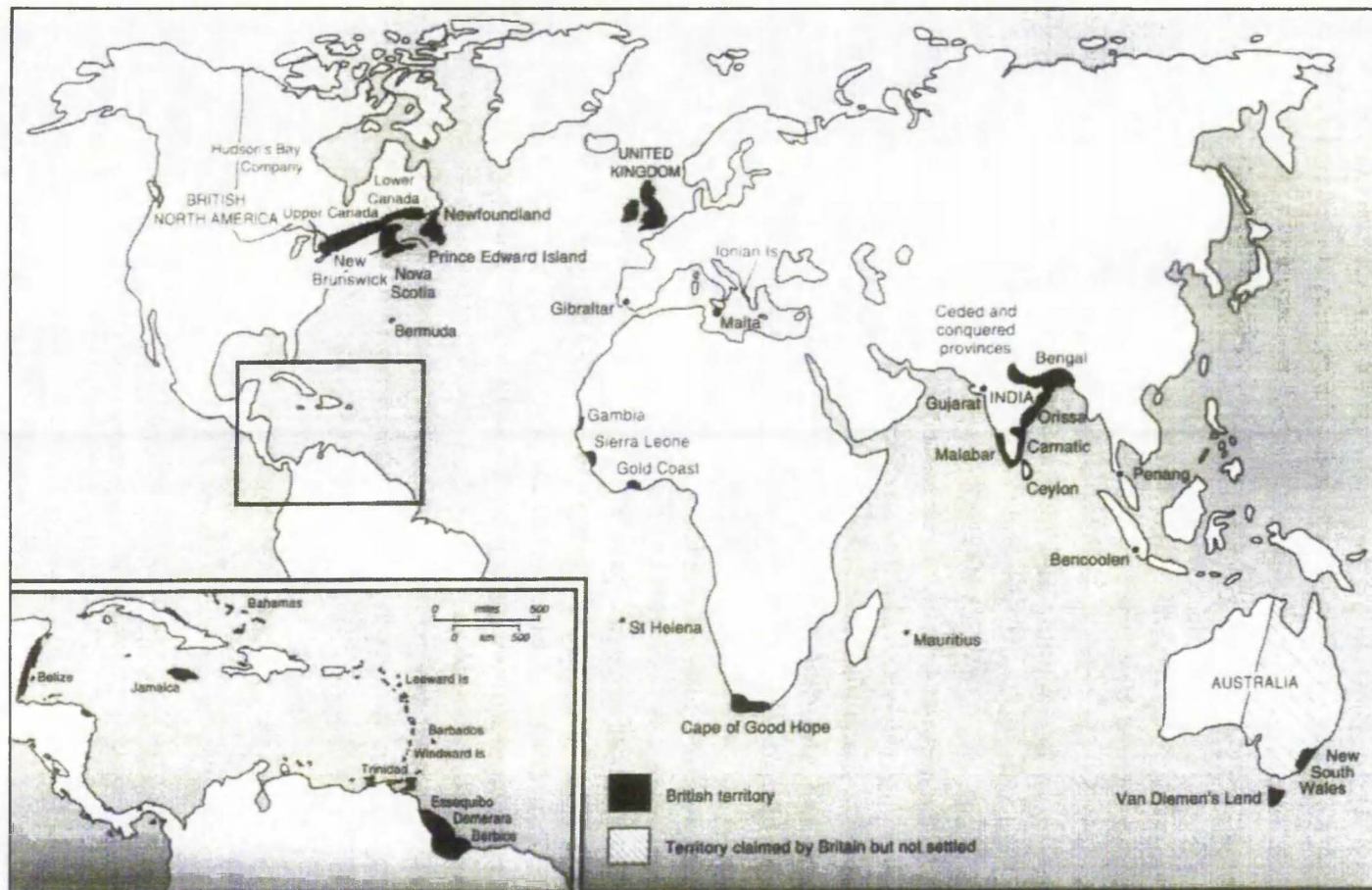
unable to maintain this model in the face of what he felt was erroneous in Arabian culture and the Islamic faith.

Southey's bid for a national code of values for Britain based on what he despised in other cultural practices and religions also contributed to his representation of India in his writing. During the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century the future of India – as a mercantile outpost under the governance of the East India Company, and after 1813 as a territory of the British Empire – was an important topic of debate in Britain.²¹ Writers during the Romantic period, such as Southey, were particularly important in forming British responses to India as well as British aspirations for governing the territories they possessed there. The British debate over how India should be ruled influenced Southey greatly in the writing of his long poem set in India, *The Curse of Kehama* (1810), as Chapter Five demonstrates. Southey's representation of India in this poem is related to his reviews on the Baptist Missions there,²² as well as to Britain's imperial aspirations in the subcontinent. This chapter argues that in the character of Kehama, Southey constructed an extreme example of Oriental tyranny that reflected his fears of Napoleon's expansionist plans in Europe and Asia, but also represented Western imperial anxieties with regard to India.

My discussion of *Kehama* provides evidence that the poem was divided by the contemporary ideological debate over India's future as a British territory that was taking place during this period, with both Orientalist and Anglicist positions being depicted. This is because while Southey was attracted to the romanticised version of India found in texts such as the *Asiatic Researches* (produced by the Asiatic Society of Bengal) in order to construct his mythology,²³ his desire to impose a British code of education, government and morality on Indian society meant him aligning himself with Anglicists such as James Mill and Thomas Babington Macaulay.²⁴ *Kehama* was

written therefore from a desire to provide exotic escapism in the form of its 'Hindoo mythology' but also to demonstrate that this aspect of his text was contained. One way in which Southey did this (as he did in *Thalaba*) was by circumscribing his poetic text with scholarly annotation and prefaces that undercut his source material. Another method was by showing the Indian landscape and the heroic characters of his poem to be domesticated by the Christian, British code of morality that he imposed on his text. Southey disseminated these values in *Kehama* in order to suggest a solution to what he saw as the immoral practices of the Hindu people, but also to provide an edifying example for his British readers.

All these chapters contribute to the recognition that Southey was in his poetry (as well as his other writings) developing a nationalist aesthetic. This aesthetic relied on projecting British institutions and values against (what Southey considered to be) less developed, less moral nations. This contrast therefore closes the thesis but also remains its point of entry, in that such representations are open and circular, always revealing new positions, new justifications of the imperial project and new anxieties in their depiction. The analysis of that process that this thesis provides, delineates the methods by which early advocates of imperialism, such as Southey, constructed a personal and literary vision of the British Empire and then sought to impose that vision on the world.



Map 1. The British Empire in 1815.

Notes

¹ Robert Southey, 'Asiatic Researches', *Annual Review* for 1807, 6 (1808), chap. 10, no. 18, 643-54 (p.643).

² As Marilyn Butler comments on Southey (as well as Coleridge, Wordsworth and Burke), he was concerned with 'interpreting the intellectual as a learned man, priest, preserver of a society's past and keeper of its conscience, the champion of an old order but in an ideal form'. Marilyn Butler, *Romantics, Rebels and Reactionaries: English Literature and its Background 1760-1830* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1981), p. 165.

³ *Romanticism and Colonialism: Writing and Empire 1780-1830*, eds. Tim Fulford and Peter J. Kitson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p. 9

⁴ *Romanticism and Colonialism*, eds. Fulford and Kitson, p. 2.

⁵ For instance see, Nigel Leask, *British Romantic Writers and the East: Anxieties of Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992); *Romanticism and Colonialism*, eds. Fulford and Kitson; *Placing and Displacing Romanticism*, ed. Peter Kitson (Aldershot, Burlington (U.S.A), Singapore, Sydney, Ashgate, 2001). Many of the texts referred to in this thesis will soon be available in *Robert Southey: Poetical Works 1793-1810*, eds. Lynda Pratt, Tim Fulford and Daniel Roberts, 5 vols., forthcoming from Pickering and Chatto.

⁶ See Javed Majeed, *Ungoverned Imaginings: James Mill's 'History of British India' and Orientalism* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992); John Barrell, *The Infection of Thomas De Quincey: A Psychopathology of Imperialism* (New Haven, London: Yale University Press, 1991); Mary Louise Pratt's *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (London: Routledge, 1992); Marilyn Butler's 'Orientalism', in *The Penguin History of Literature*, vol V: *The Romantic Period*, ed. David B. Pirie (Harmondsworth, 1994) pp.395-447.

⁷ Edward W. Said, *Orientalism: Western Conceptions of the Orient* (Penguin: London, 1995), p. 3.

⁸ Homi K. Bhaba, *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1994); Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, 'Can the Subaltern Speak?' in *Colonial Discourse and Post-Colonial Theory*, ed. Patrick Williams and Laura Chrisman (London and New York: Longman, 1994), pp. 66-111.

⁹ Barrell, *The Infection of Thomas De Quincey*; Leask, *British Romantic Writers and the East*.

¹⁰ Leask, *British Romantic Writers and the East*, p. 2.

¹¹ Bhaba, *The Location of Culture*, pp. 70-1.

¹² From Southey's 'Preface' to *The Life of Nelson* (1813), quoted by Kenneth Curry, *Southey* (London and Boston, Ma.: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1975), p. 94. On this subject see Tim Fulford, 'Heroic Voyagers and Superstitious Natives: Southey's Imperialist Ideology', *Studies in Travel Writing*, 2 (Spring 1998), 46-64.

¹³ *North America*, ed. Tim Fulford with Carol Bolton, vol. I of *Travels, Explorations and Empires: Writings from the Era of Imperial Expansion 1770-1835*, eds. Tim

Fulford and Peter J. Kitson, 8 vols. (London: Pickering and Chatto, 2000 and 2001), p. xvi.

¹⁴ Debbie Lee, *Slavery and the Romantic Imagination* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002), p. 17.

¹⁵ P. J. Marshall 'The British Empire at the End of the Eighteenth Century', in *The Cambridge Illustrated History of the British Empire*, ed. P. J. Marshall (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), p. 17.

¹⁶ Louis Antoine, Comte de Bougainville, *A Voyage Round the World, In the Years 1766, 1767, 1768 and 1769, Translated from the French by John Reinhold Forster* (London: Printed for J. Nourse and T. Davies, 1772); Captain James Cook, *A Voyage Round the World Performed in His Britannic Majesty's Ships The Resolution and Adventure in the Years 1772, 1773, 1774, 1775*, 4 vols. (Dublin, printed for W. Whitestone, S. Watson, R. Cross, J. Potts, J. Hoey and 13 others, 1777).

¹⁷ Bernard Smith, *European Vision and the South Pacific 1768-1850* (London, Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 1960).

¹⁸ Jean Jacques Rousseau, *A Discourse Upon the Origin and Foundation of the Inequality among Mankind* (London: printed for R. and J. Dodsley, 1761).

¹⁹ Robert Southey, 'Transactions of the Missionary Society', *Annual Review* for 1803, 2 (1804), chap. 2, no. 62, 189-201; Robert Southey, 'Transactions of the Missionary Society in the South Sea Islands', *Quarterly Review*, 2, no. 3 (Aug., 1809), 24-61; Robert Southey, 'Polynesian Researches', *Quarterly Review*, 43, no. 85 (May, 1830), 1-54.

²⁰ See *Middle East*, ed. Tilar J. Mazzeo, vol. IV of *Travels, Explorations and Empires: Writings from the era of imperial expansion, 1770-1835*, eds. Tim Fulford and Peter J. Kitson, 8 vols. (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2000 and 2001), pp. vi-xxviii.

²¹ See P. J. Marshall, 'Britain Without America – A Second Empire', in *The Eighteenth Century*, ed. P. J. Marshall, vol. II of *The Oxford History of the British Empire*, ed. Wm. Roger Louis, 5 vols. (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1998), pp. 576-95.

²² Robert Southey, 'Account of the Baptist Mission' *Annual Review* for 1802, 1 (1803), chap. 2, no. 71, 207-18; Robert Southey, 'Account of the Baptist Missionary Society', *Quarterly Review*, 1, no. 1 (Feb., 1809), 193-226.

²³ *Asiatick Researches; or Transactions of the Society Instituted in Bengal, for inquiring into the History and Antiquities, the Arts, Sciences and Literature of Asia*, 20 vols. (London: J. Sewell [etc.], 1799-1839), I-VIII.

²⁴ See Saree Makdisi, *Romantic Imperialism: Universal Empire and the Culture of Modernity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998); Javed Majeed, *Ungoverned Imaginings: James Mill's 'History of British India' and Orientalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992).

Chapter One

‘Once more I will cry aloud and spare not’: Southey’s Responses to the African Slave Trade

*Majestic BRISTOL! to thy happy port
Pacific COMMERCE makes its lov’d resort;
Thy gallant ships, with spacious sails unfurl’d
Waft, to thy shore, the treasures of the world*
Extract from *Bristol: a Poem* by Romaine Joseph Thorn (1794)¹

1.1 Introduction

Half a century ago Bristol was in size the second city in England. Manchester now holds that rank, and several other towns have outstripped it in population. There is less mercantile enterprise here than in any other trading English city: like the old Italians, the Bristol merchants go on in the track of their fathers, and, succeeding to enormous fortunes, find the regular profits so great that they have no temptation to deviate from the beaten way. The port is therefore yielding its foreign trade to bolder competitors; but it will always remain the centre of a great commerce with the Welsh coast, with Ireland, and all those inland counties which communicate with the Severn, a river navigable into the very heart of the kingdom.

There is in the streets nothing like the bustle of London, nor like the business of Liverpool on the quays. The Quay, however, is still as busy as well as a striking scene, and remains a noble monument of the old citizens, who made it in the thirteenth century. On one side, the shipping, the bridges, the church towers, and the neighbouring hill which overlooks the town of which it now makes a part, form a fine picture. On the other there is the cathedral with the old trees in its front, and the distant country. A third view has a wider foreground with cranes and trees, and piles of goods intermingled, shipping of larger size, a fine row of houses upon a high terrace on the opposite side, and apart from them the Church of St. Mary Redclift, which is the finest parochial church in the kingdom, and is indeed far more beautiful than the cathedral.²

Robert Southey’s description of Bristol, published in 1807 – in the pseudonymous guise of the Spanish tourist, Don Manuel Espriella – sets the scene of the eighteenth century commercial city.³ Written from the perspective of a foreign traveller, it incorporates the striking elements of a visitor’s first impressions: the shipping on

which the city depends, the cranes and 'piles of goods intermingled' on the quay, and the 'fine' houses and churches, framed by the surrounding hills. But it also betrays Southey's own familiarity with the city's history, its mercantile nature, and unique character as an inland river-port, compared to the larger, more industrious ports of London and Liverpool. Bristol had become prosperous from its trade with America, the West Indies, Africa, Northwest Europe and the Baltic, as well as Ireland (while London preserved the East Indian trade for itself). Though the port engages with a wide range of global markets, Southey nevertheless recognises Bristol's parochial identity - a result of its rural setting and the geographical hinterland of counties that it serves. The river Avon flowing out from the 'distant country', through hills and trees to the Severn and the sea, allows the intersection of foreign trade up-river into this rural city and beyond, connecting the Southwest of England with the world.⁴ Tidal rivers such as the Avon and Severn that provided access to sea-going ships, had long been agents of Britain's colonial ambition. As Simon Schama notes - when commenting on the significance of the river Thames to Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* - 'lines of imperial power have always flowed along rivers'.⁵

While Bristol is 'yielding its foreign trade to bolder competitors', Southey is proud of the city's innate ability to generate wealth, in spite of its merchants relaxed attitude to commercial profit. This wealth can be seen in the city's fine architecture - still evident today in Queens Square, College Green and many parts of Clifton, as well as in municipal buildings such as the Exchange and the Guildhall - built by its merchants from the profits of colonial trade. Southey's own family, who were linen drapers (though never wealthy) exported 'calicoe' goods to America, as the trading records of *The Bristol Record Society's Publications* for 1790 show.⁶ It is not surprising that Southey when casting around for sites for Pantisocracy should have hit

on either America or Wales as alternatives - the two places were not that far apart for a citizen of Bristol. My point is that this city, where Southey grew up, shaped his character and his politics. Its cosmopolitan flavour, from many years of foreign trade, made him a global citizen – in that he could imagine a close relationship between Britain and the rest of the world - despite the anglocentric nature of that vision. The close environs of the eighteenth-century city, while retaining the reassuring familiarity of the pastoral landscape of ‘Albion’, also provided experience of all that was foreign, and strange, and exciting from the world’s markets – both being elements that he would celebrate in his poetry.

Southey’s description of his native city provides a backdrop for a very important phase of his life that began when he met Coleridge in 1794, at the age of nineteen. Their friendship was an intellectual partnership that found common ground in their radical politics and shaped their early plans for emigration to America. However the significance of Bristol as a location for their activities during this period has further connotations, because of their collaborative opposition to the African slave trade, with which this port had strong connections. Southey and Coleridge were ideologically opposed to the concept of slavery, as well as the inhumane practices of the slave trade, and this chapter examines their attempts during the 1790s to promote abolitionist arguments in their writing. I intend to show that Southey and Coleridge’s opposition to the slave-trade originated as just one strand of their rejection of establishment politics, and that the ideas behind their call for abolition, as well as the language used to phrase it, were ‘borrowed’ from ‘Jacobin’ ideology. My analysis will also demonstrate that once Southey’s radicalism had waned, the anti-slavery campaign became a respectable outlet for him to employ this emotive political

language in order to attack the slavery lobby, but without making the British polity (which he came to support) his target.

At this stage though, I want to examine the effect on Southey of spending many of his formative years in Bristol, and the reasons for his attack on the economic basis of its existence. What Southey omits from his brief, pictorial description of Bristol is the fact that in the 1730s and 1740s the port had a monopoly on trade to Africa, and that the city's wealth was primarily gained by merchants engaged in the slave trade.⁷ Ships owned by Bristol merchants were fitted out with trade goods (textiles, guns, iron, spirits and beads) to be exchanged for slaves on the West African coast (usually known as 'the Guinea coast'; it stretched from Cape Verde to the Congo).⁸ Those slaves that survived the 'middle passage' from Africa to the colonies of North America or the West Indies were sold there, and the ships' captains were instructed to buy plantation goods to sell in Britain, before returning home. Ascendancy in the slave trade had passed to Liverpool in the 1740s but still in the second half of the eighteenth century, this trade contributed to at least 12 per cent of Bristol's overseas commerce.⁹ The major part of Bristol's foreign trade in the 1790s was directly with the West Indies, particularly Jamaica, from where merchants imported goods grown by slave labour. 'Molasses, rum, cotton, dyewoods and other products found their place in this trade but chief of them was sugar which was refined in the twenty or so sugar houses in Bristol' and became 'the most important ingredient of Bristol's prosperity in the eighteenth century'.¹⁰ Bristol merchants therefore still supported the African slave trade because their West Indian imports depended on a regular supply of slaves for the plantations.

Evidence of the slave trade in the Bristol of Southey's youth must have been hard to avoid. This city was certainly the abolitionist Thomas Clarkson's first

destination, when he began a fact-finding tour of the slave ports of Britain, in order to find evidence of the cruelty and inhumanity of the slave trade, on behalf of the 'Society for Effecting the Abolition of the Slave Trade' in June 1787. As well as the sailors and merchants engaged in the trade, there was a small but nevertheless visible black population in the city,¹¹ and Joan Baum points out that other indications of the slave trade were prominent:

Signs of the trade could also be found in notices of slave auctions, advertisements for runaways, announcements of the return of ship captains, mates, and surgeons with their 'privilege' Negroes – the young blacks they got to keep, sell, or smuggle north to work in the mines or the homes of the wealthy. Other evidence was more grim, including shops that blatantly displayed slave-restraining mechanisms such as thumbscrews with torture keys and 'African pacifiers', muzzles three feet long for the neck.¹²

Almost every citizen of Bristol in the eighteenth century, whether wittingly or not, had links with the African or West Indian trade. For instance many of the boys that Southey went to school with were the sons of West Indian planters. Edith Fricker, the woman that Southey was to marry in 1795, was the daughter of a man who manufactured sugar pans for the refining industry. Their marriage took place in the Church of St. Mary Redcliffe (mentioned by Southey in the opening passage), and it was in the crypt of this church – built by the merchants of Bristol as an imposing manifestation of their religious conviction and wealth – that African slaves were supposed to have been held before being sold.¹³

Despite Bristol merchants' reliance on the African and West Indian trade, Joan Baum comments that 'Whether owing to smaller size or longer intellectual tradition, however, Bristol was also home to inquiring minds and crusading spirits'.¹⁴ Though Clarkson encountered much initial opposition to his fact-finding mission in Bristol in 1787, the Quakers of the city offered him assistance in his quest for information and

when he left he had established a culture of opposition to the trade that led to the Bristol Abolition Committee being formed. Local newspapers encouraged debate of the issue by publishing pro- and anti-abolition articles.¹⁵ In 1793 the city had suffered a depression – due to falling economic confidence as a result of the prospect of war with France – which led to an even further decline in the Bristol slave trade.¹⁶ So in 1794, the city provided enough evidence of the slave trade to inspire those committed to its abolition – like Southey and Coleridge – and such independence of mind could be accommodated by the merchants of the city because the trade was no longer the economic mainstay of Bristol.

Coleridge was first introduced to Southey at Oxford University in June 1794. Southey was studying for a degree at Balliol College with a view to joining the clergy, but felt uncomfortable about accepting financial support from his uncle Herbert Hill, as he was not really committed to a career in the church. Despite making friends at Oxford, the erratic university discipline and dissoluteness of the students irritated Southey. Finally a combination of ‘revolutionary romanticism’ and opposition to the established Church ‘on political rather than doctrinal grounds’ made him feel unable to continue his studies.¹⁷ Rather than simply refusing to take orders Southey was considering an alternative career in medicine or the civil service. But the former he had no enthusiasm for, and the latter he had been advised against by his friend Charles Wynn because of his ‘republican’ reputation. The idea of emigrating had occurred to Southey as a solution to his career problem at least a year before, as his letters show, and the meeting with Coleridge reinforced these plans, becoming more concrete under the guiding principles of Pantisocracy that they devised.¹⁸ Southey left Oxford at the end of the summer term, returning to Bristol without graduating. He would later describe his time at Oxford as ‘the least beneficial and the least happy of my life’ (*LC*,

IV, p. 194).¹⁹ When Coleridge turned up unexpectedly in Bristol in August 1794, the two men, along with their fellow Pantisocrats made plans to leave for America by the following Spring.²⁰

At this time, Southey was at the height of his firebrand radicalism that had manifested itself at Westminster School – from which he was expelled for his anarchic views in the spring of 1792 – and Oxford. He found a congenial companion in Coleridge who shared his unorthodox politics and his enthusiasm for developments in the French Revolution. Southey's 'Jacobinism' came as much from his sympathy for the oppressed 'peasants' exploited by the 'nobly born' of his own country, as the following extract from his poetical drama *Wat Tyler* (written in July 1794) shows:

While the peasant works, - to sleep,
What the peasant sows, - to reap,
On the couch of ease to lie,
Rioting in revelry:
Be he villain, be he fool,
Still to hold despotic rule,
Trampling on his slaves with scorn!
This is to be nobly born.
(*PW*, II, pp. 33-4)

By equating the position of 'peasants' with 'slaves' in this poem, Southey finds common, if extreme ground, between the English labourers of his own day and the vassals of the fourteenth-century feudal society of *Wat Tyler*.²¹ However using the term 'slaves' also resonates with the colonial politics of the day, and the extension of Southey's radical politics to the arena of abolitionism, the roots of which I will show can be found in his domestic poetry. Southey replays the theme of power relations between master and servant/slave, or king and subject continuously in his juvenile poetry; in his 'Inscriptions' (1797-8),²² and also in such seemingly 'innocent' nature poems as 'To a Bee' (1800), where he warns:

Thou art a fool, thou busy, busy Bee,
Thus for another to toil!
Thy master waits till thy work is done,
Till all the latest flowers of the ivy are gone,
And then he will seize the spoil
He will murder thee, thou poor little Bee!²³

The basis of Southey's political diagnosis of society in terms of mastery/slavery can be found in the details we have of his early life in Bristol. He had been born into a family that was subject to the vagaries of economic instabilities, due to his father's disinclination for the drapery business. For much of his childhood Robert lived with his aunt, Elizabeth Tyler, a member of the minor gentry by virtue of the fact that she had inherited the estate of her uncle, a clergyman. Southey's aunt was a colourful character who 'had acquired a taste for high life by hobnobbing with the local gentry'.²⁴ The boy cannot fail to have noticed the inequalities of wealth in the life he led, between his aunt's house and his parental home, which supported a large family on a small income. In Bristol extreme examples of prosperity and poverty could be seen as profits rose and fell, subject to the vagaries of trade, taxes and war. The Bristolian poet, Thomas Chatterton, in 1770 had recognised the city's dichotomy of wealth when he described 'Bristol's narrow streets/Where pride and luxury with meanness meets'.²⁵ Southey's own father was bankrupted in 1792, and died shortly after, leaving his family without income. Though biographies of Southey have not emphasised the inequalities of wealth and social position within his family, or his surrounding native city, at a time when it was losing profits to Liverpool and London, these factors must have had some influence on Southey's crusade to highlight social and political injustices. Certainly the letters Southey wrote in the years 1793 and 1794 often refer to his lack of finances. In one particular letter to his friend Grosvenor Charles Bedford, he 'blushes' that he is unable to return a loan to him and bemoans

his lack of wealth or even a 'trade' in life to remedy his situation. Rather than dissect the problems of his personal situation however, he deflects them into a complaint about society generally, exclaiming 'Why is there not some corner of the world where wealth is useless!' and asking Bedford:

Do you not really think that affluence and prosperity are dangerous blessings? Occupied by variety of pleasure and reclining upon the couch of happiness man is but too apt to forget from whence those blessings flow. (*NL*, I, pp. 18-9)

The radical element of Southey's philosophy is that he does not simply argue for the assistance of the impoverished, but endeavours to prick the consciences of those who occupy superior positions of wealth. His writing attempts to open the eyes of those 'reclining upon the couch of happiness' (which echoes the line above quoted from *Wat Tyler* – 'On the couch of ease to lie') to their faults in maintaining an unequal position. With the affluent members of society as his target, his early reading of Thomas Paine leant him ammunition and sharpened his youthful antagonism into a 'levelling' principle. For instance Geoffrey Carnall has pointed out that even the idea for Southey's *Wat Tyler* could well have come from his reading of Paine's *The Rights of Man* (1791).²⁶ Paine had identified the attempts of political commentaries in 'several of the Court newspapers', and in Edmund Burke's *Appeal from the New to the Old Whigs* (1791), to make opprobrious parallels between the fourteenth century poll-tax rebels and eighteenth century 'Jacobins'. In *The Rights of Man*, Paine sought to defend the posthumous reputation of Tyler, holding him up as an example of working class, crusading 'valour', who was 'sacrificed' to the political ambitions of the powerful of his day.²⁷ He was of course the ideal hero for Southey's dramatic representation of Paine's tenets.

1.2 Lecture on the Slave-trade

The corresponding enthusiasm that Southey discovered in Coleridge for the writings of Paine and other political commentators of the day, led to a period of great intellectual industry for both men. Much of the years 1794 and 1795 were spent living and working together in Bristol – studying and writing, while they attempted to raise funds to overcome the practical difficulties of establishing their egalitarian society in America. The borrowing list of Bristol Library for this period provides evidence of how closely Southey and Coleridge were working, books often being borrowed by one of them and returned by another, and marginal comments written in them in both hands.²⁸ Their collaborative drama, *The Fall of Robespierre*, was written in August 1794, and Southey commented prophetically on their closeness at this time – ‘Coleridge is writing at the same table; our names are written in the book of destiny, on the same page’ (*LC*, I, p, 231).

Another project that the two poets were jointly engaged in was a series of lectures (at first in the ‘Plume of Feathers’ public house in Wine Street and then in the Assembly Coffeehouse on the Quay) in order to raise funds for their emigration to America. Though we do not have the texts of Southey’s lectures he did leave some record of them in his letters. He claims that in one lecture his reverential commitment to the politics of Paine so overtook him that he referred to him as the:

hireless Priest of Liberty! unbought teacher of the poor! Chearing to me is the reflection that my heart hath ever acknowledged – that my tongue hath proudly proclaimed – the Truth and Divinity of thy Doctrines!²⁹

This was strong language for the time, given the sedition trials of 1794, and shows the level of Southey’s commitment to Paine’s radical principles. But Southey’s youthful crusade against inequality was already developing into a growing interest in political

philosophy. For instance among the books that Southey read during this formative period were; Adam Smith's *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations* (1776), Mary Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792) and William Godwin's *An Enquiry concerning Political Justice* (1793).³⁰

The excitement that Southey felt after reading Godwin's vision of political equality – he later said of his response to it, 'I read, and all but worshipped' (*LC*, I, p. 247) – was communicated to Coleridge. The extreme similarity between Coleridge's lectures and Southey's letters during this period shows how much Godwin's ideas were in common currency between them. For instance Godwin asserts in *Political Justice*, that while the wealthy are sporting the 'splendour of their equipage, the magnificence of their retinue and the sumptuousness of their entertainments' they drive the 'poor man' to work harder (perhaps in providing these comforts) because he aspires to such things himself and 'mistakes opulence for felicity'.³¹ In a lecture given by Coleridge on the Quay in Bristol in June 1795 ('Lecture 6' in *Lectures on Revealed Religion*) - which has as its subject 'Equality, Inequality, the Evils of Government' - he conflates luxury with 'Commerce' to attack the Government, recognising as Godwin did before him, that luxury or 'superfluity' (which is an end result of inequality) is also an evil that keeps the manual worker in his over-worked position (*Lects* 1795, pp 214-29).³² By going on to suggest in his lecture that the 'field Labourer' is forced into 'unnatural Toil by unnatural Luxuries', Coleridge emphasises how the healthy pastoral existence of those who work the land, is also being perverted by the artificial demands of the wealthy (*Lects*, 1795, p. 223). A letter written by Southey on this subject, replicates such Godwinian arguments, and combines them with the 'computation of Adam Smith' to insist that society would be healthier if every man played a part 'in providing the necessaries and comforts of life'. This

would replace the existing system which consigns ordinary men to the position of 'brutes by obliging them to hard labour ...so to acquire a poor pitiful livelihood – while kings, nobles and priests fatten on their toil and cry out "all is well!"' (NL, I, p. 70).

It is easy to see where the two men's philosophical and humanitarian objections to the slave trade lay. Coleridge's next lecture, given a week later (*Lecture on the Slave-trade*),³³ was co-written by him and Southey, as Ernest Hartley Coleridge's transcript of the original manuscript (now lost) shows, where he noted several sections written in Southey's hand. In this lecture the 'politics of luxury' were extended to attack colonial slavery. This system too unnaturally enforces servitude in order to satisfy a demand for 'artificial Wants':

Perhaps from the beginning of the world the evils arising from the formation of imaginary wants have been in no instance so dreadfully exemplified as in the Slave Trade & the West India Commerce! We receive from the West Indias Sugars, Rum, Cotton, log-wood, cocoa, coffee, pimento, ginger, indigo, mahogany, and conserves – not one of these are necessary – indeed with the exception of cotton and mahogany we cannot with truth call them even useful, and not one is at present attainable by the poor and labouring part of Society. (*Lects* 1795, pp. 236-7)

Coleridge claims that these unnecessary imports are the demands of the 'polished Citizen [who] lies framing unreal Wants, and diverts the pains of Vacancy by the pestilent inventions of Luxury' (*Lects* 1795, p. 236). Here he invokes the metaphorical figure of affluence that Southey invented - 'reclining upon the couch of happiness' – as the embodiment of his youthful opposition to the concept of luxury. Luxury in this lecture is shown to be enervating, causing indolence and moral disease at the imperial centre, through its vehicle the colonial slave trade. The lecture is imbued with images of perversion and rottenness, implying a sickness in society, where even the most

affluent suffer from the 'pains of Vacancy'. The slave trade itself is infected with a moral malady in all stages of its operation, from its method of alluring reluctant men to sea by intoxicating them, to the 'profligate' habits of such seamen once caught.³⁴ Sailors and slaves are prey to physical disease from the 'unwholesomeness of the Climate through which they pass' and 'the hot & pestilent vapours' rising from the confined bodies of the slave ship, so 'that the very timbers of the vessel are rotted by them' (*Lects* 1795, pp. 238, 241). The imagery of disease is extended to show that the desire for luxury infects the Africans themselves with this European epidemic;

They inoculate the petty tyrants of Africa with their own vices – they teach them new wants, to gratify which they bribe them to murder, that they themselves may inflict the most grievous ills of slavery upon the survivors. (*Lects* 1795, p. 241).

The idea that the demand for luxury in society could cause disease; whether moral, social or physical, could well have come from the Bristol physician and writer Thomas Beddoes (who was influenced by George Cheyne's theories on the subject himself).³⁵ He shared the radical sympathies of Coleridge and Southey and became interested in them through their plans for Pantisocracy. Joseph Cottle, a Bristol publisher who befriended the two poets and later wrote *Reminiscences of Coleridge and Southey* (1847), refers to Beddoes knowing the two men at this time. Though Cottle's *Reminiscences* are considered to be often unreliable, Dorothy Stansfield in her biography of Beddoes asserts that Coleridge and Beddoes were known to each other by the time of the 1795 lectures:

Inevitably, Coleridge's lectures came increasingly to deal with current topics and there are a number of threads linking him and Beddoes at this time. They shared, metaphorically and in the end literally, the same platform on public affairs and there are verbal echoes and details of style which suggest not so much formal collaboration as the enjoyment of exchanging ideas.³⁶

Beddoes certainly assisted Coleridge in the publication of *The Watchman* – a political and literary journal that originated from his desire to publish the texts of his lectures. The journal only had ten issues (running from March until May 1796) but its pacifist nature and anti-Pitt sentiments attracted Beddoes as a contributor. Beddoes never abandoned his commitment to political reform and often wrote on the subject, but his early radical beliefs were largely channelled into concern for the health of the poor. He recognised the prophylactic benefits of improved living and working conditions and published many practical suggestions to this end.³⁷ His 'Pneumatic Institute' in Bristol (originally set up to experiment with 'factitious airs', such as nitrous oxide) gradually became a medical institution; a clinic and dispensary where he treated the poor and advocated preventive medicine.

Like Southey, Beddoes not only championed the poor, but also felt the levelling impulse, endeavouring to bring the rich to recognise their own shortcomings, and reform their luxurious life-style. This he saw as a primary factor in causing disease, whether from the excesses of fashion (such as all-night parties, and the 'lacing-up' of women), or that young people 'confined to frivolous pursuits, grow up to be so many *stocks*, on which consumption, or some other complaint of debility, does not fail to engraft itself'.³⁸ Beddoes argued that the health of the physical body, as with the body politic, depended on avoiding excessive indulgence of its appetites. His medical philosophy appeared in his essays collected together for publication under the title *Hygeia* in 1802, where he instructs the poor on ways to improve their health and suggests that his wealthy readers curtail their self-indulgent life-styles. As Roy Porter points out, the divide between rich and poor during this period was becoming wider, due to the 'ascendancy of commodity capitalism'.³⁹ Beddoes perceived that while the life-style of the wealthy became more comfortable, many

workers manufacturing commodities for their consumption worked in confined, polluted conditions in order to provide them. Like Coleridge therefore, who saw labourers forced into 'unnatural Toil by unnatural Luxuries', the democratic doctor singled out for criticism the demands of the wealthy for deleterious luxuries at the expense of those who strive to produce them, 'fixed down beside machines whose eternal rotation produces no greater variety of sounds than the rattling of the turnkey's bunch of keys or the creaking of the prison doors'.⁴⁰

For Beddoes, both classes of society - those that demand luxury, and those that work to provide it - 'are inseparably linked by the chain of destructive vanity'.⁴¹ In the *Lecture on the Slave Trade*, Southey - as this section of the lecture is in his hand - employs the obvious device of primitivism to oppose the insidious and all encompassing effects of luxury on society. Beddoes himself sought the reform of his own society rather than finding models elsewhere. Therefore he opposed the idea of a happy 'savage' existence as one more literary myth (like the romantic image of the bright eyed, translucent skinned consumptive) that fails to take into account medical issues such as diet and disease. Coleridge and Southey however were still in their period of Pantisocratic enthusiasm, and looking to return to a 'Golden Age' existence themselves. From Southey therefore we have the image of the noble, industrious African whose familial, egalitarian life-style contrasts so vividly with the figure of the indolent 'polished Citizen':

The Africans, who are situated beyond the contagion of European vice - are innocent and happy - the peaceful inhabitants of a fertile soil, they cultivate their fields in common and reap the crop as the common property of all. Each family like the peasants in some parts of Europe, spins, weaves, sews, hunts, fishes... (Lects 1795, p. 240)

This image, however, relies more on an idealised vision of 'savage' life – from Southey's reading of Jean Jacques Rousseau's *A Discourse Upon the Origin and Foundation of the Inequality among Mankind* (1761) – than a documented report of African living conditions. Southey extracted these details from Carl Bernhard Wadstrom's *An Essay on Colonization* (1794-5) which as the borrowing list shows, the two men took out from Bristol Library on the day before Coleridge gave the lecture.⁴² Of course as Wadstrom's title implies, and his introduction states, the book was written to encourage the colonisation of Africa and so describes a peaceful, industrious and on the whole malleable people, who 'with proper encouragement' would 'make excellent workmen'.⁴³ For Wadstrom the solution to African slavery that he advocates is to promote colonies in Africa 'where sugar cane could equally well be grown'.⁴⁴ Anthony Benezet's *Some Historical Account of Guinea...with an Inquiry Into the Rise and Progress of the Slave Trade* (1771) was also a source of information for the two writers that provided an idealised account of African life. Benezet was concerned to expose the lie that the people of Guinea 'are a rude treacherous people', depicting them as 'sensible' and 'courteous' and their country as 'rich' and 'the commerce advantageous'.⁴⁵ Southey uses these idyllic accounts as weapons in an ideological war, where African humanity – evidenced by their peaceful existence, agricultural skill and craftsmanship – is emphasised to oppose the pro-slavery lobby's depiction of Africans as less than human. For instance, in direct contrast to writers such as Benezet and Wadstrom, Edward Long, in his *History of Jamaica* (1774), had made his own survey of African characteristics in order to refute their humanity. Long's major premise was that the Africans of Guinea were 'bestial' and 'stupid', due to their extreme blackness.⁴⁶ He added, to contradict any idea that Africans were equal to civilized Europeans, 'In general, they are void of genius, and seem almost

incapable of making any progress in civility or science'.⁴⁷ In his text he endeavoured to present a polygenist account of race, in order to claim that Africans were of a different and inferior race to Europeans and so justify their slavery.

Southey's idealised account of African existence provides a severe contrast between their former lives and their cruel treatment in captivity:

The wretched slaves taken on the field of battle, or snatched from the burning ruins of their villages are led down to the ships – they are examined stark naked male and female, and after being marked on the breast with a red hot iron, with the arms and names of the company or owner, who are the purchasers; they are thrust promiscuously into the ship. (Lects 1795, p. 241)

In an interesting passage further on in the lecture, Coleridge builds on these 'horrid enormities' of Southey's to close the empirical gap between the lives of African slaves and European consumers. He asks his audience to make an imaginative leap and consider themselves in the predicament of African villagers, because he realises that a further luxury from which they benefit, is complete detachment from the plight of the African people. He does not let them enjoy that luxury, but puts them on an equal footing with Africans:

Would you choose that Slave Merchants should incite an intoxicated Chieftain to make War on your Tribe to murder your Wife and Children before your face and drag them with yourself to the Market. (Lects 1795, p. 247)

He makes the listener/reader feel their basic shared humanity with other races, in the cry 'Would you choose that *others* should do this unto you?' (Lects 1795, p. 248). The 'artificial wants' that British consumers demand drive the process of slavery, and while they live in their discrete luxury they inhabit 'the couch of ease' that Southey and Coleridge reprehend. The two poets' egalitarian doctrine operates here to 'level' the positions of Africans and Britons. Southey and Coleridge are adapting existing arguments and styles, to form a new discourse that applies their radical principles to

race, in order to promote the cause of abolition. As Debbie Lee points out writers such as Southey and Coleridge 'forged the Romantic imagination, in large part, because of their continued attempts to write creatively about the complex and glaringly unequal relationships between Africans and Britons.'⁴⁸

In the *Lecture*, the argument against luxury continues in the call Coleridge makes on the people of Bristol to renounce 'artificial wants', such as sugar, from the West Indies. This product he expressly links to the exertions and sufferings of the slaves who produce it on the plantations. An undoubted source for Coleridge's argument was William Fox's pamphlet entitled *An Address to the People of Great Britain, on the Propriety of Abstaining from West India Sugar and Rum* (1791). Fox took a passage from William Cowper's 'The Negro's Complaint' (1788) as the text for his *Address*:

Why did all-creating Nature
Make the plant for which we toil?
Sighs must fan it, Tears must water,
Sweat of ours must dress the Soil.
Think ye Masters, iron-hearted,
Lolling at your jovial Boards,
Think how many Backs have smarted
For the Sweets your Cane affords!⁴⁹

This was a text, as well as an image that Southey was familiar with, in its picture of the 'Masters' 'lolling' on the back of the slave's efforts to provide luxury ('sweets') for their table. Fox transposes Cowper's image of the bodily secretions of 'sweat' and 'tears' to the stronger image of blood for his abolitionist position when he speaks of sugar 'steeped in the blood of our fellow creatures'.⁵⁰ And in turn this was an idea that Coleridge picked up on for the 'blood-sugar topos' of his lecture, as well as the strong rhetoric of Fox's pamphlet, and its hard-hitting revelations, designed to shock his audience.⁵¹ In Fox's *Address* he outrageously suggests that 'in every pound of sugar

used, (the produce of slaves imported from Africa) we may be considered as consuming two ounces of human flesh'⁵². This lent Coleridge the image of transmutation of food into the 'Blood of the Murdered'.⁵³ The lecture dramatically presents European consumers as cannibals, who exist not only on the luxury of sugar, but the luxury of African bodies.

The calls for abstention from West Indian luxuries, made in Coleridge's lecture and Fox's pamphlet were not unique. For the majority of the population excluded from parliamentary power, this was a route to voice their opposition to the slave trade, and many 'anti-saccharine' groups were set up around the country. Thomas Clarkson estimated after a tour of Britain in late 1791 and early 1792 that 300,000 'persons' of 'all ranks and parties' had given up West Indian sugar.⁵⁴ As Clare Midgeley points out, the abstention campaign was particularly important for 'the role it played in creating in large numbers of men and women a sense of individual responsibility for slavery, and a belief in the possibility of achieving its downfall through extra-Parliamentary action'.⁵⁵ But it was also limited in its efficacy to cause direct detriment to the West Indian trade, and certainly those plantocrats who were aware of the boycott did not feel threatened by it.⁵⁶ Southey was to complain within a few years, of the apathy that the abstention campaign received among his own acquaintance, in a letter of June 1797 to his friend John May:

The Slave Trade has much disheartened me. That this Traffic is supported by the consumption of sugar is demonstrable - I have demonstrated it to above fifty persons with temporary success - & not three of those persons have persevered in rejecting it. This is perfectly astonishing to me - & what can be expected from those who will not remedy so horrible an iniquity by so easy an exertion! (*RSJM*, p. 26)

For Southey in the enthusiastic ecstasies of righteous opposition, abstention was 'easy'. He was becoming more and more influenced by his reading of Epictetus, the

Greek stoic philosopher, who stressed self-renunciation and the brotherhood of man. These values appealed to Southey's ascetic nature and underpinned his moral attack on the slave trade. Like Fox and Coleridge, Southey spoke to the individual conscience when asking people to take responsibility for their part as consumers in the process. However short-lived the abstention campaign may have been, it provides evidence of the Romantic period's recognition of the importance of 'self', in its opposition to national policy by individuals.⁵⁷ The moral individualism manifested by such protest was synergistic with the economic individualism that marks Britain's development as a modern capitalist democracy during this period.⁵⁸

As I have shown, the largest debt that Southey owed to the radical writers of the 1790s, was the formation of his personal ethos – an often unpopular 'levelling' principle – to oppose unequal power relations between men. In his collaboration with Coleridge in the *Lecture on the Slave Trade* Southey extends his radical critique of British social relations to the context of colonial politics. But the question that needs to be asked is; how far can Southey's unhesitating call for equality between 'men', found in his radical poetry at this time, be seen to be operating in his depiction of slavery? In order to answer this question I will examine the poetry that Southey wrote on the subject of the slave trade, which spans the period 1794 to 1810.

1.3 'Poems Concerning the Slave Trade'

Southey's first poems protesting against the slave trade were 'Six Sonnets', published in Southey's *Poems* (1797).⁵⁹ They were later revised and re-published with other poems on the subject as 'Poems Concerning the Slave Trade', in the second volume of Southey's own collection of all his poetry, in 1837-8.⁶⁰ An indication of how Southey's depiction of slavery was viewed at the time, comes from a contemporary

review in the *Monthly Mirror*, where his sonnets on this subject were 'commended'.⁶¹

Southey was not alone in drawing attention to the abolitionist debate. As Sukhdev Sandhu and David Dabydeen point out, many intellectual writers and thinkers felt unease during this period about a practice that was becoming increasingly at odds with the humanitarian principles inspired by moral individualism, but was nevertheless an established part of the British economy. This accounts for the huge amount of literature published during this period on the subject of slavery:

While British people consumed slave products, they also consumed written accounts of slavery. The anti-slavery movement in Britain, in fact, coincided with the rise of print culture and a middle-class reading public. Consequently, a massive outpouring of literature in the forms of parliamentary debates and newspaper columns, sermons and speeches, poems and novels and stage performances, medical tracts and anatomical inquiries, African travelogues and West Indian histories flooded the British market alongside tobacco, coffee, rum, cotton, indigo, mahogany, sugar.⁶²

Though Southey's sonnets were well received at the time, they contain ambiguities. As Timothy Morton states, the sequence includes 'several contradictory modes and objects of address' that obfuscate Southey's position and leave his reader unsure about whether Southey advocates 'supporting a slave rebellion or reform by planters and consumers'.⁶³ The former position is obviously the more radical of the two, but knowing Southey's anti-establishment stance in 1794, it would not be unfeasible. The 1797 preface to Southey's poems suggests that either of these two alternatives will lead to the abolition of the slave trade. He says it will be brought about 'by the introduction of East-Indian or Maple Sugar, by the just and general rebellion of the Negroes: by the vindictive justice of the Africans, or by the civilized Christians finding it their interest to be humane' and the poems hover between positing these solutions (*P* (1797), pp. 31-32). How committed is Southey really, to

these outcomes? And how will the levelling principle of Southey's politics be applied to the relationship of white master and black slave?

The first sonnet in the group seems to address the black inhabitants of West Africa who aggressively capture their fellow Africans to sell as slaves:

Hold your mad Hands! For ever on your plain
Must the gorged vulture clog his beak with blood?
For ever must your Nigers tainted flood
Roll to the ravenous shark his banquet slain?
Hold your mad hands! what daemon prompts to rear
The arm of Slaughter? on your savage shore
Can hell-sprung Glory claim the feast of gore,
With laurels water'd by the widow's tear
Wreathing his helmet crown? lift high the spear!
And like the desolating whirlwinds sweep,
Plunge ye yon bark of anguish in the deep;
For the pale fiend, cold-hearted Commerce there
Breathes his gold-gender'd pestilence afar,
And calls to share the prey his kindred Daemon War.
(P (1797), p. 33)

The poem depicts a chain of guilt and barbarity that feeds – and feeds off, as does the 'gorged vulture' - the slave trade. The 'mad Hands' of the natives who engage in tribal wars and capture each other to sell as slaves, are complicit in this guilt as are the traders – in their 'bark of anguish'. At the top of this chain is 'the pale fiend, cold-hearted Commerce' that drives the whole process with 'his gold-gender'd pestilence'. The poem has echoes of Coleridge's 'Reflections on Having Left a Place of Retirement' (published in 1796 - the lines referred to were added in 1797) where he identifies a 'wealthy son of Commerce' whom he sees from his cottage window as 'Bristowa's citizen', because of his 'thirst of idle gold' (*CPW*, I, p. 106, ll. 11-3).⁶⁴ The obtruding moral of that poem is that this servant of commerce - by undoubtedly benefitting from Bristol's West Indian or African trade - has become indifferent to the simple pleasures of life. He recognises his alienation; from nature in Coleridge's 'Valley of Seclusion', and from human love in that 'Blessed Place' that is Coleridge's

cottage (ll. 9, 17). The commercial activity of the slave trade - both Coleridge's and Southey's poems imply - is inhuman and unnatural in its 'thirst' for riches and in engendering obduracy in those who engage in it. In the later revised version of this sonnet for Southey's *Poetical Works*, he calls on Africans to unite against 'the common foe' and turn from using violence against each other to repel the traders (agents of European greed) 'with fire and sword' (*PW*, II, p. 55, l. 11). Nevertheless by attacking an abstract figure such as 'Commerce' in his poem, Southey does not directly accredit the blame to his contemporary Europeans. This combined with the confusing address, means that the central accusation of guilt is therefore displaced and the aggressive tone of the poem is defused by having an unspecific target.

The second sonnet moves from general declamation to directly address an African woman:

Why dost thou beat thy breast and rend thine hair,
 And to the deaf sea pour thy frantic cries?
 Before the gale the laden vessel flies;
 The Heavens all-favoring smile, the breeze is fair;
 Hark to the clamors of the exulting crew!
 Hark how their thunders mock the patient skies!
 Why dost thou shriek, and strain thy red-swoln eyes,
 As the white sail dim lessens from thy view?
 Go pine in want and anguish and despair,
 There is no mercy found in human-kind-
 Go Widow to thy grave, and rest thee there!
 But may the God of Justice bid the wind
 Whelm that curst bark beneath the mountain wave,
 And bless with Liberty and Death the Slave!

(*P* (1797), p. 34)

Southey calls the woman 'Widow' to make the point that the act of forcible abduction is as final as death, in that she will never see her husband alive again. The woman's weakness, her individual suffering is perceived as inefficacious against the might of the 'exulting crew'. His poem aims to exercise the readers' sensibilities with its vicarious concentration on the unhappy effects of the separation. The extent to which

readers of this period would react emotionally to suffering humanity in texts was a moral register, indicating a degree of personal virtue. Literature written to publicise abolitionist arguments frequently relied on overly sentimental depictions of its subjects in order to inspire sympathy for black slaves and make the amelioration of their suffering a moral crusade, and here Southey conforms to the stock imagery of such poetry. In this poem there is no solution in 'human-kind', any act of vengeance can only be located in 'the God of Justice' who in Southey's vision could 'Whelm that curst bark beneath the mountain wave,/And bless with liberty and death the Slave!'. This call only serves to heighten the absence of human power to prevent such deeds. Southey displays a lack of empathy with his subject in his empty recourse to divine justice, abandoning his heroine to her fate in a conventionally cold way, rather than suggesting any real solution to the problem. This may well be because he prefers to adopt a moralising pose, rather than advocate a political remedy. It is more likely however that Southey recognised the impotence of dilettante intellectual abolitionists like himself to effect any meaningful change to the system.

The third sonnet's confusing multiple address to an 'inhuman driver' of slaves on a sugar plantation, as well as the poem's reader, has the effect of conflating both under the apostrophe 'Pale tyrant!':

Oh, he is worn with toil! the big drops run
Down his dark cheek; hold – hold thy merciless hand,
Pale tyrant! for beneath thy hard command
O'erwearied nature sinks. The scorching sun,
As pitiless as proud Prosperity,
Darts on him his full beams; gasping he lies
Arraigning with his looks the patient skies,
While that inhuman trader lifts on high
The mangling scourge. Oh ye who at your ease
Sip the blood-sweeten'd beverage, thoughts like these
Haply ye scorn: I thank thee, gracious God,

That I do feel upon my cheek the glow
Of indignation, when beneath the rod
A sable brother writhes in silent woe.
(*P* (1797), p. 35)

In this poem the natural force of 'the scorching sun' is related to commercial interest by Southey's description of it being 'As pitiless as proud Prosperity'. In this cruel tropical environment, every element is complicit in the colonial guilt. However the effect of this attack on commercialism again extracts the human agency from these acts. In a world governed by unnatural economic forces, instead of natural benign ones such as sunlight, all humans are driven, as the 'trader' is himself, by 'pitiless' commerce. Conforming to the conventions of the sonnet form, the first line of the sestet splits to change the address to the reader. The poem's vision switches from a slave being beaten under the scorching sun to Southey's readers 'who at your ease/Sip the blood-sweeten'd beverage'. The figure of the indolent receiver of West Indian goods who reclines 'at ease' at the slave's expense is of course an explicit allusion to the 'politics of luxury' employed in the *Lecture on the Slave Trade*. The description of tea as a 'blood-sweeten'd beverage' directly draws on the 'blood-sugar topos' of this lecture too. The juxtaposition of colonial violence with drawing-room safety is a powerful technique for forcing the reader to compare his/her own position with that of the slave - also an effect of the phrase 'sable brother'. For the first time in this sequence we hear the narrator speak for himself, in the first-person, instead of ventriloquising for others. He speaks as the voice of individual conscience - 'I thank thee...', 'I do feel...', even if here that tone is self-congratulatory and sanctimonious.

Skin colour, as a mark of difference between people, is also used explicitly here for the first time - where the 'white tyrant' is juxtaposed with the dignified euphemism, 'sable brother'. Alan Richardson points out that in this sequence of

poems Southey fails to convince the reader of his vision because he cannot draw attention to the blackness of his central figures in any positive way:

Southey's attempt to reproduce a radical Enlightenment critique of slavery ... for the most part founders on his apparent inability to represent a black subject without setting off the negative associations with blackness which had become so deeply engrained in British discourse by the end of the eighteenth century.⁶⁵

However in this sonnet the issue for Southey is not so much 'blackness' but 'whiteness'. The problem he faces is that all white people can, by the colour of their skin, be seen as complicit in the egregious act he describes here. Southey in response discovers a third colour that places him outside the manichean system of guilt that the abolitionists have devised. In that scheme a black skin equals goodness, innocence, and demands compassion from the reader, while white skin suggests flagitiousness at worst and complicity at best. The 'glow/Of indignation' that the narrator/Southey feels alters his colour in the poem. While he cannot be his 'sable brother' and does not wish to be allied with the 'pale tyrant', he marks himself out as different because he is able to 'feel' and therefore 'glow'. This sets him apart from the 'pale' tea-sipping reader who does not feel as he does, and so retains the pigmentation of guilt. Southey does not, as Richardson says, discuss blackness which has historically and culturally been perceived as having 'negative associations', but does attempt to display the 'negative' effects of being white.

In Sonnet IV Southey paints another sorrowful picture that conforms to the stock sentimentalism of the period:

'Tis night; the mercenary tyrants sleep
As undisturb'd as Justice! but no more
The wretched Slave, as on his native shore,
Rests on his weedy couch: he wakes to weep!
Tho' thro' the toil and anguish of the day
No tear escap'd him, not one suffering groan

Beneath the twisted thong, he weeps alone
 In bitterness; thinking that far away
 Tho' the gay negroes join the midnight song,
 Tho' merriment resounds on Niger's shore,
 She whom he loves, far from the chearful throng
 Stands sad, and gazes from her lowly door
 With dim grown eye, silent and woe-begone,
 And weeps for him who will return no more.
 (P (1797), p. 36)

Richardson claims that the end result of Southey's 'inability to convincingly represent a black subject in his abolitionist verse' can be seen in his reluctance to 'get under the skin' of his black protagonists, suggesting a lack of true sympathy for them.⁶⁶ While it could be the case that these poems, like other 'anti-slavery poems frequently deploy sentiment to mask racial anxieties', this inability to make an imaginative connection with his characters is a common criticism of Southey's work.⁶⁷ He finds it almost impossible to successfully or sympathetically portray the plight of his suffering victims, whether black or white, male or female, – an accusation that has been levelled at him since earliest reviews of his work. For instance Dorothy Wordsworth said of his writing - 'the characters in general are not sufficiently distinct to make them have a separate after-existence in my affections'.⁶⁸ There are two reasons for this, the first is that Southey is promoting his moral message – the drive behind all his writing – and because he writes from his position on the moral high ground, his message is often as didactic and sanctimonious as Hannah More's in her *Cheap Repository Tracts* (1795-8). The second reason can be drawn from biographical evidence and is not due to a lack of sincerity or sympathy on Southey's part, but as a result of feeling *too much* for others in his youth:

Once, indeed, I had a mimosa sensibility, but it has long ago been rooted out. Five years ago I counteracted Rousseau by dieting upon Godwin and Epictetus; they did me some good, but time has done more. I have a dislike to all strong emotion and avoid whatever could excite it. A book like Werther gives me

now unmingled pain. In my own writings you may observe I dwell rather upon what affects than what agitates. (*LC*, II, p. 13)⁶⁹

It could be argued that the 'cult of sensibility' employed by writers such as Southey actually does exactly what he suggests in this letter, by dealing with what 'affects' rather than what 'agitates'. By conjuring up stock situations and figures that evoke a much weaker degree of emotion than the experiences of real-life, Southey protects his readers from painful strong feelings. As such the overt sentiment that the poems display is nothing more than a literary convention which calls for sympathy rather than any real engagement with the pain of its characters, black or white. Sympathy with another's suffering, unlike one's own personal grief is a pleasurable emotion in the cult of sensibility. This is often a problem for modern readers, who expect sincerity and realism in literature and find themselves insulated from, rather than exposed to, any raw emotion.

The suppressed emotion of this sonnet does not really prepare the reader for the violent act of the next poem in the sequence:

Did then the bold Slave rear at last the Sword
Of vengeance? drench'd he deep its thirsty blade
In the cold bosom of his tyrant lord?
Oh! who shall blame him? thro' the midnight shade
Still o'er his tortur'd memory rush'd the thought
Of every past delight; his native grove,
Friendship's best joys, and Liberty and Love,
All lost for ever! Then Remembrance wrought
His soul to madness; round his restless bed
Freedom's pale spectre stalk'd, with a stern smile
Pointing the wounds of slavery, the while
She shook her chains and hung her sullen head:
No more on Heaven he calls with fruitless breath,
But sweetens with revenge, the draught of death.
(*P* (1797), p. 37)

Southey's reader has by now realised that the sonnet sequence is dedicated to the life history of this 'bold Slave'. Because he is designed to stand as a black 'Everyman' figure – representative of general acts of cruelty against his race – one of the effects of this is to forfeit the reader's sympathy for him. As he is not drawn with any psychological depth he remains a stereotypical vengeful character. It could be argued that Southey gives plausible reasons for the uprisings in the various West Indian islands against the plantation owners because the simmering individual resentment against their position that each slave holds, as shown here, combines against their masters. Southey could be seen as celebrating rebellions such as those that had taken place in 1791 in British Dominica and St. Domingue, or at the very least, warning of the likelihood of such rebellions in a system as unstable as slavery. However rather than showing 'the just and general rebellion of the Negroes' – one way that his 'Preface' advocates slavery being abolished – this act is portrayed as one of individual 'madness'. It is not a powerful attempt to gain freedom and equality, because the futility of the slave's actions, and its results, depict his impotence to change his position.

Sonnet Six probably contains the deepest feelings of the sonnet sequence as well as the most obvious disempowerment of Southey's black subject:

High in the air expos'd the Slave is hung,
To all the birds of Heaven, their living food!
He groans not, tho' awaked by that fierce Sun
New torturers live to drink their parent blood!
He groans not, tho' the gorging vulture tear
The quivering fibre! Hither gaze O ye
Who tore this Man from Peace and Liberty!
Gaze hither ye who weigh with scrupulous care
The right and prudent; for beyond the grave
There is another world! and call to mind,
Ere your decrees proclaim to all mankind

Murder is legalized, that there the Slave
Before the Eternal, 'thunder-tongued shall plead
Against the deep damnation of your deed'.
(*P* (1797), p. 38)

Southey tells us, in his 'Preface' to these poems, that this punishment inflicted upon a slave for murdering his master is authentic; as one 'Hector St. John was an eye-witness' (p. 32). Again the cruel jurisprudence of his unnatural colonial world is extended to the natural elements that comprise it - the 'fierce sun' and the scavenging birds that attack the slave. In this poem Southey takes up the conservatively Christian stance of reminding the West Indian plantocracy of their immortal souls, as well as the abolitionist position that African slaves possess souls too, thus drawing attention to the shared humanity of the two races. The 'Negro' is strangely silent in this poem as he is throughout the sonnet sequence. We never have his thoughts voiced for us and in this last poem we are told twice that despite all his sufferings 'He groans not'. The reader never forgets that it is Southey's voice he/she hears, not the African slave's — his voice is absent. And as in the poetry Southey was writing at the same time to address inequalities in British society, there is no agency for change. All Southey does is replicate the same 'power politics' again and again, of suffering slave/servant/labourer against a system of oppression. His poetics only reflect the politics of the situation and make any question of equality between men, such as he espouses in his domestic radical poetry, seem facile and unachievable, and especially so when applied to issues of race. However it is easy to demand that earlier periods of history conform to modern humanitarian concepts and nowhere does Southey claim to be addressing racial inequality in his abhorrence of slavery. Even if at this point in his life he perhaps could see a 'general rebellion by the Negroes' as a 'just' act, he does not posit a role for freed slaves as equal citizens of society.

1.4 'To the Genius of Africa'

So in the face of this 'dead-end', what conclusion can we come to about Southey's belief in how the abolition of the slave trade (still ten years away) would come about? To reiterate the solutions he gives in the introduction to the 1797 collection; it will be 'by the just and general rebellion of the Negroes: by the vindictive justice of the Africans, or by the civilized Christians finding it their interest to be humane'. It is worth considering two further poems of the 1797 collection in order to answer this question. The subject of divine retribution, considered in the first sonnet of the sequence, is raised again in 'To the Genius of Africa' (*P* (1797), pp. 39-43). The 'Genius' addressed is the protective spirit of Africa, which instead of watching over its 'children' forsakes them in order to 'brood/Stern o'er the desert solitude' (ll. 11-2). Southey calls on the guardian spirit to 'Arise, thy children's wrongs redress!' (l. 27). Again images of black suffering are listed to conjure up an agent of divine, rather than human justice. The poem locates all hope in the apocalyptic forces of this abstract deity, which Southey imagines has:

... o'er their blood-fed plains
Swept thine avenging hurricanes
And bade thy storms with whirlwind roar
Dash their proud navies on the shore;
And where their armies claim'd the fight
Whither'd the warrior's might;
And o'er the unholy host with baneful breath
There, Genius, thou hast breath'd the gales of Death.
(ll. 49-56)

It has been claimed that in this poem Southey is 'celebrating the Haitian revolution' that had begun in 1791,⁷⁰ though the only real evidence of this can be found in the last section of the poem, which follows on from the lines above:

So perish still the robbers of mankind!
What tho' from Justice bound and blind
Inhuman Power has snatch'd the sword!

What tho' thro' many an ignominious age
That Fiend with desolating rage
The tide of carnage pour'd!
Justice shall yet unclothe her eyes,
Terrific yet in wrath arise,
And trample on the tyrant's breast,
And make Oppression groan oppress.
(ll. 60-6)

The last four lines could be interpreted as depicting African revenge on white slave owners, though this is a debatable point. Because Southey is still dealing in abstract figures such as 'Justice', 'Inhuman Power' and 'Oppression', the poem is ambiguous, rather than clearly proposing slave rebellion as a way of abolishing slavery in the colonies. In fact it is reasonable to claim that by imagining a protective African spirit that will rise to avenge its people, Southey's poem is prophylactic, rather than prophetic, in terms of positing 'the vindictive justice of the Africans'. This is the only reference to such an event and is cloaked by the anxiety that Southey felt about dealing with such a subject, despite his radical politics. However he obviously came to regret the political implications of the poem's ending in later life, because the whole passage was omitted from his *Poetical Works* (and not just the last line that Coleridge objected to).

Another of Southey's *Poems* (1797), entitled 'Horror', touches on the subject of slave rebellion, though the poem is not explicitly designed to oppose the slave trade as the others are (*P* (1797), pp. 140-4). The poem is a wide-ranging exploration of sources of horror in the world, ranging from a Gothic Abbey, to the ice of Greenland, taking in shipwrecks, battlefields, a dead child on a mother's 'frozen breast' (l. 46), and the 'phantoms of the murder'd' (l. 54), with typical Southeyan fascination for terrifying subjects. One further image that the abstract figure of 'horror' conjures up for the poet is slavery:

HORROR! I call thee yet once more!
 Bear me to that accursed shore
 Where round the stake the impaled Negro writhes.
 Assume thy sacred terrors then! dispense
 The blasting gales of Pestilence!
 Arouse the race of Afric! holy Power,
 Lead them to vengeance! and in that dread hour
 When Ruin rages wide
 I will behold and smile by MERCY's side.
 (ll. 60-8)

The poem's call to 'Arouse the race of Afric' and 'Lead them to vengeance!' is inflammatory, but though it is the likeliest version of a 'celebratory' poem on the subject, it also contains ambiguities. Southey deals in abstract figures such as 'Horror' and 'Mercy' rather than presenting plausible details of a human rebellion. Is the 'accursed shore' Africa or the Caribbean? And therefore is Southey calling for Africans to oppose traders, or slaves to rise up against their masters? Why is this rebellion which he sees as justified, described as a 'dread hour/When Ruin rages wide'? And is the 'horror' solely contained in the vision of the 'impaled Negro' writhing or can it be extended to the effects of this - the 'vengeance' that Southey seems to advocate? It should not be if Southey is genuinely advocating rebellion as a solution. Finally, is the smiling figure of the narrator 'by MERCY's side' advocating mercy for the planters/traders or the slaves?

However the puzzling elements of this poem and 'The Genius of Africa' can be solved if one considers that Southey is subscribing here to the millenarian beliefs of the period, depicting the slave uprising as part of the wars forecast in Revelation before the end of the world.⁷¹ Poems that Coleridge was writing at the same time – such as 'Religious Musings' (begun in 1794 and first published in 1796) and 'Destiny of Nations' (begun in 1794 as part of Southey's *Joan of Arc* but not published until 1817) – like Southey's, subsume contemporary political events in apocalyptic

rhetoric. For instance in 'Religious Musings' Coleridge considers the French Revolution in terms of biblical apocalypse and millenium - a customary response among English sympathisers during the 1790s – so that the Revolution itself becomes a metaphor for divine retribution – 'even now the storm begins' (CPW, I, p. 121, l. 315) – rather than a human act. It was an attractive belief that the evils of humanity would be punished by an 'omnific' God, and Coleridge includes those who engage in slavery in his list of transgressors who will face the Judgement Day, in the tone of an Old Testament prophet:

But o'er some plain that steameth to the sun,
Peopled with Death; or where more hideous Trade
Loud-laughing packs his bales of human anguish;
I will raise up a mourning, O ye Fiends!
(CPW, I, p. 114, ll. 139-42)

Millenarian rhetoric allots the retributive power of God to the poet. Like Southey, Coleridge moralises, but does not provide the difficult specifics of a political solution. Millenarian beliefs are comforting because they make the need for individual action in the sphere of human society or politics unnecessary.⁷² But such beliefs may undermine any positive attempt to change society and encourage a compassionate complacency that Southey certainly exhibits.

Given the millenarian tone of these poems therefore there seems to be no genuine commitment on Southey's part to his suggested vision of a 'just and general rebellion of the Negroes' to overturn the master/slave relationship. There is an anxiety in depicting slave revolts that prevents Southey envisaging a general uprising, except in conventional apocalyptic imagery. There are historical and biographical reasons for this. By the time all these poems were published in 1797, Southey had begun to move on from the radical beginnings in which he originally wrote them. His friendship with Coleridge was quickly deteriorating, due to Southey's waning interest in their

Pantisocratic scheme, but also because Coleridge resented having been inveigled into marriage with Southey's sister-in-law (Sara Fricker), in a moment of fraternal enthusiasm. Though it is hard to pinpoint a specific moment at which Southey's revolutionary fervour began to ebb, it certainly coincided with the realisation that he and Coleridge had different future ambitions, and had decided to go their separate ways. As early as May 1796 Southey wrote to his friend Grosvenor Charles Bedford in a much quieter style, of his more mature responses to the world; 'How does time mellow down our opinions! Little of that ardent enthusiasm which so lately fevered my whole character remains' (*LC*, I, p. 275). Southey had not long returned from a visit to his uncle (Herbert Hill) in Portugal, which was designed by the latter to quell some of his nephew's political fervour. Though the visit was not entirely successful in achieving his uncle's aims, a great deal of Southey's radicalism was quashed by being exposed to the poverty, filth, corruption and superstition he encountered in Portugal. Southey's observations of the Portuguese – 'the higher classes are despicable, and the whole body of people depraved beyond all my ideas of licentiousness' (*SL*, I, p. 21) – formed the genesis of patriotic respect for his own countrymen, that would increase with time. On his return to England Southey took the career path that his friend and benefactor Charles W.W. Wynn had suggested for him, and so was studying law reluctantly in the daytime, while writing eagerly at night. His railings against the injustices of society would in 1796 and 1797 be channelled into schemes to assist the widow of Robert Lovell, and the female dependants of Thomas Chatterton, by publishing the two poets' works by subscription. His energies were also directed towards setting up a 'Convalescent Asylum' for impoverished invalids, a scheme that despite his enthusiasm was never carried out.

But what has this to do with Southey's objections to the slave trade? The direct import of these events and changing views - though Southey would still consider himself to be an anti-establishment figure and a Republican for many years and still protested against ancient arrogations of power in his 'Inscriptions' for instance - was that his poems, including those on the slave trade, lost some of the early political edge they might have had. A further reason for Southey's waning radicalism can be found in the reactions of his own countrymen to events in revolutionary France. Much of the youthful enthusiasm of his generation for envisioning a new society, whether French, British or American, had been crushed.

As Geoffrey Carnall puts it:

Jacobins had reason to be vexed in the last four years of the eighteenth century. Their hopes in the French Revolution itself were dashed, and reaction seemed firmly established at home and abroad. Repressive laws made political agitation difficult or impossible.⁷³

Against this background Southey's interest in radical politics was curbed by the example of activists (such as John Thelwall) who suffered imprisonment and persecution for their political beliefs. Any depiction of rising masses against the tyrannous hands of their rulers would not find favour with government officials, at a time when the press suffered from censorship, and reprisals for printing inflammatory texts. In fact support for the abolition of the slave trade during this period waned generally because British people could see the disruptive effects of challenging authority, whether in Britain or the colonies. Thomas Clarkson for instance, who was an active abolitionist and supporter of the French Revolution, had to suppress his unpopular 'Jacobin' views in order to preserve the backing he had for his opposition to the slave trade.⁷⁴

Southey therefore, rather than advocating large-scale rebellion by slaves (or anyone else), very much relies on the second proposition given in his 'Introduction' to *Poems* (1797) – that the slave trade will be abolished because 'civilized Christian's will find it their interest to be humane' – and he assists in this humanitarian project by publicising the plight of the slaves. One assumes the term 'civilized Christians' to include all white Europeans, but to be particularly aimed at the West Indian planters and the consumers of their products in Britain. In the next poem Southey wrote on the subject of the slave-trade it is possible to see how his moral crusade against slavery is bound up with ambitions for his own country, as much as for black slaves. Abolishing slavery is in the best 'interest' of the British people as well as Africans.

1.5 'The Sailor, Who Had Served In The Slave Trade'

'The Sailor, Who Had Served in The Slave Trade' (*Poems*, 1799) is central to Southey's abolitionist oeuvre, but also brings this account back to his relationship with Coleridge once more, because of its similarity to the latter's much more famous poem 'The Rime of the Ancyent Marinere' (1798). Southey's poem, like Coleridge's, is a ballad, engaging the reader with its simplicity and immediacy, in a way that the declamatory style and abstract figures of his sonnets do not. The 'Ancient Mariner' was published in the first edition of Wordsworth's and Coleridge's *Lyrical Ballads*, which was reviewed by Southey for the *Critical Review*, also in 1798. Southey said of Coleridge's poem:

Many of the stanzas are laboriously beautiful, but in connection they are absurd or unintelligible... We do not sufficiently understand the story to analyse it. It is a Dutch attempt at German sublimity. Genius has here been employed in producing a poem of little merit.⁷⁵

Some critics have claimed that Southey's opinion was affected by his quarrel with Coleridge at the time. Whether this may have had some bearing or not on the review, Southey did not like the poem, referring to it privately as 'nonsense' because its meaning was obscure (*NL*, I, p. 177). It is likely that Southey would have concurred with Anna Letitia Barbauld's opinion that 'it had the fault of containing no moral'.⁷⁶ He was not alone in disliking the poem as it was 'uniformly abused' by contemporary critics.⁷⁷ Southey was not prepared to accept the 'Ancient Mariner' as an enigmatic commentary on the human condition, as modern readers might, because his own style of writing was often moralistic, didactic and even heavy-handed in making its point, as his friend and correspondent at the time, Charles Lamb recognised. Lamb was corresponding with Coleridge and Southey at various times during the period in which the 'Ancient Mariner' was written. After reading Southey's review of the *Lyrical Ballads*, Lamb wrote to him taking him to task for it and especially for his critique of the 'Ancient Mariner'. Lamb is unusual among his contemporaries in liking the poem, which he describes as 'miraculous'.⁷⁸ He also attests in a later letter, that unlike Coleridge's, Southey's own poetry is 'too apt to conclude faulty, with some cold moral'.⁷⁹ Lamb had already realised how different the two poets were, when two years earlier he had told Coleridge, 'Southey certainly has no pretensions to view with you in the sublime of poetry but he tells a plain tale better than you'.⁸⁰

Lamb's opinion of both Southey and Coleridge's poetry, and his first-hand knowledge of their poetical methods and aspirations during this period is invaluable for more than just the biographical details it divulges. It also exposes the rationale behind Southey's own account of a voyaging mariner, in 'The Sailor'. In the light of Lamb's comments it could be assumed that Southey perceived the 'Ancient Mariner' as an overly enigmatic and ambiguous abolitionist protest and so went on to write a

'plain tale' elucidating the paratactic events that take place in Coleridge's poem. Alan Richardson suggests that there are so many similarities between Coleridge's 'Ancient Mariner' and Southey's poem that 'The Sailor' should be read as 'a gloss' on the former, or as a 'companion piece' to it.⁸¹ In the light of critical works that have highlighted the colonial guilt the 'Ancient Mariner' is steeped in, this seems a sensible claim to make. J.R Ebbatson in his essay 'Coleridge's Mariner and the Rights of Man' (1972) has pointed out that Coleridge's abolitionist agenda during this period bears close comparison to other contemporary writers (including Southey) and that an apolitical reading of the 'Ancient Mariner' that does not recognise this fact leads critics and readers to an erroneous reading of the poem. Ebbatson says:

I am therefore proposing that the central act of *The Ancient Mariner*, the shooting of the albatross, may be a symbolic rehearsal of the crux of colonial expansion, the enslavement of native peoples; and that the punishments visited upon the Mariner, and the deaths of his shipmates because of their complicity, may represent European racial guilt, and the need to make restitution. The Mariner, in regaling strangers with his ghastly tale, and leaving them sadder and wiser, is acquainting them with crimes committed in their name, and warning of the wrath to come – a common theme in abolitionist literature.⁸²

Because much of Coleridge's energy during this period was taken up with fighting political injustice, and modern scholars are aware of Coleridge's protestations against the slave trade in his poetry, his letters, and his lecture on the subject in Bristol, it is easy to read the 'Ancient Mariner' in this way. J. L. Lowes in the 1920s, had already suggested the links between the poem and the accounts of voyages that Coleridge avidly read, in his pioneering study *The Road to Xanadu*.⁸³ William Empson and Ebbatson and more recently Patrick Keane, Peter Kitson and Debbie Lee, have been concerned to examine the poem in terms of its theme of European maritime exploration and guilt at the consequences of colonial expansion for other cultures.⁸⁴

The lesson that humans should consider the complex and even global consequences of their actions is evident both in the poem's denouement and in its trite moral:

He prayeth well who loveth well,
Both man and bird and beast.
(*CPW*, II, p. 1047, ll. 645-6)

The most obvious similarity between 'The Sailor' and the 'Ancient Mariner' is the first line of Southey's poem; 'It was a Christian Minister...' which echoes Coleridge's opening 'It is an ancyent Marinere'. However this more familiar beginning was not used in the first publication of 1799, but in a later revision (*PW*, II, p. 61). Furthermore the narrator of the *Poems* (1799) version is not given any religious status and plays a much more anonymous role. Nevertheless both poems are ballads written in the third person, have a mariner/sailor as the central figure, and deal with guilt; specifically located in a recognisable crime in Southey's poem, but more abstruse in Coleridge's. Both poems have as a theme, the subject of individual suffering, alienation and the absence of Christian redemption for the central character, on a ship full of men. And both are sailing:

Alone on a wide wide sea:
So lonely 'twas that God himself
Scarce seemed there to be.
(*CPW*, II, p. 1047, ll. 631-3)

In his short preface to 'The Sailor', Southey claims that the poem was based on a factual account. He describes how 'a Dissenting Minister of Bristol' discovered a sailor 'groaning and praying in a cow-house' and continues:

The circumstance which occasioned his agony of mind is detailed in the annexed ballad, without the slightest addition or alteration. By presenting it as a Poem the story is made more public, and such stories ought to be made as public as possible. (*P* (1799), p. 105)

The sailor's story accounts for his mental state of 'such heart-anguish as could spring/From deepest guilt alone' (*P* (1799), pp. 107-114, ll. 19-20). He says:

I sail'd on board a Guinea-man,
And to the slave-coast went;..
Would that the sea had swallowed me
When I was innocent!

And we took in our cargo there,
Three hundred negroe slaves,
And we sail'd homeward merrily
Over the ocean waves.

But some were sulky of the slaves,
And would not touch their meat,
So therefore we were forced by threats
And blows to make them eat.

One woman, sulkier than the rest,
Would still refuse her food, -
O Jesus God! I hear her cries -
I see her in her blood!

The captain made me tie her up,
And flog while he stood by;
And then he curs'd me if I staid
My hand to hear her cry.

She groan'd, she shriek'd - I could not spare
For the Captain he stood by -
Dear God that I might rest one night
From that poor woman's cry!
(ll. 57-80)

The beatings the sailor gives to the woman result in her death, but the sailor's torment does not end there:

They flung her overboard; - poor wretch
She rested from her pain, -.
But when - O Christ! O blessed God!
Shall I have rest again!
(ll. 97-100)

Unlike the Mariner's guilt in Coleridge's more famous poem - a guilt that haunts from the Mariner's own uncertainty of what he has done - the blame here can be placed squarely on the sailor's shoulders for beating the female slave. This central act upon which the poem concentrates is one designed to outrage all the sensibilities of Southey's reading public because of its violent treatment of, not simply a slave, but also a woman, who under the reigning ideology demanded protection from, rather than exposure to, such cruelty. There was a precedent for exposing violence against female slaves at the time by abolitionist activists, who realised the power of such imagery in highlighting the iniquity of the slave trade. One celebrated case was that of Captain Kimber who 'flogged a young black woman to death for refusing to dance naked for him on deck'.⁸⁵ Southey might well have drawn upon this incident as a source for his poem because as Kimber was captain of the Bristol slave ship *Recovery*, a Bristol newspaper, *Felix Farley's Bristol Journal*, had covered the story in great detail.⁸⁶ Kimber was tried for the murder of the girl in the Admiralty High Court in June 1792 but was 'acquitted to general amazement'.⁸⁷ The episode was publicised by William Wilberforce, parliamentary champion of the 'Society for Effecting the Abolition of the Slave Trade' who described the facts of the case to Parliament in order to further the cause of abolition. A cartoon illustrating the case was circulated in London in the same year depicting the leering, sadistic Captain Kimber (with his phallic sword-hilt) about to flog his hanging, faceless victim (Fig. 1). The illustration relies for effect on its graphic (and even gratuitous) depiction of physical abuse, as does Southey's poem.

In the 'Ancient Mariner', as in 'The Sailor', events are triggered by a crucial act on the part of the main character. The mariner shoots the albatross of his own volition, and the reader is left to presume that this act of free-will singles him out for



Figure 2. The Abolition of the Slave Trade. Cartoon, London, 1792

individual punishment and alienation. In Southey's poem the sailor's guilt is recognised by the reader as not his alone, but as inherent in a system that trades in human beings. That the sailor's act is an *involuntary* one, the poem is very clear about at several points:

The captain made me tie her up,
And flog while he stood by;
And then he curs'd me if I staid
My hand to hear her cry.
(*P* (1799), ll. 73-6)

The compression of ideas in the lines; 'So therefore we were forced by threats/And blows to make them eat' (ll. 67-8), suggests almost that the coercion of 'threats and blows' would be applied to the crew for not carrying out the captain's instructions. Here there is another link between the illustration of Captain Kimber and Southey's poem. Both texts highlight the abusive regime that sailors, whether on merchant or naval ships, existed under in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, on a daily basis. The cartoon shows the crew-members as refractory, yet complicit in their captain's guilt, whether by turning their backs as the group in the rear do, or by reluctantly assisting like the sailor on the right (Fig. 1). Southey had some knowledge of how brutal naval captains could be from following the story of Captain William Bligh, whose intolerant pedantry had contributed to the mutiny on board his ship the *Bounty* in 1789. Southey also received information from his brother Thomas (1777-1838), who was pursuing a career in the navy and was subject to the vagaries of authoritarian commanders. One particular letter written by Southey in July 1797 attests to his indignation that Thomas is exposed to such abuses of power:

My brothers Captain is a worthless wicked man & behaves very unkindly & insolently to Tom because he thinks him friendless...I feel very angry at reflecting that such a life as my brothers should be at the mercy of a sea captain. It is not many months since he was sent to board a vessel in such weather that the boat must inevitably have sunk in attempting to reach her - &

yet he could not refuse or [remonstrate?], & would have perished if a Lieutenant with him had not ordered them to give over the attempt. This is called discipline. (RSJM, p. 28)

Against the claims of those who believed that slave ships provided a 'nursery' or training ground for naval seamen, Thomas Clarkson in his *Essay on the Impolicy of the African Slave Trade* (1788) published the findings of his investigation into conditions on slave ships. Apart from the dreadful environment in which the slaves themselves were kept, he also discovered the extent of the maltreatment that crews of such ships (also kept in confined conditions and lacking free will like the slaves themselves) were subject to. In the *Essay* he presents graphic individual examples of abuse that often ended in death, in order to counteract:

the argument, upon which so great a stress has been laid, that *the slave trade is a nursery for our seamen*. The truth of this argument I deny in the most explicit and unequivocal manner. I assert, on the other hand, that it is a *grave* for our seamen, and that it destroys more in *one* year, than *all the other* trades of Great Britain, when put together, destroy in *two*.⁸⁸

Clarkson gives the numbers of those who have died in named ships and ascertains from these figures that in every vessel's crew engaged in the slave trade 'between a fourth and a fifth may be said to perish'.⁸⁹ Clarkson exposed such information because he realised after the publication of his first essay that he would not find support alone through descriptions of suffering black humanity. He had to bring the debate closer to home by showing the fate of British white seamen in order to appeal to the nation's sympathies. Clarkson and Southey both rely on exposing their country's collective guilt by asking readers to examine those members of its society that are complicit, but as much oppressed by the slave-trade, as the Africans. In 'The Sailor' the essential shared humanity of the black woman, the sailor and the captain is made explicit in the phrase (from the 1837-8 collection) 'What woman's child a sight like that/Could bear

to look upon!' (*PW*, II, p. 65, ll. 85-6). They share the same origins, having all been a 'woman's child'. The chain of abuse stretches from victimised slave, to oppressed sailor, to brutalised captain, to the nation that lives off such abuse.

Of course the subject of Southey's poem is not in fact the African slave at all. She is again a stock, abused female figure who becomes a vehicle in the poem to explore the sailor's guilt and suffering and by extension the guilt of the British government that allows its citizens to be exposed to such a system. The reader also does not hear her speak, although the sailor is haunted by her cries:

She groan'd, she shriek'd - I could not spare
For the Captain he stood by-
Dear God! That I might rest one night
From that poor creature's cry!
(*P* (1799), ll. 77-80)

But to the reader without any description of the slave, or dialogue that includes her, she becomes a faceless, voiceless 'creature' (as in the Kimber cartoon). Southey's sailor displaces the central position that the female slave should truly occupy, so that she becomes an 'object' in the poem rather than its 'subject'. Southey is more concerned with how slavery affects the moral health of his own country, the imperial centre, than with individual black lives. The argument of abolitionists had long been that the system of slavery does moral damage to the 'master' as well as the slave, and by extension those who support the slave-owner's malfeasance. The long-term opposition of the Quakers to slavery stemmed as much from consideration of the ethical and spiritual consequences of ownership, as from humanitarian concern for the slave, as the dire imprecation of one 'Friend' suggests, 'Thus shall God shed the blood of those persons who enslave their fellow-creatures'.⁹⁰

The slave's death at the sailor's hands causes him to be haunted by supernatural manifestations. She remains a visible reminder of his act:

I saw the sea close over her,
Yet she was still in sight;
I see her twisting every where;
I see her day and night.
(*P* (1799), ll. 101-4)

However a stronger agent of nemesis is 'the wicked one' (l. 106) who follows the sailor everywhere. This haunting of the sailor by a supernatural avenger has an obvious connotation with the 'Ancient Mariner'. In Coleridge's poem this agent of retribution is the 'Polar Spirit' and its 'fellow demons' (*CPW*, I, p. 202). There is the same struggle between forces of good and evil, though Southey's poem is more obviously rooted in conventional Christian belief, as his forces are the devil and Christ and God. In the poem the battle it seems is won at the end, when the sailor receives Christian solace. The reader hears no more from the sailor, so presumes that his act of prayer concludes his mental torture. Coleridge's poem seems to steer closely towards the conventional consolation of 'the kirk' as his mariner nears land and begs a religious figure (the 'Hermit of the wood') to help him; 'O shrieve me, shrieve me holy Man' (*CPW*, II, p. 1046, l. 607). The mariner tells his story but unlike the sailor finds no redemption. He is compelled to keep telling it as a penance:

Since then at an uncertain hour,
Now oftimes and now fewer,
That anguish comes and makes me tell
My ghastly adventure
(*CPW*, II, p. 1047, ll. 615-8)

The image of constantly recurring horror suggests that in an age of colonial exploration and imperial expansion, such cycles of guilt will continue. Southey's trite, contrived ending - the 'cold moral' that Lamb accuses him of - implies that while this

individual sailor's story is over, as he resolves not to go to 'the Negroe shore' again, there is also no real closure, while the slave-trade and Britain's involvement in it continues:

Poor wretch, the stranger he replied
Put thou thy trust in heaven,
And call on him for whose dear sake
All sins shall be forgiven.

This night at least is thine, go thou
And seek the house of prayer,
There shalt thou hear the word of God
And he will help thee there!
(*P* (1799), ll. 117-24)

The poem's final stanzas display anxiety over the issue of slavery during the period, because while they are meant to be consolatory, the ending does not have enough power to redress the wrongs in the poem (a reflection of the lack of power to halt the trade). The 'stranger' - or Christian minister as he becomes in the later version - is helpless to oppose such an irreligious and immoral system. The final message of the poem is to passively accept the wrongs of this world, including the slave trade. There is no earthly solution to the sailor's sins or the system of slavery that engenders them, so he must 'trust in heaven' for redemption. In the end Southey's poem is not an aggressive clarion call for change because it anxiously reflects the religious conservatism of quietist reformers such as Hannah More. In her poem 'The Sorrows of Yamba, or the Negro Woman's Lamentation' (1795), More's character Yamba says after her conversion to Christianity:

Now I'll bless my cruel capture
(Hence I've known a Saviour's name),
Till my grief is turned to rapture
And I half forget the blame.⁹¹

Slaves (and sailors) should passively accept the problems of this world - in order to gain a heavenly place in the next - until such a time as British consciences are awakened (or they find it in their 'interest' to abolish the slave trade). Such sentiments would of course come to be spoken through that icon of suffering acquiescence, Tom, in Harriet Beecher Stowe's text *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852).

* * *

The connection between the 'Ancient Mariner' and 'The Sailor' which I have explored here is important because if Southey intended his poem to be a didactic re-writing of Coleridge's, it provides some evidence that the abolitionist theme was intended to be one aspect of the subject matter explored in the 'Ancient Mariner'.

Jonathan Wordsworth touches on the link between the two poems in his 'Introduction' to the 1997 facsimile of Southey's *Poems* (1799).⁹² His introduction characteristically concentrates as much on Coleridge as it does on Southey, and – oddly enough at the beginning of a volume of Southey's poetry – endeavours wherever possible to point out that he is not one of 'the greatest poets'.⁹³ Wordsworth accuses Southey (as many have done before) of a lack of generosity in his review of *Lyrical Ballads* and then various acts of plagiarism against the authors of that volume. He says:

Nowhere is it more difficult to be sure of Southey's motivation than in his attack on *Lyrical Ballads* ...and subsequent plagiary. To call the *Ancient Mariner* 'a Dutch attempt at German sublimity' is one thing, then to publish a ballad that plainly borrows from it is another. *The Sailor who had Served in the Slave Trade* is not an isolated case: other and more blatant, plagiarisms are found in Southey's borrowings from Wordsworth. He can't be unaware of what he is doing.⁹⁴

This seems to me a narrow understanding of Southey's position, but in the hot defence of his champions against the plagiarising Southey, Wordsworth (Jonathan, not William) stumbles on Southey's motives.⁹⁵ When Wordsworth says of Southey 'he

can't be unaware of what he is doing', the reply could well be that he is not, because he is only too aware of his didactic intent to correct poetical errors where he sees them. It makes more sense to see Southey as genuinely critical of the poems and subsequently fulfilling his intention to correct those errors in his own writing of rural ballads, whatever opinion modern critics may have about the merits of those poems in relation to Coleridge's and Wordsworth's.

Again in Coleridge's comment that Southey begins 'to rely too much on *story* and *event* in his poems, to the neglect of those *lofty imaginings*, that are peculiar to, and definitive of, the poet', we find evidence of the two poets' different methods of writing.⁹⁶ Though it is too simplistic to say with the benefit of hindsight that Coleridge is valued for his 'lofty imaginings' while Southey concentrates simply on 'story' and 'event', it also throws light on Southey's intention in writing 'The Sailor'. While Coleridge might have seen 'lofty imaginings' in the 'Ancient Mariner' (and regretted having given too much away by its moral), Southey saw its lack of 'story' and related 'event' as being 'absurd' and 'unintelligible', while his own poem 'The Sailor' cannot be accused of that. Christopher Smith sees *Poems* (1799) as having been written in response to *Lyrical Ballads*, so that Southey's 'The Sailor' is therefore 'one answer to *The Rhyme of the Ancyent Marinere*: an intelligible, authentic story of contemporary social concern publicly told without embellishment, with the reinforcing statement that such tales need publicity'.⁹⁷ My contention is therefore that 'The Sailor' should not be read as a 'gloss', or 'companion piece' for the 'Ancient Mariner', but as Southey's *re-writing* of Coleridge's poem in order to make sense of the 'nonsense' he found there and to 'unriddle' its elusive message.

Southey intended his 'Sailor Who Served In The Slave Trade' to be an overt and unmistakable attack on slavery, proudly announcing 'I know it prevented a West

Indian planter from buying my first volume; so it made the fellow feel' (*SL*, I, p. 70). Whatever limitations his poetic depiction of the slavery debate has, his intention was to benefit mankind by his ability to make readers (including planters) 'feel' - even if the much needed funds he required from his writing were forfeit. It should not be forgotten that Southey's poems on the slave-trade were central to his oeuvre, and his intention to write poetry that was morally useful. In the same letter to John May in which he expresses his disappointment at not converting more consumers to giving up sugar, he shows his ambition to improve society through his poetry:

I may not live to do good to mankind personally – but I will at least leave something behind me to strengthen those feelings & excite those reflections in others, from whence virtue must spring. (*RSJM*, p. 27)

So as an author, Southey's moral usefulness was a fundamental facet of his character. The critique of colonial guilt is only implicit in Coleridge's 'Ancient Mariner' (while not forgetting that poems like 'Religious Musings' and 'Fears in Solitude are much more critical) while it is explicit in 'The Sailor' because Southey wished this poem to make a real difference to society. Rather than presenting an obscure (if sublime) exploration of the psychology of colonialism, Southey's criticism is firmly rooted in the abolitionist debate.

The approach Southey chose however is rather limited. His attempt to ameliorate black suffering by a conventional route that publicises the harsh predicament of the slaves, relies on a 'cult of sentiment' that demands victims. By showing his black protagonists as victims of traders, sailors, planters and even British consumers of West Indian products, Southey may gain his readers' sympathy, but he also conforms to the stereotypical depiction of the slave as inferior, weak (and even as a 'creature'),⁹⁸ rather than as a rational, intelligent human being. Trapped within their

subordinate position, black slaves are shown to be as dependent on the more powerful white abolitionists to obtain their freedom for them, as they are on the planters who purchase them. This has always been a contentious point for post-colonial critics who point out the nugatory role that slaves were given by their contemporaries.⁹⁹ The depiction of black people as powerless and dependent might have been effective abolitionist propaganda in an era of sensibility, but it also served to reinforce ideas of inferiority. By using this weapon in the ideological war for abolition, Southey actually replicated the pro-slavery lobby's argument that black humans were inferior to whites, given by writers such as Edward Long. Though Southey did not subscribe to the polygenist theories of Long,¹⁰⁰ or his racist polemic – and did not believe that inferiority justified slavery anyway¹⁰¹ – the visionary claims for equality of his levelling politics do not stand up in the colonial arena. Making his fellow humans 'feel' was at the end of the day all Southey intended to do; his poetry was not calculated to change white society's views of black people.

1.6 'Verses spoken in the theatre at Oxford, upon the installation of Lord Grenville'

This final poem in Southey's edition of *Poetical Works*, which brings the collection of Southey's 'Poems Concerning the Slave Trade' together, was written in 1810 (after the 1807 bill for abolishing the slave trade in Britain and her colonies had been passed by the House of Lords). The poem praises William Wyndham Grenville, who was responsible for founding the coalition 'Government of All the Talents' as it was known, in 1806-7, which abolished the trade. In the poem, Southey does not discuss issues of slavery or abolition, preferring to applaud Britain's role in resisting the 'upstart tyranny' (*PW*, II, pp. 67-70, l. 33) of Napoleon Bonaparte's (now Emperor

Napoleon I) French regime. Britain is portrayed as a repository for all those virtues and values that Southey sees Europe in danger of losing, under siege from Napoleon:

And thou, O England, who dost ride
Serene amid the waters of the flood,
Preserving, even like the Ark of old,
Amid the general wreck, [of Europe] thy purer faith,
Domestic loves, and ancient liberty
(ll. 42-6)

There are some differences from Southey's early, radical poetry that can be accounted for in the years that have passed since it was written. Britain is not attacked here for its social or political injustices, but is portrayed much more positively. Southey finds a foreign 'other' to criticise instead of his own country, because he has come to believe that while the British political system may not be ideal, it is better than many of those he sees. But despite this positive image of Britain, Southey warns that there have been times when his country may have been in moral peril. One of these dangers might have been British links with colonial slavery, if it had not been for Lord Grenville's protection of his country from such depravity:

...bless thy name,
Grenville, because the wrongs of Africa
Cry out no more to draw a curse from Heaven
On England!
(ll. 53-6)

As in 'The Sailor Who Served in the Slave Trade', Southey is concerned to preserve his own country from the stain of slavery, and so attempts to dissociate Britain from those of her 'children' who still continue to engage illegally in the trade. The implication is that while some British citizens may 'set at nought/Her laws and God's own word' (ll. 65-6), nevertheless only such a country as Britain – where 'purer faith' and 'ancient liberty' reside (ll. 45-6) – could have produced such a 'son' as Grenville, who holds dear these values.

Napoleon's 'midnight murders and perfidious plots' (l. 77) are also described to show how virtuous and noble, Grenville (and by extension, Britain) is in comparison. Southey's eulogy of Grenville rises to beatific heights in its veneration of the statesman:

...Grenville, even then
Thy memory will be fresh among mankind
Afric with all her tongues will speak of thee,
With Wilberforce and Clarkson, he whom Heaven,
To be the apostle of his holy work,
Raised up and strengthen'd and upheld through all
His arduous toil.

(ll. 81-7)

Grenville (despite Wilberforce and Clarkson) is the saviour of Africa and Britain, and again this poem totally effaces any active black role in achieving abolition. F.O.

Shyllon has pointed out how such 'canonised' white abolitionists totally erase the role that black activist groups (which he suggests did exist in London) and black writers (like Ignatius Sancho, Olaudah Equiano, and Robert Wedderburn) had in achieving abolition.¹⁰² Despite the individual and often eloquent voices of black writers, Sukhdev Sandhu and David Dabydeen state that 'the writings of abolition and emancipation...subsume these people into a discourse that at times drains them of their humanity, stereotyping their experience for the sake of parliamentary debates and changes in the law'.¹⁰³ Southey's poem predicates the image of humble, thankful Africans, raising their voices to offer their gratitude to Grenville:

Nations unborn, in cities that shall rise
Along the palmy coast, will bless thy name;
And Senegal and secret Niger's shore,
And Calabar, no longer startled then
With sounds of murder, will, like Isis now,
Ring with the songs that tell of Grenville's praise.
(ll. 96-101)

Black people are marginalised to the position of an adulatory audience, in order to celebrate this white British champion of oppressed Africans, who takes central stage in the abolitionist drama. Southey is not concerned with the black experience in his poem; only with how Lord Grenville's role in abolishing slavery reflects on Britain. Described as being like the 'Ark of old', Britain maintains her (morally) upright position floating above the floods and 'general wreck' of Europe (p. 68), but also like the Ark of the Covenant, Britain contains and preserves all the sacred probity of God's laws.

1.7 Articles concerning the slave trade

I intend now to examine the articles that Southey wrote on the subject of the slave trade – or that deal with the wider issues of colonial politics in Africa and the West Indies – in order to show how his opinions progressed to combine with his increasingly conservative politics. Southey's reviewing career began in 1797 when he was employed by the *Critical Review* – in which periodical his 1798 review of *Lyrical Ballads* was published – and continued almost throughout his life for various periodicals. Most of the articles he wrote that refer to the slave trade were published at a later period in his life than his poems on the subject, and are interesting for the way they extend his thoughts on the issue. After all Southey's 'Poems Concerning the Slave Trade' were written with a specific polemical urgency, while his articles, though often hotly opposed to the slave trade, are more reflective in their approach. Southey's journalism reflects his abiding interest in the work of missionaries and colonists to create outposts of British society abroad; whether Polynesian, Indian, Australian, African or Caribbean. Several of Southey's articles discuss developments in the West Indies and Africa and while they are often disparate, ruminative and digressive in their subject matter, I have examined the composite links between them

in order to expose his responses to colonial politics in later life. These articles, while often objecting to slavery, or the practices of slave-owners in the West Indies, nevertheless advocate the colonisation and development of the region. The plantocracy maintained that this development could not be carried out without slaves to work the land. For instance Bryan Edwards, a Jamaican planter, argued for the pro-slavery lobby in 1789 that:

there is not a man in the perfect exercise of his understanding, who can seriously believe that, if the Slave-Trade be abolished, any part of this great territory will ever come into cultivation.- Mr. Wilberforce is silent upon the subject.- The great aim of his Propositions is to demonstrate that we may, by various means, keep up our *present* cultivation: He does not venture to go a step further. Every acre of uncultivated property must, therefore, on his own admission, remain an unexplored, unimproved, unproductive wilderness.¹⁰⁴

Objecting to colonial slavery while advocating the possession of foreign territories in the name of Britain might seem at odds in the light of modern humanitarian principles, but Southey comfortably straddled both ideas in his ethos of how colonisation would benefit the British economy and British citizens.

Southey's articles on the slave trade do retain some of the philippic of his protest poems, though six years on from the publication of *Poems* 1797, he seems to accept the institution of slavery as an established evil. His concern is as much with ameliorating the slaves' living conditions as with abolition. Southey's review of the *Transactions of the Missionary Society* in the *Annual Review* (1803), as well as discussing Polynesian missions, also reports on a Dutch attempt to set up a South African mission. Southey appends a short, favourable report on the institution of the latter amongst the 'Hottentots' to his review. He also digresses to discuss 'a very remarkable circumstance relative to the propagation of christianity'. Southey is

incredulous that 'in certain of our West Indian islands, the missionaries have been forbidden to attempt the conversion of the negroes' because:

If such tenets as they inculcate can any where be useful, it must be in those accursed islands, where the sight of a plantation would soon reconcile the most scrupulous humanity to the doctrine of fire and torments for the wicked ...the disbelief or disregard of a God in the sugar islands, converts the planter into the image of a devil.¹⁰⁵

Southey objects to the fact that the planters do not want to 'civilize' or 'christianize' the slave population of the islands, and so are condemning both themselves and their slaves to 'eternal punishment'. But a twin concern is that by allowing this situation to continue; 'We have one set of laws for the sugar islands, and another for England; one set of feelings, one set of morals for each'.¹⁰⁶ Southey's reference to the difference in laws could apply to the West Indian plantocracy's long resistance to the British justice system to impose its laws on the issue of slave-ownership. For instance the planters opposed legal decisions on slaves who claimed their freedom on British soil, by their own system of 'custom' that created local laws outside the central control of the metropolis.¹⁰⁷ The difference in laws that Southey exposes implies a difference in 'feelings' and 'morals' that institute those laws, in order to protect the planters, rather than the slaves, from injustice. Southey wants to bring the islands back into line under the regulating umbrella of the British Empire with its Christian religion and established justice system, in order to control this imperial outpost. Any benefit for Britain will be in this region being an extension of empire not an immoral and irreligious, separate community. At this point though, Southey is still concerned to attack those in power in Britain, who have done nothing to prevent the system of slavery. He concludes ironically:

It would then be seen, whether those worthy, and noble, and royal legislators who, in their humanity, voted away the bodies of the negroes, would also in their piety, vote away their souls.¹⁰⁸

In the following year Southey wrote another article for the *Annual Review* (1804) which enabled him to discuss the issue of slavery again. His review was of a pamphlet, published anonymously, and entitled; *Addressed to the serious Consideration of the Peers; No Slaves, No Sugar: containing new and irresistible Arguments in favour of the African Trade. By a LIVERPOOL MERCHANT*. He describes the text succinctly:

This pamphlet is an ironical defence of the slave trade, in which the author, by stating in plain and naked language the arguments of its advocates, exposes the folly, the impudence, and the impiety of the reasoning, and the hard-heartedness of the reasoners.¹⁰⁹

The review repeats the exaggerated, specious arguments of the pamphleteer, in order to expose the sophistry of the slave-trade lobby. For instance the writer proposes that it is against God's ordinance to oppose slavery, as it has been biblically decreed that Ham's descendants (i.e. black people - who have historically been identified with the Canaanites) should fulfil this role. This is a familiar argument brought by the slave trade's defendants. Southey repeats the author's questioning (which has much in common with Edward Long's theories) of how all the races of man can be related when 'they are black and ugly and stupid? ... We may just as well believe that we are connected with the oran outangs, as that the negro savages are of the same race with ourselves'.¹¹⁰ Slavery is considered to be beneficial as it will 'remedy the inequalities of situation and civilization; to awaken savage man from the lethargy in which he lies'. The review of the pamphlet repeats many of its outrageous fallacies, such as the suggestion that if African natives were not removed from their country, the remaining

inhabitants would suffer from famine, and 'who can doubt that the negroes would eat one another were it not for the slave trade?'¹¹¹ The pamphlet goes on to parallel the slave trade with the iniquitous acts of British society, in order to justify its practices. Slave-traders are smoothly compared to naval press-gangs and 'crimps' who increase military numbers by purchasing 'simple young lads' with 'an insignificant bounty, to serve for their whole natural lives'.¹¹²

Southey intersperses the review with his own opinions on slavery, and to warn his readers of the dangers of ignoring oppression:

Only a few quakers had regarded the slave trade as sinful, till Mr Clarkeson called the public attention to its atrocity. The people of England redeemed themselves by the feeling which they immediately discovered, - but the sin still remains. The speedy assent of the legislature to the abolition is now become of less interest to the moralist, and more to the politician, since the triumph of the negroes in Hayti.¹¹³

Southey argues that the moralising sentiment or 'feeling' that gave abolition its impetus in earlier years, should be replaced by political expediency if the British government wishes to avoid 'the triumph of the negroes' in their own colonies. Southey refers to the slave rebellions against the planters that began in 1791, in the French West Indian colony of St. Domingue and continued to erupt, repelling British, Spanish and French forces in their fight for self-government and black emancipation. The colony was proclaimed as the new 'Republic of Haiti' at the beginning of 1804 by its rebel leaders, and the black Jean Jacques Dessalines was proclaimed as 'Governor General'. Abolitionists had closely followed the events in St. Domingue, and James Stephen (brother-in-law of William Wilberforce) had advocated helping the rebels in a pamphlet entitled *The Opportunity or Reasons for an Immediate Alliance with St. Domingo* in 1803.¹¹⁴ Certainly the figure of Toussaint L'Ouverture, who had led the St. Domingue slaves and maroons to victory, before being captured

by Napoleon's forces and dying in prison in 1803 had become a romantic figure of liberty and equality for many. Because Toussaint was regarded as a 'black Jacobin' it is of course a moot point whether he was valued as an opponent of the French autocratic government, or as a champion of black liberty. Wordsworth wrote a sonnet to the imprisoned 'Chieftain' in the year of his death, where he suggests that the spirit of rebellion that Toussaint has inspired will continue; 'Thou hast left behind/Powers that will work for thee' (*WPW*, III, p. 113, ll. 9-10). Southey intimates in his article that the continual threat of rebellion from the black populations of the West Indies will be a motivating factor in abolishing slavery:

The Romans, in their greatest power, durst not suffer their slaves to wear a badge, lest the oppressed should count their own numbers: the Creoles cannot imitate them in this; they can neither keep their slaves ignorant of their strength, nor conceal themselves from their fury when the day of retribution arrives. If they prevent it not by acting according to religion, and common humanity, and common wisdom, that day inevitably will arrive, and their blood be upon their own heads!¹¹⁵

Although Southey yet again avoids discussing the issue of colour - so that the slaves' black skin is equated to a 'badge' - he does concede to the African slaves a more powerful image of kinship and common identity in their shared colour, with which to oppose the Creoles. Despite the apocalyptic warning that this passage contains, Southey seems hopeful that 'religion and common humanity and common wisdom' will prevail.

The reference to Thomas Clarkson in the review is one of many to be found in Southey's poems, letters and articles that reveal the esteem he held this dedicated campaigner in. Thomas Clarkson and his wife had moved to Ullswater in the Lake District in 1796, and became friends of Dorothy and William Wordsworth in 1799 when they too were looking for a home there. Coleridge, the Lambs and Southey all

became acquainted with the Clarksons through their friendship with the Wordsworths. Southey met Clarkson when he came to live in the Lake District and recommended him to his friend Charles Danvers as a man 'who so nobly came forward about the Slave Trade to the ruin of his health – or rather state of mind – and to the deep injury of his fortune' (*NL*, I, p. 335). He added that when he talks on the subject of slavery, 'he agitates every one who hears him'. Like Clarkson, Southey also admired the Quakers for their pacific principles and both men were interested in the developing Pennsylvanian colony that the Quaker, William Penn had founded, where native Americans and British colonisers existed in a peaceful, harmonious existence.¹¹⁶ This colonial community was one that Southey was to hold up as a model for the British Empire all over the world, including Africa and the West Indies.

Southey went on to write very positive reviews of Clarkson's *Portraiture of Quakerism* (1806) and *History of the Abolition of the Slave-Trade* (1808) for the *Annual Review*. The latter review comprises a comprehensive history of the abolition campaign from Clarkson's perspective, concentrating particularly on his personal trials and triumphs. Southey's article also repeats documented instances of abuse carried out on sailors and slaves from the triumphalist position of one who advocated abolition, in the year after it was achieved. Among those that the review berates however are the royal supporters of slavery – though they are not named here, Southey had attacked the Duke of Clarence in previous articles, for his backing of the pro-slavery lobby¹¹⁷ – which Clarkson's *History* also hints at, 'but which is much too delicate to be mentioned'.¹¹⁸ Southey notes Clarkson's reserve in his *History*, but claims himself that if it had not been for the 'notorious predilection of the royal family for the African slave trade' then 'that traffic would have been abolished ten years earlier, and all the guilt and misery accumulated in consequence during those years

would have been spared'.¹¹⁹ Despite his admiration now for British justice and humanity in abolishing the slave trade, he still feels the levelling impulse to attack those in power, who he feels have neglected their moral and patriotic duty as leaders of their country.

Southey's 1804 review of the pamphlet 'No slaves, no sugar', had already noted the Duke of Clarence's support of the slave trade. In this article though Southey was less concerned with attacking notable supporters and more so with criticising the propagandist techniques of the pro-slavery lobby that this parody exposes:

Though the irony in this pamphlet is too long continued, and sometimes not sufficiently obvious to those who are not well acquainted with the history of the subject, the author has nevertheless succeeded in his object: by such sneers, such obstinacy of ignorance, such impudent assertions, and such dangerous statements of the comparative happiness of the negro slaves and the English poor, this traffic in human flesh has been, and will be, defended.¹²⁰

The discussion by domestic reformers, such as William Cobbett, of the 'comparative happiness of the negro slaves and the English poor', was a device by which attention could be drawn to the harsh working and living conditions of the English lower classes. In his *Political Register* (a weekly periodical that was established in January 1802), Cobbett – who despite abstaining from West Indian commodities, did not oppose the slave trade – compared the lives of the British poor to plantation slaves, to demonstrate that the former were more oppressed.¹²¹ Despite Southey's opposition to such 'dangerous' parallels being made, this was something that he also did in later life when his concern for abuses in the colonial outreaches had been replaced by a more introspective solicitude for the welfare of his own society. For instance in a letter to his friend John May in 1833 he is happy to make such comparisons himself, in order to expose the plight of the British manufacturing workers:

I have gone thro the whole Evidence concerning the treatment of Children in the factories; & nothing so damnable was ever brought to light before. The slave trade is mercy to it, [& a Jamaica plantation is a Garden of Eden.] We know how the slave trade began, & imperceptibly increased, - nothing in the beginning being committed that shocked the feelings as was contrary to the spirit of the age: having thus grown up it went on by succession and of latter years has rather been mitigated than made worse. But this white slavery has arisen in our own days, & is carried on in the midst of this civilized & Christian nation. – Herein it is that our danger consists; the great body of the manufacturing populace - & now of the agricultural – are *miserably* poor. Their condition is worse than it *ought* to be. One after another we are destroying all the outworks by which order, & with it property & life - are defended; - & this brutalized populace is ready to break in upon us. The prelude which you witnessed at Bristol was a manifestation of the spirit that exists among them: but in the manufacturing district when the wages of the adults are at a starvation rate, & their children are – literally – worked to death, murdered by inches, - the competition of the masters being the radical cause of these evils, there is a dreadful reality of oppression, - a dreadful sense of injustice, - of intolerable misery, - of intolerable wrongs, - more formidable than any causes which have ever moved a people to insurrection, Once more I will cry aloud and spare not, - these are not times to be silent. (*RSJM*, p. 256)¹²²

The abuses of the slave trade that Southey had previously highlighted are palliated here. In earlier times they were only one more manifestation of ‘the spirit of the age’ and so were acceptable on those terms. More recently the slave trade has been ‘rather mitigated than made worse’, suggesting Southey is relinquishing his philosophical opposition to the concept of slavery. In this example slavery has become nothing more than a metaphor for Southey, in order for him to draw attention to the iniquities of his own society. Compared to the manufacturing industry, he says ‘the slave trade is mercy’ and ‘a Jamaican plantation is a Garden of Eden’. While the hyperbole is presumably intended to heighten the reader’s impression of the ‘white slavery’ in his own country, it also serves to make light of the African slavery that Southey had previously reserved his outrage for. This letter was written a few months before the Emancipation Act was passed, establishing the freedom – though limited by a system of apprenticeship – of slaves in the British colonies. Whereas once Southey had felt obliged to ‘cry aloud and spare not’ on the subject of African

slavery, he now does so on behalf of British workers and their children who are 'murdered by inches'. Southey sacrifices the black slave here for the white one he identifies, diluting or even negating the experience of black suffering. The anti-slavery campaign was not now a priority in his life, in fact 'he believed in a slower method of abolition than that proposed by emancipators',¹²³ as a letter written two years earlier reveals:

The Anti-Slavery Society have sent me some papers wishing me to stir the question in this neighbourhood. I got a petition for them on one or two former occasions; but will lend them no assistance now, when Government stands less in need of the spur than of the curb. (*SL*, IV, p. 227)

Southey's concern now is not for human conditions in the colonies but for those at the imperial centre, and this concern is linked to his fears that industrial oppression will end in violence, like the Bristol riots he alludes to. These took place in Bristol in 1831 in response to the failure of the second Reform Bill to extend the franchise, which was defeated in the House of Lords. The connection that Southey makes between slavery and the violence wreaked by a 'brutalized populace' on its 'masters', calls to mind the slave revolutions that have taken place in the West Indies. Southey makes the same warning about 'white slavery' as he did about black, that there is a likelihood of violent rebellion as a response to oppression. The terrifying slave uprisings of the colonies are 'imported' to Britain, and Southey's fears for society (i.e. 'property and life') reach a fevered pitch in his letter. He is still positing revolt and riot, but the consequences now for him are fearful rather than laudable. Southey's politics have become more reactionary, so in order to criticise his society and yet avoid accusations of radicalism; he uses the safe metaphor of a much more distant colonial 'slavery' to make his comparison. Though still attacking 'masters'

who oppress their labourers, his objections are diffused into a criticism of the manufacturing industry, that forms the basis of his country's capitalist ambitions.

1.8 Thomas Southey's *Chronological History of the West Indies*

Southey had access to direct information on West Indian matters from his brother Thomas, who served several times on ships that went there. Robert's letters to Thomas often ask him to gain information on the customs of the Africans he sees, even suggesting the questions he should ask regarding their 'superstitions' and their 'beasts' to direct his inquiries, saying:

This is the way to collect facts respecting the native African and their country. I would engage, in twelve months, were I in the West Indies, to get materials for a volume that should contain more real importancies than all travellers have yet brought home. (*LC*, II, p. 241)

In a further letter he writes again:

Your extracts are very interesting...Go on as you have begun and you will soon collect more, and more valuable, materials than you are aware of...Lose nothing that a Creole, or any man acquainted with the islands, tells you concerning them. (*LC*, II, p. 358)

Such 'valuable materials' eventually led to the publication in 1827 of Thomas Southey's *Chronological History of the West Indies*.¹²⁴ It is tempting to speculate how far Southey was involved in his brother's project, knowing his enthusiasm for it, and considering that by this time he was a well-known writer. The 'notes' sections of Southey's epic poems for instance (considered in subsequent chapters) constitute mini-histories themselves in the exhaustive range of facts they provide to support his poetic fiction. However much Southey was involved in the publication process, he certainly assisted his brother by writing a long and favourable (anonymous) review of

it for the *Quarterly Review* in 1828, saying of Thomas 'he has searched widely, and compiled diligently'.¹²⁵

The review provides a synopsis of the *History*, which discusses first Spanish colonial expansion in the West Indies (incidentally condemning the 'Romish faith' of that nation), followed by that of the British and the French. Southey's article conforms to what would become an established reviewing technique, of picking out from the historical account of the colonisation of the islands – which includes 'much that is revolting, much that is bloody, and more that is base' – the 'romantic incident' that will appeal to his reader.¹²⁶ Towards the end of the article he discusses the 'evil' result that occurred on St. Domingue (Haiti) due to 'the multiplication of the negroes'.¹²⁷ He suggests that the rebellions by the slaves could have been averted if the Spanish and French had not made laws preserving their racial purity. Because the races were not allowed to mix, the black population was segregated, and so found strength in their 'badge' of blackness. Southey suggests a solution to such problems in the colonies:

in those regions the only proper course of policy was indicated by the course of nature; that in the mixed breed, the European mind is engrafted upon the African constitution; and that if the French government had understood its own interest, it should have encouraged the growth of that race, capable by nature, as they are, of labouring under a tropical sky, and educated, as they might, and ought to have been, in those artificial wants, which are the wholesome and needful incentives to industry, and in those moral and religious principles, which are the only safeguard of society.¹²⁸

This passage is curious for its vision of miscegenation that depends not on a mixing of bloods or colours, but on the 'engrafting' of 'the European mind' upon the 'African constitution', creating a strange picture of a white head on a black body. This dislocated image is of course what Southey intends, because the physical (African) body that needs to be strong enough to withstand disease and work, should nevertheless be subordinate to a superior (European) intellect that has inculcated

'moral and religious principles'. Incidentally, this new race will be 'educated' in 'those artificial wants, which are the wholesome and needful incentives to industry'. The perceived benefit of 'artificial wants' to the civilizing process is now very different to the 1795 philosophy of them as inequitable and iniquitous aspects of the 'luxury of individuals'.

Southey's racial solution would prevent insurrection because the colour distinction would no longer exist, but it would also solve the pro-slavery lobby's contention that without African slaves the West Indies could not be settled and cultivated. It was well known that diseases such as yellow fever annually wiped out many of the islands' white populations, and it was also perceived that Europeans were physically unfit for heavy work in a tropical climate. In an account of the parliamentary debate for the abolition of the slave trade in 1791, General Tarleton, apologist for slavery, was reported as saying:

Many attempts have been made to cultivate the lands in the different islands by white labourers but it was found that from the difference of climate, and other causes, population had decreased, and those who took the greatest pains to accomplish this, found that in ten years time they could not have any proportion of whites capable of purposes of cultivation at all. He therefore agreed in the necessity of the Slave-Trade, if we meant to carry on the West India commerce and cultivation.¹²⁹

The problem of how to develop the West Indian colonies without slaves is solved by Southey in his 'super' race that combines what he sees as the best elements of Europeans and Africans. This was not a new idea for Southey; he had proposed such a solution to the development of the West Indian colonies in a letter to John May in 1814. His ideal colonial inhabitant there too is described as; 'of a mixed race, uniting so much of the European mind and African conformation as may render them the fit

inhabitants of a tropical climate' (*SL*, II, p. 358) - his kit for building a composite colonist.

A review that Southey wrote a year later (1829) should be mentioned here for its similarities. The review was also for the *Quarterly*, of a text entitled the *Life and Services of Captain Philip Beaver*. The article includes an account of Beaver's superhuman attempts to colonise the island of Bulama, off the West African coast, in 1792.¹³⁰ Beaver's colony began with a population of 275 Britons, but many died or returned home, and within two years Beaver had also abandoned the colony. Despite the idyllic descriptions of the verdant landscape given in the review, Southey concedes that it is not a place for Europeans:

It was not at that time notoriously known, that 'white man' cannot live there: that the European *homo* can no more bear the climate of Western Africa, than the African *simia* can bear that of northern Europe.¹³¹

Again he posits his theory of the kind of people that can live there, but is more detailed and practical in his description of the next generation of colonists:

It [i.e. Bulama] seems,' says Beaver, 'to have been produced in one of Nature's happiest moods.' But not for white colonists! It is from negroes and mulattos, trained in European civilization, that the civilization of Western Africa must come; and proper colonists, fitted by such training, as well as by constitution, will be raised up in the course of one generation, from the time in which the humane, and temperate, and just, and wise measures of our present colonial policy shall be fairly carried into effect in the Columbian Islands.¹³²

Southey's colonial strategies for Africa therefore include the West Indies too. Like the Creole planters (and the earlier writers, Wadstrom and Benezet) Southey sees the solution to West Indian development in an African work-force. Still seeking imperial control, but without the benefits of modern medical science, Southey admits that 'negroes and mulattos' can only live in these places. He advocates Britain's role as a

paternalistic colonial authority rather than exposing British colonists to such unhealthy tropical locations. If control of these areas must be relinquished because of disease and enervation, then links should be maintained through 'training' in British 'colonial policy', a precursor to the twentieth-century administrative system of the British Commonwealth.

Southey therefore recognised Britain's inability to lay claim to African territories because (as he stated in a review of the *Report of the Committee of the African Institution* of 1808) 'the geographical divisions of nature are permanent, her colour on the map admits of no shiftings...that which is black must remain so', but his plan was to claim the loyalty of its people for Britain.¹³³ His complaisant black colonists will:

have nothing to apprehend from the climate, and being English by language and by religion, their convenience and their interest would always attach them to England, even if no reliance were to be placed upon gratitude and the goodness of human nature.¹³⁴

There are of course dangers to his plan to anglicise Africans and one of these he identifies in a review of the *New Testament in the Negro Tongue* for the *Quarterly Review* (1830). In this article Southey discusses the use of 'talkee talkee', a 'childish' corrupt 'lingo' - a mixture of Dutch and English, used by the slaves of Surinam (a Dutch, South American colony) - in which a version of the Bible has been published.¹³⁵ Despite the ostensible desire of promoting Christianity, Southey sees this bastardised language as a vehicle for slave owners to keep slaves in a degraded position, ignorant of the true meaning of the Bible, literature, and particularly legal knowledge with which to oppose their captivity. His article concludes that the parent languages of white settlers, whether English or Dutch, are the most suitable for their colonies abroad, because of the access to knowledge that this promotes. Being aware

of Southey's plans for black English colonies in Africa, it is easy to follow his reasoning. For him, English is the language of knowledge but also the ideal tool for training black colonists in, in order to ensure that 'their interest would always attach them to England'.

Southey concludes his review of Thomas Southey's *History of the West Indies* by admitting that past events in this area have generally been depressing:

In the annals of the last century, military and naval operations occupy a large space; they are melancholy details of lives sacrificed by thousands to a fatal climate, and of expeditions producing nothing but evil in their course.¹³⁶

But he looks to the future for hope and improvement in an exciting new period when slavery has ended, and model colonies, inhabited by 'proper colonists', are run along the lines of the Pennsylvanian example, for the greater benefit of Britain:

New colonies are now rising in the remotest part of the world; and under whatever form of government they may settle when the foundations are firmly laid, the language, at least of England will be retained there. Great Britain which may truly be called the hive of nations, is sending and must continue to send, forth its swarms.¹³⁷

1.9 Conclusion

The narrative of this chapter, which spans the literary output of Southey's life, owes much to the structure of his progression from young radical to cautious conservative. His youthful protests against the slave trade can be seen as one more aspect of his radical politics, but nevertheless should not be dismissed lightly. By measuring the actions, rather than the words of Southey and Coleridge, their ambitions to change society for the better had failed. Their Pantisocratic society never became reality; Southey's plans to create homes for invalids and impoverished women never materialised; both men became reactionary members of the society they had once

opposed. However by engaging in the abolitionist arena Southey and Coleridge added their voices to a loud, if often marginalised, call for an end to the slave trade – the most useful manifestation of their radical politics. The debate among historians over how influential such individual voices were continues. But by lending his weight to the cause of abolition Southey assisted in publicising the inhumane treatment of African slaves, through the medium of his poetry and his reviews. His writing was aimed at a specific section of British society, and so was published in periodicals and volumes that found their way into the lives and homes of the educated and wealthy – those who had the power to pressure the government into abolishing the slave trade. Southey's opposition may have originated in the revolutionary politics of the 1790s, but it contributed to a humanitarian campaign that came to embody the beliefs and conscience of the period.

As I have shown, Southey attempted to envisage Britain's relationship with Africa and the West Indies in the decades after the abolition of the slave trade (1807) and before the Emancipation Act (1833). While he can be accused of apostasy in his over-cautious approach to emancipation, it is necessary to remember that the focus of his attention had changed from wide-ranging, generalised calls for the improvement of the human condition to a more specific focus of how colonisation abroad would benefit Britain. Southey observed global matters through a domestic lens and so discussed these issues from a peculiarly parochial and paternalistic position. His argument that African colonies should benefit from the civilising influence of Britain intended the improvement of African lives as a subsidiary advantage, but his primary aim was to extend Britain's colonial power into African territories. While this may seem overly narrow or anglocentric now – and the legacy of such arguments is obvious in post-colonial terms – Southey's approach must be appreciated within its

historical context. Southey's importance to his period was not only as a poet and commentator of the moment, but in his attempt to imagine Britain's future relationship with the world – for better or worse, the colonialist projects advocated by Romantic intellectuals such as Southey would become the imperialist politics of the Victorian period.

Notes

¹ *Bristol and Transatlantic Slavery*, eds. Madge Dresser and Sue Giles (Bristol: Bristol Museums and Art Gallery with the University of the West of England, 2000), p. 53.

² Robert Southey, *Letters from England: by Don Manuel Alvarez Espriella. Translated from the Spanish* (1807), ed. Jack Simmons (London: The Cresset Press, 1951), pp. 480-1.

³ Southey was writing *Letters from England* in the Lake District where he now lived, and so it is not unreasonable to argue that he was envisioning the eighteenth-century Bristol of his youth.

⁴ 'In its own right Bristol was a large centre of consumption and production but, standing at the web of land and water communications, it also served as the focus of economic activity for a large area of south-west England, south Wales and the south-western Midlands. For this hinterland it acted as the market, distribution centre and source of capital', *The Trade of Bristol in the Eighteenth Century*, ed. W.E. Minchinton, vol. XX of *Bristol Record Society's Publications*, 46 vols. (Bristol: J W Arrowsmith Ltd., for Bristol Record Society 1957), pp. xiv-xv.

⁵ Simon Schama, *Landscape and Memory* (London: Fontana Press, 1996), p. 5.

⁶ *The Trade of Bristol in the Eighteenth Century*, ed. Minchinton, p. 57.

⁷ *Bristol, Africa and the Eighteenth Century Slave Trade to America: The Years of Ascendancy, 1730-45*, ed. David Richardson (Gloucester: Alan Sutton Publishers Ltd., for Bristol Record Society, 1987), pp. vii-xxiv.

⁸ For a comprehensive study of the production of goods used to trade for African slaves see Hugh Thomas, *The Slave Trade: The History of the Atlantic Slave Trade, 1440-1870* (London and Basingstoke: Picador, 1997), pp. 313-329.

⁹ This figure comes from Ellen Gibson Wilson, *Thomas Clarkson: A Biography* (Basingstoke and London: Macmillan, 1989), p. 30.

¹⁰ *The Trade of Bristol in the Eighteenth Century*, ed. Minchinton, XX, pp. xiii.

¹¹ Thomas, *The Slave Trade*, p. 301. Several critics, and among them Patrick J. Keane (in *Coleridge's Submerged Politics: The Ancient Mariner and Robinson Crusoe* (Columbia and London: University of Missouri Press, 1994), p. 135) have asserted that Shadrach Weeks, the manservant of Southey's aunt (Elizabeth Tyler) was black, but I have not found any evidence of this. A reason for this assumption is perhaps to be found in Coleridge's letters to Southey, where he opposes Southey's plan to take servants to America with them. In his egalitarian fervour Coleridge compares the position of domestic servants like 'Shad' and his wife, Sally, to slaves and 'helots'. See *Collected Letters of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, ed. Earl Leslie Griggs, 6 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1956-71), I, pp. 112-4, 121-2.

¹² Joan Baum, *Mind Forg'd Manacles: Slavery and the English Romantic Poets* (North Haven, Conn.: Archon Books, 1994), p. 17. Thomas Clarkson gives details of these instruments in *The History of the Rise, Progress and Accomplishment of the Abolition of the African Slave Trade* (Philadelphia: James P. Parke, 1808) that he says were sold in a shop in Liverpool but that he 'entirely overlooked at Bristol' (p. 300). In his account of the slave trade in Bristol, Clarkson was more concerned to examine the treatment of sailors on slave ships.

¹³ This is just one of several apocryphal stories that have grown up about St. Mary Redcliffe. The church's crypt was used to incarcerate French prisoners of war in the eighteenth century but there is no record of slaves being held there. It was also this church's bells that were supposed to have rung out in celebration of the defeat of Wilberforce's 1791 abolition bill in parliament. Many churches did express support for the defeat of the bill in this way but there is no record of payment for bell ringers in the accounts held for St. Mary Redcliffe – see *Bristol and Transatlantic Slavery*, eds. Dresser and Giles, pp. 95-6. However the fact that such stories grew up about St. Mary Redcliffe only serves to reinforce how closely linked the church was to the African trade through its wealthy and influential parishioners. Its lofty situation, towering over the docks, is a manifestation of the wealth and power of those citizens who profited by the trade.

¹⁴ Joan Baum, *Mind Forg'd Manacles*, p. 3.

¹⁵ Peter Marshall, 'The Anti-Slave Trade Movement in Bristol' in *Bristol in the Eighteenth Century*, ed. Patrick McGrath (Newton Abbot: David & Charles, for the Bristol Historical Association, 1972), pp. 187-215.

¹⁶ Marshall, 'The Anti-Slave Trade Movement in Bristol', pp. 212-4.

¹⁷ Jack Simmons, *Southey* (London: Collins, 1945), pp. 33-6.

¹⁸ See Southey's letters to Horace Walpole Bedford, 13th November 1793, and Grosvenor C. Bedford, 14th December 1793, *LC*, I, pp. 193-6, which show how attracted Southey was to the idea of emigrating to America even before he met Coleridge.

¹⁹ However in this later period of his life, Southey was ready to acknowledge the universities of Oxford and Cambridge as 'the great schools by which established opinions are inculcated and perpetuated'. Quoted by Simmons, *Southey*, p. 41.

²⁰ The Pantisocratic members changed at various times, but in a letter to his brother Thomas Southey, dated 7th September 1794, Southey writes, 'In March we depart for America: Lovell, his wife, brother, and two of his sisters: all the Frickers [Sarah, Edith, Mary, Martha, Eliza, George and their mother] – my mother, Miss Peggy and brothers; Heath, apothecary and man and wife; G. Burnett – S.T. Coleridge – Robt Allen and Robert Southey. Of so many we are certain, and expect more', *NL*, I, pp. 74-5.

²¹ It is worth pointing out here that Southey enjoyed an imaginative, if not truly a blood link with the leader of the Peasant's Revolt, through his grandmother's first marriage to a John Tyler. When he began writing poetry for the *Morning Post* in 1798 he used the pseudonymous signature 'Walter', saying 'I assume the name of Walter Tyler, in honour of my good old uncle, an ancestor of whom I am very proud, and with reason' quoted in *The Contributions of Robert Southey to the Morning Post*, ed. Kenneth Curry (Alabama: University of Alabama Press, 1984), p. 29.

²² For instance the inscription 'For a MONUMENT in the NEW FOREST', which traduced the tyrannical acts of enclosure carried out by William I was published in *Poems* (1797). Several other inscriptions opposing autocratic crimes, such as 'Inscription. For a column in Smithfield where Wat Tyler was killed' were published in the *Morning Post* (see *The Contributions of Robert Southey to the Morning Post*, ed. Curry). *The Annual Anthology* (1799) also included inscriptions that sought to create monuments to victims of abusive rulers, so that Southey can be seen to have been creating his own popular and radical history of Britain to oppose to the dominant heritage that was inculcated into British citizens by 'official' versions of history.

²³ *The Annual Anthology* (1799 and 1800), ed. Robert Southey, with an introduction by Jonathan Wordsworth (Poole and Washington D. C.: Woodstock Books, 1997), p. 135 (ll. 25-30). For a similar theme and even more radical development of the ideas in this poem see 'SONNET.- THE BEE' (*The Contributions of Robert Southey to the Morning Post*, ed. Curry, p. 31) where Southey also explicitly compares the exploitation of 'the Peasant' to this insect.

²⁴ Ernest Bernhardt-Kabisch, *Robert Southey* (Boston Ma.: Twayne Publishers, 1977), p. 14.

²⁵ Quoted by Basil Cottle, 'Thomas Chatterton', *Bristol in the Eighteenth Century*, ed. Patrick McGrath, pp. 90-108 (p. 103).

²⁶ Geoffrey Carnall, *Robert Southey and His Age: The Development of a Conservative Mind* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1960), pp. 31-2.

²⁷ Thomas Paine, *The Rights of Man* (Ware, Herts: Wordsworth Editions Ltd., 1996), pp. 183-4.

²⁸ George Whalley 'The Bristol Library Borrowings of Southey and Coleridge, 1793-8', in *The Library: A Quarterly Review of Bibliography*, ed. F.C. Francis (London, New York, Toronto and Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1950), Fifth Series, Vol. IV, pp. 114-32.

²⁹ Letter to Thomas Southey, 9th May 1795, quoted by Carnall, *Robert Southey and His Age*, p. 45.

³⁰ George Whalley, 'The Bristol Library Borrowings of Southey and Coleridge, 1793-8', pp. 116-7.

³¹ William Godwin, *Enquiry Concerning Political Justice, And its Influences on Modern Morals and Happiness* (1793), ed. Isaac Kramnick (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1976), p. 91.

³² The comment on the lecture's subject as 'Equality, Inequality, the Evils of Government' comes from Ernest Hartley Coleridge's preliminary note to it (p. 214).

³³ Coleridge gave the lecture on 16th June 1795 (of which a revised copy was printed in the fourth number of *The Watchman*, 1796), *Lects* 1795, p. 232.

³⁴ Thomas Clarkson, *An Essay on the Impolicy of the African Slave Trade* (London: J. Phillips, 1788), pp. 32-3. This book was borrowed from Bristol Library by Coleridge the day before his lecture was given, see George Whalley, 'The Bristol Library Borrowings of Southey and Coleridge, 1793-8', p. 121.

³⁵ George Cheyne (1671-1743) was a Scottish physician (although strictly speaking he was not qualified), who suggested that though the conditions of society had physically improved, there was nevertheless a price to pay for success, wealth and abundance. He identified that the British upper classes who enjoyed a luxurious lifestyle, were particularly subject to gluttony, indolence, heavy drinking and late nights. This way of life damaged their constitutions. In *The English Malady* (1733) Cheyne went on to identify the psychiatric disorders and neuroses that he observed in the aristocratic classes as symptoms of a malaise in civilized society, caused by its deleterious habits. However Roy Porter argues that it was precisely this identification of mental anguish and emotional disorder as a 'civilized' disease, that perversely made it a 'fashionable' condition, with the (often female) sufferers being credited with sensitivity and delicacy, Roy Porter, *Doctor of Society: Thomas Beddoes and the sick trade in Late-Enlightenment England* (London and New York: Routledge, 1992), pp. 86-111.

³⁶ Dorothy A. Stansfield, *Thomas Beddoes M.D. 1760-1808: Chemist, Physician, Democrat* (Dordrecht, Boston, Lancaster: D. Reidel Publishing Company, 1984), p. 127.

³⁷ For instance Beddoes' idea of a 'broth machine' and other measures to make food for the poor more substantial and nutritious. These were published in his 'Letter to the Rt. Hon. William Pitt on the means of relieving the present scarcity and preventing the diseases that arise from meagre food' (1796), see Stansfield's *Thomas Beddoes M.D. 1760-1808*, p. 187.

³⁸ Thomas Beddoes, *Hygeia: or Essays Moral and Medical on the causes affecting the personal state of our middling and affluent classes*, 3 vols. (Bristol: J. Mills, and London: R. Phillips, 1802), II, Essay VII 'Consumption', p. 18.

³⁹ Porter, *Doctor of Society*, p. 60.

⁴⁰ Quoted by Stansfield, *Thomas Beddoes M.D. 1760-1808*, pp. 213-4.

⁴¹ Beddoes, *Hygeia*, I, Essay II 'Personal Imprudence', p. 63.

⁴² George Whalley 'The Bristol Library Borrowings of Southey and Coleridge, 1793-8', p. 121.

⁴³ Carl Bernhard Wadstrom, *An Essay on Colonization, particularly applied to the Western Coast of Africa, &c.* (London: Darton and Harvey, 1794-5), p. 14.

⁴⁴ Wadstrom, *An Essay on Colonization*, p. 4.

⁴⁵ Anthony Benezet, *Some Historical Account of Guinea...with an Inquiry Into the Rise and Progress of the Slave Trade* (Philadelphia: Printed by Joseph Crukshank, 1771), p. 18.

⁴⁶ Edward Long, *History of Jamaica*, 3 vols. (London: printed for T. Lowndes, 1774), II, p. 354

⁴⁷ Long, *History of Jamaica*, II, p. 353.

⁴⁸ Debbie Lee, *Slavery and the Romantic Imagination* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002), pp. 3-4.

⁴⁹ William Fox, *An Address to the People of Great Britain, on the Propriety of Abstaining from West India Sugar and Rum* (London: Sold by M. Gurney..., T. Knott... and C. Forster..., 1791), title page.

⁵⁰ Fox, *An Address to the People of Great Britain*, p. 1.

⁵¹ Timothy Morton, 'Blood Sugar', in *Romanticism and Colonialism: Writing and Empire 1780-1830*, eds. Timothy Fulford and Peter J. Kitson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp. 87-106.

⁵² Fox, *An Address to the People of Great Britain*, p. 2.

⁵³ The passage from the lecture reads: 'A part of that Food among most of you is sweetened with the Blood of the Murdered. Bless the Food which thou hast given us! O Blasphemy! Did God give Food mingled with Brothers blood! Will the Father of all men bless the Food of Cannibals – the food which is polluted with the blood of his own innocent Children? Surely if the inspired Philanthropist of Galilee were to revisit earth and be among the feasters as at Cana he would not change Water into Wine but haply convert the produce into the things producing, the occasioned into the things occasioning! Then with our fleshly eye should we behold what even now truth-painting Imagination would exhibit to us – instead of sweetmeats Tears and Blood, and Anguish – and instead of Music groaning and the Loud Peals of the Lash', *Lects*, 1795, p. 248. See Morton, 'Blood Sugar', pp. 91-3.

⁵⁴ Quoted by Clare Midgeley, *Women Against Slavery: The British Campaigns 1780-1870* (London and New York: Routledge, 1992), p. 38.

⁵⁵ Midgeley, *Women Against Slavery*, p. 40.

⁵⁶ In *Women Against Slavery*, Clare Midgeley covers this whole debate and draws attention to just how many abolitionist groups and abstainers from West Indian products there were.

⁵⁷ There has been much debate in critical texts concerning the motivation behind the movement to abolish slavery in Britain at the end of the eighteenth and beginning of the nineteenth century, since the publication of Reginald Coupland's *The British Anti-Slavery Movement* (1933) and Eric Williams' *Capitalism and Slavery* (1944). The rise of capitalism was undoubtedly influential in promoting the cause of abolition, as Eric Williams shows. In order to apply the term 'capitalism' to this period it should be stripped of some of its modern connotations to be perceived as the liberal idea of the right to free enterprise. For example, one manifestation of this capitalist influence was the outcry against unfair privileges and allowances afforded to West Indian trade as opposed to East Indian, which resulted in lobbying against the former by those with an interest in the latter. However the impetus against the slave trade provided by such economic influences was only one strand in progressive thinking during the period. These effects should be seen in tandem with a new emphasis on the individual 'self', evident in the poetry of Wordsworth and Coleridge. This realisation of the importance of 'self' can be found in the opposition by individual conscience to national policy - an extension of the 'Jacobin' radicalism of British intellectuals in the 1790s. A demonstration of this was the attempt by private individuals to carry out extra-parliamentary campaigns against the slave trade through their writing, or by abstention from the consumption of West Indian products. Despite the debate over causation - and claims that works concentrating on white humanitarians and abolitionists obscure the part played by black writers and groups in Britain at the time - the contributions that Romantic writers like Southey and Coleridge made to the abolition movement cannot be discounted.

⁵⁸ See *Slavery, Abolition and Emancipation*, eds. Michael Craton, James Walvin and David Wright (London and New York: Longman, 1976), p. 195, where the editors state that 'in the last two decades of the eighteenth century a powerful humanitarian sentiment began to play a significant role in British politics inside and outside Parliament', and that the 'leading issue to which this sentiment was directed was that of slavery'. The authors suggest that the ideological origins of this growing opposition can be found in at least two strands of development, 'religious revivalism' (manifested in Quaker and Methodist groups, but also in the evangelical wing of the Church of England) and 'secular Enlightenment' especially 'movements for legal and economic reform'. In the politically charged climate of the late eighteenth century it was inevitable that manifestos for social change would not exist in isolation, but also lead to questions about the treatment of more peripheral human groups such as African slaves. As F.O. Shyllon shows in *Black Slaves in Britain* (London, New York, Ibadan: Oxford University Press, 1974), there were several celebrated court cases that drew national attention from the press and its wide readership. Judicial decisions over property rights regarding slaves, and insurance claims in respect of these rights (for instance the case of the slave ship *Zong* in 1783), led to discussions over whether it was legal for the trade in 'human cargo' to continue and so to a general questioning of individual human rights.

⁵⁹ *P* (1797), pp. 31-8.

⁶⁰ *PW*, II, pp. 55-70. Though this publication of Southey's poems dates the sonnets as 1794 – which would indicate that they are earlier versions than those in *Poems* (1797) – they have presumably been revised and edited for this much later collection and so I have chosen to use the text of *Poems* (1797).

⁶¹ Quoted by Kenneth Curry, *Robert Southey: A Reference Guide* (Boston, Ma.: G.K. Hall & Co., 1977), p. 2. This text contains a very useful survey of Southey's publications, as well as critical reviews of his work, from first publication up to 1975.

⁶² *Black Writers*, eds. Sukhdev Sandhu and David Dabydeen, vol. I of *Slavery, Abolition and Emancipation: Writings in the British Romantic Period*, eds. Peter J. Kitson and Debbie Lee, 8 vols. (London: Pickering and Chatto, 1999), p. x-xi.

⁶³ Morton, 'Blood Sugar', p. 98.

⁶⁴ These lines were not in the original *Monthly Magazine* version of October 1796 but were included in the version published in Coleridge's *Poems* (1797). See William Empson and David Pirie on this, who criticize the lines for making too obvious a 'moral exemplum', *Coleridge's Verse: A Selection* (London: Faber, 1972), p. 219.

⁶⁵ Alan Richardson, 'Race and representation in Bristol abolitionist poetry', *Romanticism and Colonialism*, eds. Fulford and Kitson, pp. 129-47 (pp. 143-4).

⁶⁶ Alan Richardson, 'Race and representation in Bristol abolitionist poetry', p. 145.

⁶⁷ *Verse*, ed. Alan Richardson, vol. IV of *Slavery, Abolition and Emancipation: Writings in the British Romantic Period*, eds. Peter J. Kitson and Debbie Lee, 8 vols. (London: Pickering and Chatto, 1999), p. x.

⁶⁸ *Robert Southey: The Critical Heritage*, ed. Lionel Madden (London and Boston: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1972), p. 101.

⁶⁹ This letter was written to William Taylor on 12th March 1799, in response to a letter from Taylor in which he had accused Southey of having a 'mimosa sensibility, an imagination excessively accustomed to summon up trains of melancholy ideas, and marshal funeral processions; a mind too fond by half, for its own comfort, of sighs and sadness, of pathetic emotion and heart-rend woe', *LC*, II, p. 12.

⁷⁰ Alan Richardson, 'Race and representation in Bristol abolitionist poetry', p. 144.

⁷¹ In his letter to John May, dated 26th June 1797, Southey employs this rhetoric again saying 'The savage and civilised states are alike unnatural, alike unworthy of the origin & end of man. Hence the prevalence of scepticism & atheism, which from being the effect become the cause of vice; & the civilised world sunk into a depravity dreadful as that which characterises the last ages of Rome seems again about to be renovated by a total revolution. It is covered by pestilential fogs which nothing but tempests can scatter & those tempests are begun', *RSJM*, p. 26. Incidentally the last phrase echoes Coleridge's prophecy 'even now the storm begins', *CPW*, I, p. 121, l. 315.

⁷² Southey however was not a committed millenarian. His letter to John May, 26th June 1797, continues on the subject: 'The necessity of another revelation I do not see myself. What we have, read with the right use of our own reasoning faculties, appears to me sufficient; but in a Millenarian this opinion is not ridiculous, and the many yet unfulfilled prophecies give it an appearance of probability...', *LC*, I, pp. 317-8.

⁷³ Carnall, *Robert Southey and His Age*, pp. 38-9.

⁷⁴ Wilson, *Thomas Clarkson: A Biography*, pp. 79-87.

⁷⁵ Robert Southey, 'Lyrical Ballads', *Critical Review*, 24 (October 1798), pp. 197-204 (pp. 200-1).

⁷⁶ Quoted in *Romanticism: An Anthology*, ed. Duncan Wu (Oxford and Malden, Massachusetts: Blackwell Publishers, 2000), p. 209.

⁷⁷ *The Critical Heritage: Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, ed. J. R. de J. Jackson (London and New York: Routledge, 1968), p. 4. However Richard Haven disputes this, saying that contemporary critics treated the poem 'first with coolness and then, for some years, with neglect. The poem did not, as is sometimes said, meet with universal disapproval', Richard Haven, 'The Ancient Mariner in the Nineteenth Century', in *Studies in Romanticism II* (1972), 360-74 (p. 365).

⁷⁸ Letter to Robert Southey, 8th November 1798, *The Letters of Charles Lamb*, ed. Alfred Ainger (London and New York: Macmillan & Co., 1888), p. 95.

⁷⁹ Letter to Robert Southey, 15th March 1799, *The Letters of Charles Lamb*, p. 104.

⁸⁰ Letter to Samuel Taylor Coleridge, 5th January 1797, *The Letters of Charles Lamb*, p. 58.

⁸¹ Alan Richardson, 'Race and representation in Bristol abolitionist poetry', p. 145.

⁸² J.R. Ebbatson, 'Coleridge's Mariner and the Rights of Man', in *Studies in Romanticism, II* (1972), 171-206 (p. 198).

⁸³ John Livingstone Lowes, *The Road to Xanadu: A study in the ways of the imagination* (Boston, Ma.: Houghton, Mifflin, 1927).

⁸⁴ William Empson, 'The 'Ancient Mariner'', *Critical Quarterly*, 6 (1964), 298-319; J.R. Ebbatson, 'Coleridge's Mariner and the Rights of Man', *Studies in Romanticism, II* (1972), 171-206; Peter Kitson, 'Coleridge, the French Revolution, and "The Ancient Mariner": Collective Guilt and Individual Salvation', *The Yearbook of English Studies*, 19 (1989), 197-207; Patrick J. Keane, *Coleridge's Submerged Politics*; Debbie Lee, 'Yellow Fever and the Slave Trade: Coleridge's *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*', *ELH*, 65 (1998), 675-700; Peter Kitson, "'Bales of living anguish": Representations of Race and the Slave in Romantic Writing', *ELH*, 67 (2000), 515-37.

⁸⁵ Midgeley, *Women Against Slavery*, p. 20.

⁸⁶ *Felix Farley's Bristol Journal* of 7th April 1792 covered the debate on the whole of its front and back pages, and went on to cover the London trial of Kimber in detail, in its 9th and 16th June 1792 issues, due to the local interest in the story. Peter Marshall discusses the Kimber case in 'The anti-slave trade movement in Bristol' in *Bristol in the Eighteenth Century*, pp. 206-11. Southey certainly knew of the case by 1808 (if not earlier) as he refers to it in a review, 'Clarkson's Abolition of the Slave Trade', *Annual Review* for 1808, 7 (1809), chap. 5, no. 8, 127-48 (p. 141).

⁸⁷ Wilson, *Thomas Clarkson: A Biography*, p. 85.

⁸⁸ Clarkson, *An Essay on the Impolicy of the African Slave Trade*, pp. 49-50.

⁸⁹ Clarkson, *An Essay on the Impolicy of the African Slave Trade*, p. 53.

⁹⁰ Quoted by Thomas, *The Slave Trade*, p. 457.

⁹¹ Hannah More, 'The Sorrows of Yamba, or the Negro Womans Lamentation' from *Cheap Repository Tracts* (1795), in *Romanticism: An Anthology*, pp. 30-4.

⁹² Robert Southey, *Poems* (1799), ed. Jonathan Wordsworth (Poole and Washington D.C.: Woodstock Books, 1997), introduction, unnumbered.

⁹³ Southey, *Poems* (1799), ed. Wordsworth, tenth page (unnumbered).

⁹⁴ Southey, *Poems* (1799), ed. Wordsworth, fifth page (unnumbered).

⁹⁵ There is not space here to discuss the well known issue of Southey's 'plagiarism'. Elsewhere Jonathan Wordsworth points out that several of Southey's poems pre-empt those in *Lyrical Ballads*, 'Two years before the Advertisement to *Lyrical Ballads* (September 1798) he had developed a plain style that was quite as "experimental" as

anything in Wordsworth and Coleridge, and quite as affronting in its social implication', Robert Southey, *Poems* (1797), ed. Jonathan Wordsworth (Oxford: Woodstock Books, 1989), p. 2. Christopher Smith suggests that Southey's 'plagiarism' is an inevitable result of the three 'lakers' working closely and interrelatedly on similar themes and styles, and his review of *Lyrical Ballads* was at worst the act of someone 'quite prepared to put the opposition in its place, and even damage it a little' in the competitive struggle that the three shared within their milieu, Christopher J. P. Smith, 'Robert Southey and the Emergence of *Lyrical Ballads*', *Romanticism on the Net*, 9 (February 1998), [9th December 2002] <<http://users.ox.ac.uk/~scat0385/southeyLB.html>>.

⁹⁶ Letter to Joseph Cottle, April 1797, quoted in *Robert Southey: The Critical Heritage*, ed. Madden, p. 53.

⁹⁷ Christopher Smith, *A Quest for Home: Reading Robert Southey* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1997), p. 285.

⁹⁸ In referring to the female slave in 'The Sailor Who Had Served in the Slave Trade', Southey substituted 'woman' for 'creature' in the later publication, *PW*, I, p. 64, l. 84.

⁹⁹ See Shyllon, *Black Slaves in Britain*.

¹⁰⁰ Southey seems to have subscribed to the alternative 'monogenist hypothesis' of racial origins - proposed by Georges-Louis Leclerc, Comte de Buffon and developed by Kant and Blumenbach - which accounts for different racial characteristics between human beings as 'degeneration from biological and climatic causes'. *Theories of Race*, ed. Peter J. Kitson, vol. VIII of *Slavery, Abolition and Emancipation: Writings in the British Romantic Period*, eds. Peter J. Kitson and Debbie Lee, 8 vols. (London: Pickering and Chatto, 1999), pp. vii-xxvi (p.xiii). An interesting poem by Southey appeared in the *Morning Post* of 28 June 1799 as 'A Midsummer Poem' (*The Contributions of Robert Southey to the Morning Post*, ed. Curry, p. 23), later published as 'Cool Reflections During a Midsummer Walk' in the *Annual Anthology* (1800). In this poem Southey imaginatively portrays the effect of unnaturally hot conditions on its white narrator:

'Help Me. O Jupiter! My poor complexion!
I am made a copper-Indian of already,
And if no kindly cloud will parasol me,
My very cellular membrane will be changed-
I shall be negrofied.

Robert Southey, *The Annual Anthology* (1799 and 1800) (Poole, Washington D.C.: Woodstock Books, 1997), p. 31 (ll. 52-6). Though intended to be comical, the poem's depiction of the theory of climatic degeneration from light skin, through the intermediate stage of becoming 'copper-Indian', to a 'negrofied' conclusion, has an uneasy effect. This may be caused by the necessary 'speeding up' of the metaphor for the poem, but also because it shows the idea of degeneration to be inherently racist in positing a 'norm' - embodied by the narrator who is fearful for his 'poor complexion' - from which other races deviate. *The Annual Anthology* comprised two volumes of poetry (published in 1799 and 1800) collected and edited by Southey. Many of the poems in both volumes were written by Southey as well and were included anonymously or with pseudonyms underneath. The poem quoted above had the anagram 'THEODORIT' (THE EDITOR) printed under it.

¹⁰¹ For instance in his poem 'The Dancing Bear' (first published as 'To A Dancing Bear' in the *Morning Post* for 10 July 1799, see *The Contributions of Robert Southey to the Morning Post*, ed. Curry, p. 23) which is 'Recommended to the Advocates for the SLAVE-TRADE', Southey makes an implicit and ironic comparison between the bear's captivity and the life of slaves. But he also points out that claiming the bear is 'born/Inferiour' to his owner and therefore 'unto him/ Rightly belongs dominion' is something 'politicians say' to justify ownership, as with slaves. Southey, *The Annual Anthology*, p. 262 (ll. 31, 35-7).

¹⁰² Shyllon, *Black Writers in Britain*.

¹⁰³ *Black Writers*, eds. Sandhu and Dabydeen, I, p. xxiii.

¹⁰⁴ *The Abolition Debate*, ed. Peter J. Kitson, vol. II of *Slavery, Abolition and Emancipation: Writings in the British Romantic Period*, eds. Peter J. Kitson and Debbie Lee, 8 vols. (London, Pickering and Chatto, 1999), p. 327.

¹⁰⁵ Robert Southey, 'Transactions of the Missionary Society', *Annual Review* for 1803, 2 (1804), chap. 2, no. 62, 189-201, (p. 201).

¹⁰⁶ Southey, 'Transactions of the Missionary Society', p. 201.

¹⁰⁷ Shyllon, *Black Slaves in Britain*, pp. 82-124.

¹⁰⁸ Southey, 'Transactions of the Missionary Society', p. 201.

¹⁰⁹ Robert Southey, 'No Slaves, No Sugar', *Annual Review* for 1804, 3 (1805), chap. 12, no. 4, 644-8 (p.644).

¹¹⁰ Southey, 'No Slaves, No Sugar', p. 644.

¹¹¹ Southey, 'No Slaves, No Sugar', p. 644.

¹¹² Southey, 'No Slaves, No Sugar', p. 644.

¹¹³ Southey, 'No Slaves, No Sugar', p. 648.

¹¹⁴ See Robin Blackburn, *The Overthrow of Colonial Slavery, 1776-1848* (London and New York: Verso, 1988), pp. 161-264 and also C. L. R James, *The Black Jacobins* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 2001).

¹¹⁵ Southey, 'No Slaves, No Sugar', p. 648.

¹¹⁶ Southey discussed this model colony in his review, 'Civilization of some Indian Natives', *Annual Review* for 1806, 5 (1807), chap. 13, no. 5, 589-93.

¹¹⁷ For instance in Southey, 'No Slaves, No Sugar', p. 644.

¹¹⁸ Southey, 'Clarkson's Abolition of the Slave Trade', p.145.

¹¹⁹ Southey, 'Clarkson's Abolition of the Slave Trade', p.145.

¹²⁰ Southey, 'No Slaves, No Sugar', p. 647.

¹²¹ 'The blacks, when carried to the West Indies are put into a paradise compared with the situation of these poor white creatures in Lancashire and other factories of the North', *The Opinions of William Cobbett*, ed. G. D. H. and Margaret Cole (London: The Cobbett Publishing Company, 1944), p. 179.

¹²² It is interesting to note that despite Southey's very different political position in 1833, he still employs the radical rhetoric of his youth. In a letter dated 26th June 1797 Southey had written 'he who cries aloud and spares not, will at least reap the reward of feeling that he has done his duty', *RSJM*, p. 26. Over thirty years later he is still doing 'his duty' as the last line of the passage quoted shows; 'Once more I will cry aloud and spare not'.

¹²³ Kenneth Curry, *Robert Southey: A Reference Guide*, p. 53.

¹²⁴ Thomas Southey, *Chronological History of the West Indies*, 3 vols. (London: Longman, Rees, Orme, Brown and Green, 1827)

¹²⁵ Robert Southey, 'Chronological History of the West Indies', *Quarterly Review*, 38, no. 75 (July, 1828), 193-241 (p. 215).

¹²⁶ Southey, 'Chronological History of the West Indies', p. 206.

¹²⁷ Southey, 'Chronological History of the West Indies', p. 238.

¹²⁸ Southey, 'Chronological History of the West Indies', p. 239.

¹²⁹ *The Debate on a Motion for the Abolition of the Slave-Trade, in the House of Commons on Monday and Tuesday, April 18 and 19, 1791* (London: W. Woodfal, 1791), p. 43.

¹³⁰ Southey was also very interested in the establishment of a colony for freed slaves in Sierra Leone, West Africa. This idea was initiated in order to deal with the problem of a growing poor, black population of London. The Committee for Abolition under the aegis of Granville Sharp, with the support of the British government launched 'the Sierra Leone plan' in 1787. The first settlers to the colony comprised of 331 black men and women and 70 white women, but half of this population had died in the first year. The colony was additionally reinforced by a further 1,000 black people from Nova Scotia, who had been sent there after fighting for the British in the American War of Independence. They were sent to Sierra Leone under the command of Lieutenant John Clarkson (brother of the abolitionist). The colony underwent many difficulties including attacks from the neighbouring African population and the French. See Helen Thomas, *Romanticism and Slave Narratives: Transatlantic Testimonies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 1-13. In 1798, when the colony was still thriving, Southey wrote a poem on the subject, entitled 'On the Settlement of Sierra Leona' - published in the *Morning Post* on 16th January 1798. In its address again to the 'Genius of Africa', it seems to be a reply to his earlier poem of that name. Southey was enthusiastic about the prospects for the colony and envisaged that 'the sons of England [will] leap to land' in Africa, no longer to 'oppress' but with 'peace and happiness':

Genius of Afric! now no more,
Let anger fire thy mind,
They seek not now thy distant shore,
The robbers of mankind.
Their minds enlarged, their hearts humane,
They come to break the oppressive chain,
The generous effort bless!
They come to bid injustice cease,
They come with science and with peace,
To proffer happiness.

The Contributions of Robert Southey to the Morning Post, ed. Curry, p. 29 (ll. 11-20).

¹³¹ Robert Southey, 'Life and Services of Captain Beaver', *Quarterly Review*, 41, no. 82 (Nov., 1829), 375-417 (p. 391).

¹³² Southey, 'Life and Services of Captain Beaver', p. 392.

¹³³ Robert Southey, 'Reports of the African Institution', *Annual Review* for 1808, 7 (1809), chap. 5, no. 9, 149-52 (p. 152).

¹³⁴ Southey, 'Reports of the African Institution', p. 152.

¹³⁵ Robert Southey, 'New Testament in the Negro Tongue', *Quarterly Review*, 43, no. 86, (Oct., 1830), 553-64 (p. 555).

¹³⁶ Southey, '*Chronological History of the West Indies*', p. 239.

¹³⁷ Southey, '*Chronological History of the West Indies*', p. 240. This passage with its metaphor of Britain as a 'hive of nations' of course echoes Wordsworth's poem, *The Excursion* (1814), where Britain also sends out its 'swarms' (see Chapter Two, p. 146).

Chapter Two

‘Taking possession’: Southey’s and Wordsworth’s Romantic America

2.1 Introduction

In May 1768 the Admiralty appointed Captain Cook to command a voyage to the Pacific Ocean. It was a scientific and imperialist mission: Cook was to observe the transit of Venus, make collections of unfamiliar flora and fauna, and find evidence of the ‘Great Southern Continent’. On this voyage and the two subsequent ones he undertook (1772-1775; 1776–1779) Cook was also expected to discover and claim new land for his country, as the sealed ‘Secret Instructions’ from his third voyage make explicit:

You are also with the Consent of the Natives to take possession of convenient situations in the name of the King of Great Britain, or if you find the country uninhabited, take possession for his Majesty by setting up Proper Marks and inscriptions, as first discoverers and possessors.¹

Cook took possession of new lands in the southern half of the globe by naming them for the ‘King of Great Britain’. He named new places for their physical characteristics, and abundance, or lack of, necessary materials for the survival of his ships’ crews (‘Duck Cove’ and ‘Thirsty Sound’).² He named them after his crewmembers and friends (‘Clerke’s Rocks’, ‘Shepherds Isles’)³ and also from a direct emotional response to events that happened there – ‘the name ‘Unfortunate Cove’ indicates where a powder horn blew up in Cook’s hand, nearly bringing his surveying career to a premature end’.⁴ Cook’s inscribing of new territories formally established British claims to the land as well as locating and familiarising unknown places for his countrymen by giving them English names and putting them on the

map. The narratives of Cook's voyages, and those of many other explorers of the period, combined novelty with excitement and were consumed by an enthusiastic reading public at home, including most of the Romantic poets.

The process of 'taking possession' by British explorers in the eighteenth century can be examined in the light of a number of recent studies which deal with the significance of place in the shaping of human self-consciousness and national identity. Simon Schama, for example, in *Landscape and Memory* (1995) considers human relationships with the landscape as a formative element in creating a common cultural currency that is inextricably linked to how groups of people, bound by similar ethnic or national origins, perceive themselves.⁵ Within the field of Romantic studies, the collection of essays, *Romantic Geographies* (2000), examines the importance of location (and dislocation) on the writings of the period.⁶ More particularly, Michael Wiley has shown how in the Romantic period, spaces/places were the subject of ideological contests, and that the acts of configuring and representing places and especially naming them were not innocent ones.⁷

In this chapter I intend to develop the focus of these critics by exploring the way in which Southey and Wordsworth appropriated places for themselves in their poetry – a process that often had nationalist and imperialist dimensions. This chapter will therefore compare and contrast Southey's and Wordsworth's poetry in the context of the contemporary discourse of travel narratives written by explorers they both admired – men whose projects were directly related to the expansion of empire – Captain James Cook, Samuel Hearne, William Bartram and Jonathan Carver. Despite the two poets' reliance on these contemporary popular travel accounts, they used their sources in different ways. As Tim Fulford points out, because these narratives contributed to 'a composite genre, travel writing was able to contain contrasting and

even contradictory perspectives and discourses. No one expected it, like epic poetry, to achieve a unique vision or consistency of voice'.⁸ Just as there were multiple forms of travel writing - despite generally conforming to a narrative of quest as Patrick Brantlinger identifies⁹ - there were multiple forms of texts produced by writers who absorbed and 'recycled' these primary accounts for their readers. Because Southey and Wordsworth extracted selective information from these hybrid and dialogic texts – that conformed to the vision they wanted to promote in their own writing – they produced two quite distinct versions of colonial life.

Southey's long narrative poem, *Madoc* (1805), imitates the tropes of discovery and exploration from the travel accounts Southey read, in order to appropriate the American landscape of his poem. This political motivation for naming the landscape can be traced back to Southey's radical inscriptive poetry, which is also examined here. Wordsworth's 'Poems on the Naming of Places' (1800) similarly reveal the influence of travel narratives, in the way he too 'takes possession' of the landscape around him by naming it. My argument is that the desire of both men to efface official names by supplying their own, is directly related to the political radicalism of this period in both their lives, but the way in which their naming aesthetic manifested itself was often quite different. In this chapter too I will also examine Southey's depiction of the settlement of America by his Welsh colonists in *Madoc* in relation to Wordsworth's poem 'Ruth' (1800), which also incorporates a colonial vision of America. By looking at the methods that these two writers employed, I intend to show the variety and ambivalence within the discourse of Romanticism, and to explore the differences that emerge between them as their work is viewed in the context of empire.

It is a modern recognition that history 'inevitably tells the same dismal tale: of land taken, exploited, exhausted; of traditional cultures said to have lived in a relation of sacred reverence with the soil displaced by the reckless individualist, the capitalist aggressor'.¹⁰ This 'tale' is one of the effects of colonisation, of course, at its simplest level, but what this statement highlights particularly is the idea of established 'cultures' being at the mercy of the private 'reckless' individual who is servicing his own needs (at least in the early stages of the colonising process). But can this individualism which causes displacement of other cultures on the ground be seen to operate at other levels? Can writers such as Southey and Wordsworth who emphasise the primacy of private emotion and the importance of the individual in their writings (recognisable Romantic attributes), be said to have contributed to this 'tale'? Marlon Ross has argued that:

In a very real sense the Romantics, some of them unwittingly, help prepare England for its imperial destiny. They help teach the English to universalise the experience of "I".¹¹

If Ross is right, then one way in which this has been done, by Southey and Wordsworth, as well as by explorers in their narratives, is by putting themselves at the centre of the landscape in their texts and effectively silencing any other claims.

2.2 Southey's 'Inscriptions'

In the 1790s, Southey's desire for political and intellectual freedom led him to see America as a new unmapped and uncorrupted land, where he could found a colony, settling and naming the wilderness, making it a home for *him* and his fellow Pantisocrats. His motives for leaving Britain, that is to say, were as much territorial as philosophic. He and Coleridge wanted to gain 'the advantages and yet avoid the vices of cultivated society' (*NL*, I, p. 19), to abolish individual property and live in a self-

governing democracy, yet they also wanted to mark the land in the image of their own ideals. Christopher Smith speaks of Southey's ambition to create:

the new colony of 'Southeyopolis'...He wants the new state to be as great as the famous cities of the ancient world, but to have that democratic vigour which America already possessed.¹²

For Southey the naming process was not only an emotional investment in a place, but a first step towards controlling it, making its laws and founding a new society. His dream of Pantisocracy relied on (communal) ownership of ground where the foundations would be laid for a life in liberty.

But why was Southey so discontented that he saw life in Britain as 'dark and gloomy', while 'the only ray enlivening the scene' is one that 'beams on America'? (*LC*, I, p. 199). His state of mind at the time can be seen in his 'Inscriptions', included in the *Poems* of 1797, which serve as a critical vehicle to display his disenchantment with British politics. The political implications of place names are evident here. Southey generally sets his inscriptions in specific, named locations before explaining the personal and political significance which he discovers in them. Southey's speaker is the exhortative, imperious voice of the epitaph/inscription tradition, stating 'This is the place' (*P* (1797), p. 62) or 'Gaze Stranger here!' (*P* (1797), p. 57). In his 'Inscriptions' Southey takes the British monarchy to task. He 're-writes' well known locations from the perspective of their historical significance, and his political bias gives them new meaning. For instance his poems 'For a COLUMN at NEWBURY' and 'For a MONUMENT in the NEW FOREST' deal with the tyrannies of Charles I and the Norman King William respectively, who abused their position of power by oppressing their own subjects:

This is the place where William's kingly power
Did from their poor and peaceful homes expel,
Unfriended, desolate, and shelterless,
The habitants of all the fertile track
Far as these wilds extend.

(*P* (1797); 'For a MONUMENT in the NEW FOREST', p. 62, ll. 1-5)

Southey champions the underdogs and seeks to undermine the official map of Britain by marking locations of martyrdom against royal authority.

Naming is a human process and in these poems 'Man [who] creates the evil he endures' (*P* (1797); 'For a CAVERN that overlooks the River AVON', p. 58, l. 21) is judged against nature and found lacking. Southey's inscription 'For a TABLET on the Banks of a Stream' conforms to the Greek epigrammatic tradition which directs the weary traveller to the best place to drink, and has the descriptive power to literally refresh on the page:

Stranger! awhile upon this mossy bank
Recline thee. If the sun rides high, the breeze,
That loves to ripple o'er the rivulet,
Will play around thy brow, and the cool sound
Of running waters soothe thee.

(*P* (1797), p. 63, ll. 1-5)

The poem concludes however:

But passing on amid the haunts of man,
It finds pollution there, and rolls from thence
A tainted tide.

(ll. 12-4)

This poem is the only one not located by a place-name in the sequence, as if Southey wished to free it from human processes such as naming, and becoming one of the 'haunts of man' which bring 'pollution'. Traditional place-names are simply memorials of shameful evil deeds by 'the wicked rulers of mankind'. In response to this political tyranny Southey directs his 'Stranger' to seek happiness in 'the

woodland cot/Of INNOCENCE' (ll. 15-6). His own reasons for going to America were to discover an idyllic retreat such as the one he created in his poetry, so that his plans for emigrating combined political ideals with his personal desire for a life of pastoral domesticity.

2.3 *Madoc*

Southey and Coleridge had several reasons for siting their ideal community in America. One was to avoid the serious consequences of prosecution and even imprisonment for embracing 'Jacobin' principles. Another was to escape the polluting influence of British society and its demand for religious and political conformity. But they were also attracted by the political ideal of liberty that the infant republic seemed to represent, as well as the descriptions of American colonial life that they avidly read in texts such as: Jonathan Carver's *Travels Through the Interior of North America* (1778), William Bartram's *Travels Through North and South Carolina, Georgia, East and West Florida* (1791) and Thomas Cooper's *Some Information Respecting America* (1794).¹³ The latter particularly, written to encourage British settlement of the American territories, reflects the colonising spirit of the age.

Jonathan Carver suggests several reasons why Britons would leave home to settle far away in another continent. America is a place:

Where future generations may find an asylum whether driven from their country by the ravages of lawless tyrants, or by religious persecutions, or reluctantly, leaving it to remedy the inconveniences arising from a superabundance of inhabitants; whether I say, impelled by these, or allured by hopes of commercial advantages, there is little doubt but their expectations will be fully gratified in these rich and unexhausted climes.¹⁴

Southey's letters too reveal the modest aspirations of many pioneering colonists when he says, 'I could till the earth and provide by honest industry the meat which my wife

would dress with pleasing care' (*LC*, I, p. 194). But unlike other settlers who may have left Britain for America, this simple statement belies the large-scale plans harboured by Southey and Coleridge of beginning a new community, based on binding ties of friendship and familial bonds and governed by their philosophical principles of 'the generalization of individual property' and 'the equal government of all'.¹⁵ While Southey's and Coleridge's project can be seen as a radical rejection of established political systems, it also in fact conforms to a pattern of colonialism, which at its least ambitious level plans to establish a 'cottage'd Dell' (*CPW*; 'Pantisocracy', I, p. 69, l. 5), and at its most extreme led to the British justice system transporting convicts to Botany Bay. James McKusick sums up Pantisocracy as:

a fairly typical example of European expansionism, intellectually justified by an ideology of political equality and religious freedom, yet grounded at a more unconscious level in an economics of colonial exploitation.¹⁶

When Southey was forced by circumstances to abandon his American dream he tried to achieve it vicariously in *Madoc*. This poem too is written from Southey's humble 'first principle' that his hero needs to find a home abroad as a 'resting place for peace' (*Madoc*, p. 33). However, as in the Pantisocratic scheme, Madoc's emigratory design becomes more ambitious as he returns to Wales to gain new recruits for his project in order to swell the community's numbers. Rather than assimilating himself into another culture, Madoc, like Southey intends to create his own society/colony. Much of the interest in reading *Madoc* comes from tracing the faint outline of Southey's egalitarian society behind the imperialist project that Madoc institutes.

In this two-volume poem, completed for publication in 1805, Southey's hero, the twelfth century Welsh prince, Madoc, mortified by the murderous politics of the

Welsh court, sails to America to escape it and establish a colony there. The plot has obvious parallels with Southey's own dissatisfaction with British politics and his desire to emigrate to the banks of the Susquehannah River. The radical spirit in which Southey's 'Inscriptions' were written is employed in descriptions of the Welsh court in *Madoc*. Belonging to the royal line of Owen, Southey's hero, Madoc, has his family name inextricably linked with the land he lives in, with far-reaching consequences. When Owen dies it results in Briton fighting Briton 'in unnatural war' (*Madoc*, p. 24) and as Madoc shares the Welsh king's name with his brothers he has the choice of being 'the victim, or the murderer' (p. 29). Rather than live there with these consequences, he is compelled to find a new world entirely. The first book of *Madoc* is structured as 'a tale within a tale', so that his narrative describing the journey and colonisation of the new land is enveloped by the political action in Wales, juxtaposing Madoc's radical search for freedom with the conservative, medieval claustrophobia of the Welsh court. The emphasis in the old land is on tradition and the continuation of the monarchy through the new King's political union with a Saxon bride to preserve the royal family name. As Madoc praises his father, saying 'King Owen's name/Shall live in the after-world without a blot!' (p. 25) the structural irony of the plot develops to divulge to him his father's crime in usurping his nephew's lands. This act of violence shadows the acts of tyrannical kings in Southey's 'Inscriptions'. The 'wicked rulers of mankind' depicted there are relocated in the Welsh royal family, which is a vehicle in *Madoc* for Southey to portray the evils of the British system of primogeniture. This sets the scene for a rejection of old world values, as Madoc vows to be one of those men 'who the unfrequented path/Of Justice, firmly treads'.¹⁷ Madoc's embarkation to America as Southey's fictional solution to his discontent implies that such a 'path' cannot be followed in Britain. 'Justice'

requires a new land of liberty and democracy and Southey's ambition to 'take possession' of other lands was born out of his rejection of the British political establishment.

That Southey had political motivations for writing *Madoc* is undeniable. In order to link his personal politics to those in his poem it is necessary to examine the 1794 manuscript fragment of his poem which includes the text of the first two and a half books of the first draft. Kenneth Curry points out the importance of this text for its declaration of Southey's democratic politics, where Madoc 'cries out against the wars waged by tyrants, speaks of the brotherhood of man, and boldly lectures the King on his duties'.¹⁸ Though this text was subsequently revised by Southey in 1797 – as his note to the manuscript states – it reflects the fact that it was written at the height of his impassioned support for the French Revolution, that had begun in 1789. As Southey said himself of his hero; 'he will be as Jacobinical as heart can wish' (*NL*, I, p. 238).

In the 1794 manuscript, Madoc's rejection of the tyrannical rule of the Welsh monarchy, whose personal ambitions cause conflict and war to be let loose on their people is vociferous:

Ill fall the evil-minded man whose wiles
Embroider his country. Conscience shall enfix
Her scorpion sting in his dark brooding breast
Who from her hamlet haunt scares Peace away
With wars shrill clarion, drenching the red earth
With human blood to aggrandise himself.¹⁹

Southey provides a contrasting example of princely qualities in the crusading Madoc:

So did not Madoc, him wave-wandering chief
Guiding his prow where never mariner

Rush'd thro the deep, & on the distant shore
For over ocean rearing Cambrias flag
A blameless warrior, sing I.²⁰

But even this early draft contains instabilities that I will argue are magnified in the 1805 text. Madoc shares the same territorial ambitions as his aggressive brothers. He is a 'blameless warrior' for Southey simply because he preserves his own country's stability by going abroad to conquer other lands. Over the ocean Madoc still intends 'rearing Cambrias flag', and is simply exporting his land-ownership objectives to another location. As in Southey's own idealistic motives for emigrating to America, such ambitions involve territorial acquisition elsewhere and therefore can never be entirely innocent.

When Madoc returns to Wales from his first foray across the Atlantic, he regales his royal relations with the story of his adventures:

In search of peace, return I, not forlorn
In poverty but bearing store of gold
The liberal produce of that happy clime.²¹

So Southey's 'philosophic' hero (*SL*, I, p. 332), as he considered him, quests for peace, but returns laden with the spoils of another country in order to impress a domestic audience who value such things. Madoc's stated aims are constantly undercut even in this early text. His 'taking possession' is not a radical step but in fact conforms to the territorial and economic priorities of European society.

The 1794 text ends before Madoc can relate his 'discovery' of America. In the 1805 publication this is a seminal moment:

But who can tell what feelings fill'd my heart,
When like a cloud the distant land arose
Grey from the ocean,... when we left the ship

And cleft, with rapid oars, the shallow wave,
And stood triumphant on another world!
(*Madoc*, p. 45)

Southey presents Madoc's journey as a traveller's 'tale' within the main text of his long narrative poem – a device that refers directly to the travel-writing genre on which Southey was so dependent. Quite fittingly the fourth book of his text ends here, hanging with all the optimism of a new beginning in 'another world'. For Southey, as for Keats, this moment of potential discovery and encounter is a sublime one – like all those other first moments in Keats's poem; looking into Chapman's Homer'; finding a new planet; or standing in Cortez's shoes looking out onto the anticipated, but still unexpected Pacific – it is as yet uncomplicated by the later realities that will follow.²² As Madoc's ship approaches the new continent, the land is seen as a 'cloud', lacking the solid outline of reality and heavy with unknown potential. It is 'grey' because it is as yet 'undiscovered' by Madoc and so unpainted in the reader's imagination by Southey. Madoc's description of his discovery replicates the exultant diction of other such revelatory moments in the travel narratives Southey had read. Such a device enables his readers to suspend disbelief and see America, as Southey did in this period, as truly a 'new world' that could remain detached from the European field of politics and war. However the representation of Madoc's disembarkation as 'triumphant' hints at the problematic nature of his text. While Southey could be simply referring to the successful conclusion of Madoc's quest to 'find' America, these victorious first steps incorporate an act of appropriation. Such an act is constantly denied by Madoc:

... I come not from my native isle
To wage the war of conquest, and cast out
Your people from the land which time and toil
Have rightly made their own.
(*Madoc*, p. 81)

But it is nevertheless reinforced by his actions. The 1794 text hints at the problems Southey would encounter in trying to combine idealistic motives with the practical difficulties of describing Madoc's colonisation of America. This moment of discovery therefore constitutes a high spot in *Madoc*, after which, I will argue, Southey's clear Pantisocratic vision of America becomes muddled by colonial politics and racial anxiety.

2.4 'Man's asserted empire'

Soon after Madoc's ship 'discovers' America, he and his Welsh emigrants are welcomed by the Hoamen Indians whom Madoc befriends and then champions in battle, against the Hoamen's oppressors, the hostile, warlike and irreligious Aztecs. The subdued Aztecs plan revenge on Madoc's colony and after acts of retaliation by them, Madoc expels them for good, aided by a convenient volcanic eruption. The poem is constructed so that Madoc, as a superior being, is morally bound to defend the rights of the 'noble savages' (the Hoamen tribe). Disconcertingly this acknowledgement is made to come from the mouth of the Hoamen's high-priest, who:

With reverential awe accosted us,
For we, he ween'd, were children of a race
Mightier than they, and wiser, and by heaven,
Beloved and favour'd more

(*Madoc*, p. 56)

The justification for many of Madoc's acts in America is that he comes from a race that is morally and religiously superior to the native Indian tribes – a familiar vindication for many colonising projects. It is necessary that the British colonisers are not seen as such simply by themselves, or Southey's readers, but that those they colonise are made to articulate this recognition. As Chris Tiffin and Alan Lawson state 'Colonialism (like its counterpart, racism) then, is an operation of discourse, and

as an operation of discourse it interpellates colonial subjects by incorporating them in a system of representation'.²³ This discourse becomes more powerful when those being colonised recognise themselves in the terms of the coloniser, as here.

So ostensibly Madoc, as Western empire builder, gradually comes to dominate the Hoamen tribe, who are dependent on him for protection, expelling the 'foul idolatry' of the Aztec empire who previously colonised and dominated the Hoamen lands themselves, so that by the end of the poem Madoc is 'left sole Lord' in the land (p. 449). *Madoc* is a text of colonisation, not Pantisocracy, and why this came about can be seen by comparing Southey's own uneasy vision of settling in America with his description of the Welsh colony in *Madoc*. The following excerpt comes from a letter he wrote in December 1793:

Fancy only me in America; imagine my ground uncultivated since the creation, and see me wielding the axe, now to cut down the tree, and now the snakes that nestled in it. Then see me grubbing up the roots, and building a nice snug little dairy with them: three rooms in my cottage, and my only companion some poor negro whom I have brought on purpose to emancipate...till at last comes an ill-looking Indian with a tomahawk and scalps me, a most melancholy proof that society is very bad and that I shall have done little to improve it. (LC, I, p. 196)

In this passage, Southey projects himself as the first man on the land – this is 'ground uncultivated since the creation', and images of 'the tree' and 'snakes' resonate the idea of America as Eden. Southey sees himself in a relationship with the land where he is physically in control – 'wielding the axe' and 'building' his own home. He builds up a humorous picture of himself in control of his idyllic world, until the sudden introduction of an 'ill-looking Indian' who 'scalps' him with 'a tomahawk' – killing his claim to the land, and his vision, with one fell swoop. Though Southey wants to 'emancipate' somebody to fulfil his dream of instituting a paternalistic and egalitarian society, this will not be an Indian unknown quantity who may 'scalp' him,

but 'some poor negro', a tamed and grateful companion, who is 'brought on purpose'
– a less dangerous, because domesticated, 'alien'.

In *Madoc* Southey depicts a colony in complete control of its environment:

Here had the Chief
Chosen his abiding place, for strength preferr'd,
Where vainly might an host in equal arms
Attempt the difficult entrance; and for all
That could delight the eye and heart of man;
Whate'er of beauty or of usefulness
Heart could desire, or eye behold, being here.
What he had found an idle wilderness
Now gave rich increase to the husbandmen,
For Heaven had blest their labour. Flourishing
He left the happy vale; and now he saw
More fields reclaim'd, more habitations rear'd,
More harvests rising round. The reptile race,
And every beast of rapine, had retired
From man's asserted empire; and the sound
Of axe and dashing oar, and fisher's net,
And song beguiling toil, and pastoral pipe,
Were heard, where late the solitary hills
Gave only to the mountain cataract
Their wild response.

(*Madoc*, pp. 191-2)

The two passages are manifestations of the same dream. The 'ground uncultivated since the creation' of the first passage is the previously 'idle wilderness' of *Madoc*. In both passages, Southey wants to domesticate a wild but paradisiacal land and then protect it from invasion of any kind. The first passage shows his fear of losing control to Indians and snakes in the real, harsh world of America, but in the second passage all threats to the community, whether human or 'reptile race' are forbidden entry to Madoc's 'asserted empire'. Caermadoc's position in a 'natural bulwark' (p. 191) is chosen because it forms a defensive fortification to protect the pastoral life of the colony from those outside who seek to destroy it. By portraying a utopian dream of life and then banishing any form of threat to it – as Southey can do in his fictional

America – he shows a paranoid realisation of just how frail that dream is. The description of the colonisation process that takes place in *Madoc* is the closest that Southey gets to working out the fears and aspirations of his own journey and settlement in America. In *Madoc* Southey faces the disintegration of his utopian vision, and finds his hero in the predicament of having to control native populations or expel them. Southey's private anxieties and fears about his own projected emigration, living in a hostile landscape with aggressive natives are reflected in the uneasy colonial politics of his text.

While Madoc is in Wales recruiting colonists for his project the settlement is named in his honour:

Caermadoc,... by that name Cadwallon's love
Call'd it in memory of the absent Prince,...
Stood in a mountain vale, by rocks and heights,
A natural bulwark, girt.

(p. 191)

This naming of the colony is an emotional investment in the landscape. Love, liberty and language create the headquarters of Madoc's (and Southey's) colonial ambitions. The sentence sets up, as a decree, a new entity: 'Caermadoc...stood', an unmarked space now exists as a *place* because it has been named. But there is a tension in the process of naming places in a new land, and the naming of a colony can be seen as a political act. Names are often given as an extension of old world values, perpetuating for instance the British political system and its monarchy by naming after the King, or leading political figures. Cook, for instance, records his naming of 'Prince of Wales Island', 'Queen Charlotte Sound',²⁴ and 'Sandwich Land' for the Earl of Sandwich.²⁵ Or a name can be used to move away from tradition and create a political challenge to the old land, a siting of new values, and a chance to begin again. 'Caermadoc' means

'home of Madoc' and implies a safety and security impossible in the Welsh court, but also a new beginning instituted by Madoc. If it is an anti-monarchical name in Wales, it is nevertheless the imposition of an old-world Prince on a new land.

2.5 'My father's bones'

In fact this assumption of a new beginning is undermined by the text. As is often the case in Southey's work, the denouement of the plot complicates the argument he is making. Madoc's rejection of his own country is undermined by his embracing of just that tradition that Southey means his hero to escape from. As Madoc prepares to return to his American colony, he finds his father's bones being exhumed by a 'Saxon Prelate', and decides to take them with him:

My father's bones
Shall have their resting-place, where mine one day
May moulder by their side. He shall be free
In death, who living did so well maintain
His and his country's freedom.

(*Madoc*, p. 163)

This event following on so rapidly from confirmation of all that is bad in a state rooted in bloodshed, raises a query in the reader's mind as to why one who wants the freedom and peace of a new land would wish to transport the tyrannical trappings of the old with him. Does Madoc take his father's body with him to America as a victory for 'freedom'? Or as the reinstatement, and even rejuvenation, of the Welsh monarchy in a new land where it can begin again, cleansed of the polluting Saxon influence, which was to eradicate so many Welsh names? But this confusion in the text only reinforces the ambivalence of Southey's own changing political position. *Madoc* was written over a period of sixteen years and as Lynda Pratt states 'contains evidence ...of what has traditionally been charted as his move from incendiary young radical to older belligerent Tory apostate'.²⁶

The act of naming is only the first step in the process of situating and locating the colony. 'Caermadoc' in fact now has the ideal justification for its existence – the enshrined remains of Madoc's father's bones. Madoc's burial of his father's remains from the old land creates the foundations of his life in America, where an imported past and tradition is brought into the present and future of the new land. But the importance of the dead to the living's claim on the land is not just a Welsh preoccupation. The Aztecs are also a colonial power who have relocated their roots and their past in this country, and when they are driven out by Madoc, they also take the bodies of their forebears with them. The Aztec King asks for the 'Ashes of my Fathers' (p. 438) and prepares to leave and begin anew in another land with his dead antecedents as Madoc has done. His people are offered the choice of staying behind:

But they who would not have their children lose
The name their fathers bore, will join our march.
(p. 440)

The emphasis is on naming again; the right to have a name is rooted in the tradition of the ancestors who also bore that name. Bartram's *Travels* – which Southey knew well and was another source for *Madoc*, as his notes to the poem reveal – consistently displays the ghosts of ancient civilizations. Their earthworks and remains of settlements, haunt the landscape of the new settlers' mansions where Bartram is hospitably entertained. The name of those ancient people has disappeared from the land, along with their place-names, as Bartram discovers when questioning the local population, who know nothing of their history. The name of a tribe or family is inextricably linked to the name of a place as shown by 'Caermadoc', 'Southeyopolis' or 'Georgia' (for George III). The desire of Madoc and the Aztecs to retain the name of their dead ancestors can be seen as a necessary part of holding on to the land, in a place where colonies come and go.

2.6 Controlling the foreign

There are other methods that Southey employs in his text for 'taking possession' in his American vision. The 'grey' new land that Madoc finds is fleshed out for the reader through the authorial eyes of one who is a native of another country and so the 'foreign' is domesticated by being compared to the 'familiar'. As Edward Said says of the Western style of Orientalism:

Something patently foreign and distant acquires, for one reason or another, a status more rather than less familiar. One tends to stop judging things either as completely novel or as completely well known; a new median category emerges, a category that allows one to see new things, things seen for the first time, as versions of a previously known thing. In essence such a category is not so much a way of receiving new information as it is a method of controlling what seems to be a threat to some established view of things.²⁷

So in *Madoc*:

Here, Urien, cried the Prince
These craggy heights and overhanging groves
Will make thee think of Gwyneth. And this hut,
Rejoin'd Cadwallon, with its roof of reeds,
Goervyl, is our palace: it was built
With lighter labour than Aberfraw's towers;
Yet, Lady, safer are its wattled sides
Than Mona's kingly walls...

(*Madoc*, p. 192)

The different visions are conflated in such a way that the hut is also a palace, the 'roof of reeds' becomes 'Aberfraw's towers' and the 'wattled sides' are also 'kingly walls'. The two visions of two different lands, one foreign, and one familiar, are superimposed on each other. The reader sees both at the same time and they become one. Southey has his colonisers control the foreign landscape, by overlaying the familiar outlines of a knowledge system from their home country onto one that is alien and still largely unknown to them in this way. Such a precedent is evident in the travel narratives that Southey read. Explorers predicate an act of 'discovery' in

finding something new, but then try to assimilate or contain that novelty by using more familiar terms of reference with which to overlay it.

Southey's preoccupation with controlling the 'foreign' is extended to the indigenous inhabitants as well as their land. In his first encounter with the natives, Madoc speaks of his pleasure at hearing the friendly native, Lincoya speak their language:

Nor light the joy I felt at hearing first
The pleasant accents of my native tongue,
Albeit in broken words and tones uncouth,
Come from these foreign lips.

(p. 53)

Madoc's 'joy' comes from imposing his familiar ('native') language on 'foreign lips'. It is accepted that the inhabitants of this country will learn the Welsh language and so the Welsh names for places, thereby erasing existing Indian names. The colonial desire of the Cambrians to relocate and perpetuate their language in a new land can be seen as a reaction to the eradication of Welsh place-names by the English. The new colony provides compensation for cultural obliteration in their native land. The name 'Caermadoc' ('home of Madoc') preserves the culture and language of the old country as well as providing a new beginning. Madoc's desire to take the bard Caradoc with him to America has to do with reinforcing his colony by appealing to the colonists' collective memory of their Welsh national history:

The harp of Cambria shall in other lands
Remind the Cambrian of his fathers' fame

(p. 115)

The bardic songs are rooted in the tradition of the past, but can also be used to justify the future and Madoc's claim to the new land. Madoc's bard serves to inscribe the landscape and make a song in a new place, rather than die with the old culture as

Thomas Gray's bard did in his poem 'The Bard' (1757). Gray's bard's curse on the English king – 'Be thine Despair and scep'tred Care'²⁸ – is the fate of all those who have colonial aspirations in another land and indicates the troubled mood in which Madoc's dominion continues. Madoc's colonisation preserves the Welsh way of life in a new land, but leads to the eradication of the Aztec barbarian culture who also then have to make a long journey, to re-site their name, ancestors and language.

2.7 'Sole lord'

Southey tries to create a 'new' world with a 'united people' (*Madoc*, p. 400) for us in fiction, and so has Madoc take the best of his home culture abroad, eradicating foreign evils through his brand of Christian imperialism. But as Lynda Pratt recognises:

The poem, as a whole...lacks a central focus. It also, and quite crucially, pays only scant attention to the exact nature of the new state founded by the Welsh prince. Instead it concentrates largely on those old societies which Southey wishes to replace, the European and the Aztec.²⁹

Southey could not envisage his new society and so there is no conviction at the end of the poem that the problems of colonisation are resolved. Southey's appointment of Madoc as 'sole Lord' implies a lonely position of responsibility (the 'White Man's burden') and the reader is not left with any confident statement about the stable existence of Caermadoc. The final passage of *Madoc* only implies a dark future for the Aztecs and their demise at the hand of 'the heroic Spaniard's unrelenting sword' (p. 449), rather than ending on any hope for the future of Madoc's colony.

The bleak picture of colonial life that Southey created can be found in many contemporary travel accounts. Samuel Hearne's *A Journey from Prince of Wales Fort in Hudson's Bay to the Northern Ocean* (1795), and Carver's *Travels*, were two accounts that Southey drew on in writing *Madoc*, where the daily struggle for survival

is strikingly evident.³⁰ Apart from coping with the problems of being strangers in an unknown environment, travellers and settlers had to deal with Indian (and often French) hostility towards them. Carver's and Hearne's texts include graphic accounts of Indian 'savagery', as they saw it. For instance Carver recounts the details of a particularly ferocious attack (by Indian allies of the French military forces during the 'Seven Years War') on English troops at Fort William Henry in 1757, where 'the savages drank the blood of their victims, as it flowed warm from the fatal wound'.³¹ Samuel Hearne survived his journey to the Arctic Ocean with the aid of the Indian members of his expedition, but nevertheless witnessed and recounted their 'barbarous' massacre of Inuit tribes.³² Despite both travellers providing cameos of individual native Americans that depict more positive qualities (in Western terms), the image of incomprehensible bloodthirsty savages abides with the reader. Because life in the American colonies of this period is portrayed as an arduous struggle for survival between skirmishes and wars, these problems also dominate Southey's text. The peaceful philosophical precepts of Pantisocracy founder in the instability and anxiety of the colonial frontier.

This is the most obvious legacy which Southey, perhaps unwittingly, adopts from the American travel narratives that he uses as source material. Madoc is empowered with the right to name, or have a place named after him, but like his father before him, finds that his colony has to be protected from others who would claim it and name it themselves. Naming is an act of possession that has to be defended by force if necessary. The idealism of the colonial dream disintegrates in the 'contact zone' of Southey's text with its inevitably violent trajectory of colonial relations. One feels that 'Southeyopolis' would have met the same fate. As *Madoc* concludes, the tone is flat rather than triumphant as if Southey realised that the bright new

beginnings of Madoc's colony had only two precedents within his text to follow: the intrigue and bloodshed of the Welsh court, or the Aztec fate of being exiled by new colonisers – either leading to erasure of the colony's name.

2.8 'Poems on the Naming of Places'

In 1798 another avid reader of contemporary travel narratives, William Wordsworth, walked around the Lake District, and named parts of it for friends and family members. He recorded this process in his 'Poems on the Naming of Places', which he published in the 1800 edition of *Lyrical Ballads*, with the following Advertisement attached:

By persons resident in the country and attached to rural objects, many places will be found unnamed or of unknown names, where little Incidents must have occurred, or feelings been experienced, which will have given to such places a private and peculiar interest. From a wish to give some sort of record to such Incidents, and renew the gratification of such feelings, Names have been given to Places by the Author and some of his Friends, and the following Poems written in consequence. (*WPW*, II, p. 111)

The 'unknown' places and 'little incidents' of Wordsworth's Lake District seem, on the face of it, miles away from the vast territories over which travellers such as Cook, Carver and Hearne were roaming and fighting in America, Africa, India and the South Seas. Yet they were closer together than they seem, for Wordsworth was influenced by his reading of explorers' narratives to make an aesthetic out of one of the most fundamental processes of colonial expansion – the act of naming.

Wordsworth's 'Poems on the Naming of Places' can be seen as an extension of the traditional poetic forms of inscription and epitaph, which were popular with many eighteenth-century poets.³³ While the epitaph form was more firmly rooted in the graveyard location of monument or tomb, inscriptions (and particularly Wordsworth's

nature-inscriptions) take the reader out of the graveyard and into the wider vista of nature for their commemorative value. In these poems the reader is posited as a traveller in a landscape which has no emotional meaning to him or her, until progress is halted by the poet's voice speaking with secret knowledge as the votive spirit of the place. A problem with inscriptive poetry, however, is that the poet is often over-writing a place which already has significant meaning given to it by its public name. To find a space for his own voice in order to make an emotional investment in the landscape, the anonymity of the place has to be stressed. Wordsworth does this in his poem 'Lines left upon a Seat in a Yew-tree, which stands near the Lake of Esthwaite, on a desolate part of the shore, commanding a beautiful prospect' (1798). The poem uses its long title as a prelude, though not to identify the place for the reader, but rather to obscure its location. Instead of competing with an 'official', or well-known place-name, the poem's effect is gained by inscribing this special place, but refusing to divulge its name or pin down its position. Its message relies on the combination of anonymous nature - a 'lonely Yew-tree stands/Far from all human dwelling' (*WPW*, I, p. 92, ll. 1-2) - and the unrenowned life of a 'lost Man' who is remembered only by the poet at 'this seat his only monument' (ll. 44, 47). The place only becomes invested with importance by having its hidden life in nature revealed, and its emotional significance explained to the reader.

Wordsworth's 'Poems on the Naming of Places' build on the inscriptive genre of 'Lines left upon a Seat in a Yew-tree' by not only inscribing the place with memories of a loved one, but by naming the place after that person. In these poems aesthetics combine with a powerful emotional desire to put loved ones on the map - an elegiac attempt to people the landscape with those who have left it.³⁴ They are quieter in tone than the imperious voice of inscriptive poetry and speak directly to the

person for whom they are written, the poems themselves becoming the inscribed monuments of the loci. Conversational and affectionate, they permit the reader to eavesdrop on the intimate memories of the loved ones for whom the places are named. Combining mental circumlocution of memory with the meandering path of the poet discovering hidden vistas and vales, Wordsworth often describes coming upon parts of the Lake District which were hitherto unknown to him, as if he is exploring new lands. In the poem 'To M.H.' he says:

Our walk was far among the ancient trees:
There was no road, nor any woodman's path;
But a thick umbrage – checking the wild growth
Of weed and sapling, along soft green turf
Beneath the branches – of itself had made
A track, that brought us to a slip of lawn,
And a small bed of water in the woods.

(*WPW*, II, p. 118, ll. 1-7)

In his 'Advertisement' Wordsworth has already claimed that these places are 'unnamed or of unknown name'. Like colonial explorers, he and his intimates are discovering a new landscape, populated by its native inhabitants (shepherds, reapers, 'peasant'), but alien to the general public. In this poem, 'To M.H.' the reader is told 'There was no road' – no such civilising influence – the only route through is a 'track' that is nature's own as:

The spot was made by Nature for herself;
The travellers know it not, and 'twill remain
Unknown to them

(ll. 15-17)

Nature has paved the way for his discovery but other 'explorers' will never see it - the 'traveller' of Wordsworth's inscriptive poetry is not welcome here. This place exists for Wordsworth, his friends and readers alone, and he stakes his claim on it:

And therefore, my sweet MARY, this still Nook,
With all its beeches, we have named from You!
(ll. 23-4)

Wordsworth constructs himself as an explorer so that the English Lake District becomes a blank, seemingly unmapped area - a 'virgin' field like those recounted in travellers' tales - which he can then take imaginative possession of by naming features for himself. The description of the landscape makes no mention of the marks of economic ownership, and so these prior claims on the land are negated, at least in his poetry. He who walks the land is close to the land, and so claims a relationship to the Lake District, like 'he who tills the field' in 'Home at Grasmere' (1800-1806), because 'He, happy Man! Is Master of the field'.³⁵

Examples of colonial namings, such as the events which led to Cook's nomenclature 'Unfortunate Cove', or more famously, 'Cape of Good Hope', show how discoveries of new lands are identified in terms of an emotional response to them. Wordsworth's fourth poem in the 'Naming of Places' sequence narrates a process of naming very like Cook's, where a landmark is identified in terms of Wordsworth's emotional and moral reaction to discovering it:

My Friend, Myself, and She who then received
The same admonishment, have called the place
By a memorial name, uncouth indeed
As e'er by mariner was given to bay
Or foreland, on a new-discovered coast;
And, POINT RASH-JUDGEMENT is the Name it bears.
(WPW, II, p.117, ll. 75-80)

The place becomes important for the personal investment made in it by Wordsworth and his 'two beloved friends' when they learn to be less hasty in condemnation of their fellow human beings. Like Cook's naming, Wordsworth's relies on a process

whereby a private name, endowed with emotional significance, claims the importance of a common universal currency.

In naming 'Point Rash-Judgement', Wordsworth quite self-consciously draws a comparison between the Lake District and the new world, so that his presentation of home is conditioned by his reading about abroad. Wordsworth's adoption of the role of explorer, with the ideology of discovering and naming, leads to images of distant lands – a 'new-discovered coast' – being transposed onto the scenery of the Lake District. Consequently, as Michael Wiley states, the 'landscape that he describes in the poems is an allegorical one, implying alternative worlds within its narrow scope'.³⁶ Wordsworth overlays his own world with these images, in order to portray it in a different way. By this process he takes imaginative possession of the landscape around him.

2.9 Colonial Naming

But why did Wordsworth look to the example of explorers to take imaginative possession of his own world? One answer is that, as shown here, their narratives lent their precedent of naming the land to his own text, thereby strengthening his bid for emotional ownership of the Lake District. Another is that Wordsworth lived in a culture that avidly read new travel accounts as they appeared.³⁷ One of the most recent of these published journals, which Wordsworth knew well, was Samuel Hearne's *Journey*.³⁸ The mission given to Hearne by the Hudson's Bay Company was to make a journey from Hudson Bay to 'the Northern Ocean' for 'the Discovery of Copper Mines' and to find evidence of a Northwest passage. More explicitly he was told to find:

This river which is called by the Northern Indians Neetha-san-san-dazey, the Far Off Metal River...And if the said river is likely to be of any utility, take possession of it on behalf of the Hudson's Bay Company by cutting your name on some of the rocks, as also the date of the year, month, etc.³⁹

In the end Hearne's mission could be said to have failed in its stated intentions, as he found neither evidence of a Northwest passage, nor enough copper supplies to make extraction feasible. Hearne in fact only returned safely by relinquishing his command of the expedition and becoming reliant on his Indian companions for survival. He did not even have the correct implements to carve his name on the rocks by the river, having to make do with painting his name on an Indian 'target' or shield as a monument, so adding irony to the tale.⁴⁰ In other ways, though, Hearne's journey could be considered a success, as his efforts paved the way for others (such as Alexander Mackenzie) to follow in their bid for British possession of the Canadian Northwest.

The Hudson's Bay Company's instruction for 'taking possession' in unknown territories, is the method that Wordsworth adopts when he names Joanna's rock in his poem 'To Joanna':

I chiselled out in those rude characters
Joanna's name deep in the living stone.
(*WPW*, II, p. 114, ll. 82-3)

Here Wordsworth makes a more physical claim on the landscape (at least within the text) to ensure that the rock will be known by his name, despite any other claim to ownership. Precedents for this kind of taking possession exist in the Lake District as his footnote to the poem makes clear:

In Cumberland and Westmoreland are several Inscriptions, upon the native rock, which, from the wasting of time, and the rudeness of the workmanship, had been mistaken for Runic. They are, without doubt Roman. (*WPW*, II, p. 114)

Whether Roman or Runic, the stones point to long dead colonial powers, who also took possession of the landscape by etching their names on it. These names were often replaced by those of new colonisers, and similarly the Indian 'Neetha-san-san-dazey' river of Hearne's text will now be known in terms of its possession by the Hudson's Bay Company. The company's interest in acquiring the river is due to its potential as a 'utility', a source of mineral wealth. Wordsworth's 'Naming' poems use explorers' methods, and borrow the ideology of discovery and ownership of the new world, but to make a personal, rather than an economic, investment in the landscape of the old world. Wordsworth feeds on the language and concepts of colonialism for his own naming of the Lake District, but his idealistic personal motives for 'taking possession' evident in the 'Naming of Places' poems, could even be said to conceal economic motives similar to those behind other acts of possession in the colonies at this time. He recycles the colonial process as a subjective narrative of emotional exploration, which becomes widely accessible and is given universal importance by being promulgated in the form of a literary cultural product – which, ironically, he sells to make an economic living from the landscape. Even his own emotional possession is not entirely free from economic motives.

Possession often involves others' dispossession; naming demands their silencing. Wordsworth could have seen as much in that other popular travel narrative of the 1790's – Jonathan Carver's *Travels*, where he gives an account of his foray into the previously unmapped land above the Mississippi River.⁴¹ For Carver the land comes into being, when he, the first (European) man walks upon it, as 'the Mississippi has never been explored higher up than the River St Francis'.⁴² Peter Taylor has argued that space and place are distinguished by different understandings of their meaning 'with space treated as general and place as particular: space is everywhere,

place is somewhere. Moreover, place has content.⁴³ And if we read Carver's narrative in this way, space is what was there before it was given a name, and then it becomes a place, not an imaginative area any more, but a real locus with certain known characteristics. Carver finds a huge unmapped space, the only maps of this area being Indian 'sketches made in a crude manner'.⁴⁴ Like Cook, and Wordsworth, the landscape he finds as an empty space has emotional meaning invested in it, by naming it, personalising it and making it a place on the map – 'his' map now, after he has converted the 'crude' Indian sketches into his own plan. He says:

I arrived at a small branch (of the river) that fell into it from the north; to which as it had no name that I could distinguish it by, I gave my own; and the Reader will find it in the plan of my travels denominated Carver's River.⁴⁵

There is significance in being known/unknown, named/unnamed in travel accounts of the period. While land is unnamed it is untamed and unpossessed. Carver's river literally did not exist for him until he named it, pronounced his ownership of it and identified it on a map. When he discovered yet another 'unnamed' river, he named it 'Goddard's River' after a friend and also designated it on his plan.⁴⁶ Carver thus literally mapped himself and his associates onto the landscape, and made himself of primary importance in it in the same way that Wordsworth had when he placed himself and his intimates on an emotional map of the Lake District. He gave little credence to the validity of the names given in native American sketches which were silenced by his naming process.

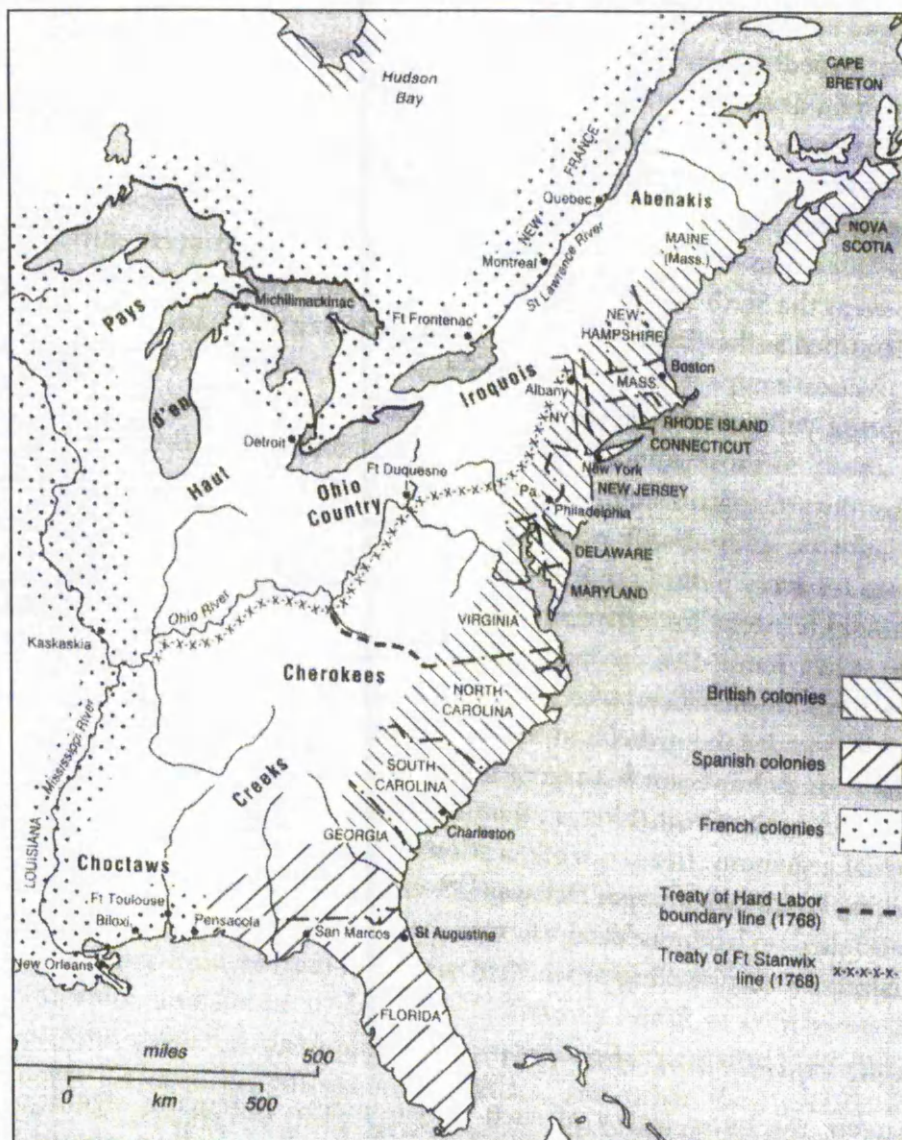
By giving English names to the landscape – which would eventually become common currency – a two-fold loss was incurred. On the one hand, an act of emotional plundering took place long before the land became economically viable. For in the act of naming eighteenth-century explorers and settlers were thereby

erasing significant names for features that presumably existed prior to their discovery: 'This island is known by the name of Manataulin, which signifies a Place of Spirits, and is considered by the Indians as sacred.'⁴⁷ On the other hand, the names may have been significant for the information they contained about the features they designated, encoding important knowledge to others. Examples of these names are: 'Whool dyah'd Whoie' – an Indian name meaning 'Pike lake',⁴⁸ because of the abundance of that fish in it, or 'Mosquettoe' country⁴⁹ because of the amount of those insects there. The Indian names that were silenced were often informative, containing a native intelligence system that went unrecognised by the naïve or uninitiated Europeans, who re-named features according to their own value systems and semiotics, thereby losing the useful information of the older names they obliterated.

It could be argued that Wordsworth displayed a pattern similar to these explorers when he obscured local indigenous names (and people) by claiming places for himself in his 'Naming of Places' poems. The first poem in the sequence particularly, which begins 'It was an April morning...' (*WPW*, II, p. 111, l. 1) names a 'wild nook' as 'Emma's Dell' (ll. 38, 47) – 'Emma' being a literary pseudonym Wordsworth often used for his sister Dorothy:

And, of the Shepherds who have seen me there,
To whom I sometimes in our idle talk
Have told this fancy, two or three, perhaps,
Years after we are gone and in our graves,
When they have cause to speak of this wild place,
May call it by the name of EMMA'S DELL
(ll. 42-7)

For it is clear that Wordsworth intended not just to name the place for himself, but to have the local population of 'Shepherds' call it that too. However the poem's tone remains hopeful rather than imperative. The desire to 'take possession' does underlie Wordsworth's name for the place, but it is merely prompted by his 'fancy' that 'two



Map 2. North America: Indian Peoples and European Colonies in the Mid-Eighteenth Century

or three' 'may call it by the name of EMMA'S DELL'. In Wordsworth's poetry names are his and his readers to share, but do not find their way onto maps or become adopted by the population, as they did in America. Wordsworth's colonisation is a personal, emotional and subjective process relying on the power of thought, recaptured as the printed word on the page, rather than the power of subjugation. His intention is to colonise, not just the figurative shepherds in his poem, but his readers. He does not aim to alter the official map of the landscape.⁵⁰

2.10 'Ruth'

Hearne's and Carver's accounts of their journeys were not the only popular travel narratives to shape Wordsworth's developing aesthetic. Another text which Wordsworth read (during the years 1797-1799, according to Duncan Wu and Mary Jacobus⁵¹) and which was clearly an influence on 'Ruth' (*Lyrical Ballads*, 1800), was William Bartram's *Travels*. This text records a journey Bartram was commissioned to make into Florida by the British naturalist, Dr John Fothergill. William Bartram's father had been a botanist and William had gained his botanical experience by accompanying him on field-studies and making many drawings of plants and animals, some of which were published in the *Gentleman's Magazine*.⁵² Bartram's role was as part of a drive to render new, unfamiliar varieties of plant-life, as known and classified species. The collection and systematisation of alien flora, by botanists in the colonies, can be seen as a colonising process in itself, with its naming and categorisation of species, and in the exportation of knowledge (of potential commercial value) back to Europe.⁵³ While Bartram was on a 'scientific' expedition to identify and name, collect and draw, the botanical specimens he found for despatch to his English patron, he was also an enthusiastic naturalist who gloried in the wild nature he found – his descriptions often ending in jubilant praise of their creator.

As well as documenting his naming of new species, Bartram's account of his journey records his investment in the landscape, where he names new places for their botanical value, as in 'Mount Magnolia' after 'a new and beautiful species of that celebrated family of flowering trees' and the 'Dog Woods' after 'a very remarkable grove of dog wood trees'.⁵⁴ Bartram's *Travels* gives an account of mainly settled territories where Indian villages exist amongst landowners' plantations and in recounting the locations he passes he shows a tradition of naming the land as well as its flora. He mentions that he 'ran by Mount Hope, so named by my Father, John Bartram', and describes 'a large plantation near the white cliffs, now called Brown's cliffs in honour of the late governor of West Florida'.⁵⁵ Although Bartram does record some Indian names, second-generation Americans like himself are concretising the names given to places by their forebears, and so erasing the emotional investment made in the landscape by native Americans.

Bartram also uses literary analogies from the old world, to make the foreign elements he encounters more familiar, and so take control of the strange and sometimes hostile landscape he finds himself in. Bartram describes an encounter where he and his companions come across some 'young, innocent Cherokee virgins' picking strawberries in a 'sylvan scene of primitive innocence'.⁵⁶ While some are resting in the shade of exotic shrubs:

other parties more gay and libertine, were yet collecting strawberries or wantonly chasing their companions, tantalising them, staining their lips and cheeks with the rich fruit.

The scene Bartram says is 'too enticing for hearty young men long to continue idle spectators' and they pursue the girls. The description of events is sexually charged, with images of taking possession - the 'nymphs' being hunted until the men 'gained

ground on a group of them' whereby they 'presented their little baskets, merrily telling us their fruit was ripe and sound'. But in presenting this scene to the reader, Bartram deals with the obvious desire the group of men feel for these Indian girls by containing the descriptions of the new world, within literary and cultural references from the old world, so that the girls become 'nymphs', or a 'gay assembly of hamadryades', in a scene of 'Elysian fields'. He conjures up pastoral scenes from classical mythology, in order to render the real, seductive danger of foreign sexuality, safely appealing.

While Bartram made his American encounters 'safer' by his systematisation of the botanical world, his record of naming, and European literary analogies, Wordsworth used the novel descriptions and travellers' idiom he found in Bartram to make his poetry more 'foreign' and exciting. In Wordsworth's poem, his central character, the young girl Ruth, is at home in the Somerset landscape where she wanders over 'dale and hill/In thoughtless freedom, bold' (*WPW*, II, pp. 227-35, ll. 5-6). A Rousseauesque native, she:

Had built a bower upon the green,
As if she from her birth had been
An infant of the woods.
(ll. 10-12)

In her harmonious relationship with the land, she is self possessed - 'Pleased with herself', and so is evenly balanced 'nor sad, nor gay' (l. 16) – until the 'lovely Youth' (l. 37) bursts onto her existence. He is impressive in 'a military casque', and exotic 'with splendid feathers drest' (ll. 20-1), and is described in terms of the animals that inhabit a strange and dangerous shore:

The panther in the wilderness
Was not so fair as he;
And when he chose to sport and play,
No dolphin ever was so gay
Upon the tropic sea

(ll. 38-42)

This 'youth' seduces Ruth with tales of life in America, so that she longs to go there with him and be part of his world, as his 'helpmate in the woods' (l. 92). She sees herself - also exoticised through his eyes - becoming his 'sylvan huntress' to 'drive the flying deer' (ll. 95-6). But as they prepare to depart, he abandons her and she never leaves her native shore to live 'in the wilderness', instead becoming mad and 'in a prison housed' (l. 195). When Ruth escapes her prison she becomes a vagrant, and only finds her identity again back in the Quantock countryside, where:

Among the fields she breathed again
The master-current of her brain
Ran, permanent and free

(ll. 211-3)

Much of the poem's beauty comes from its descriptions of the American landscape – which Wordsworth gleaned from the *Travels*, selecting 'highlights' from Bartram's lyrical, exuberant portrayal that were exotically unfamiliar to his British reader. Examples of features from the *Travels* in Wordsworth's poem are the descriptions of magnolia and cypress trees, 'green savannahs', 'lonesome floods' and 'wild woods'. But in places Wordsworth has obviously heightened these unusual scenes even further for his own purposes. Bartram describes the shrub *Gordonia lasianthus*:

It at the same time continually pushes forth new twigs, with young buds on them; and in the winter and spring, the third year's leaves, now partly concealed by the new and perfect ones, are gradually changing colour, from green to golden yellow, from that to a scarlet, from scarlet to crimson; and

lastly to a brownish purple, and then fall to the ground. So that the *Gordonia lasianthus* may be said to change and renew its garments every morning throughout the year; and every day appears with unfading lustre.⁵⁷

Wordsworth was evidently impressed with this passage, adapting it in his poem to:

He spake of plants that hourly change
Their blossoms, through a boundless range
Of intermingling hues;
With budding, fading, faded flowers
They stand the wonder of the bowers
From morn to evening dews.
(ll. 55-60)

In Wordsworth's re-telling of the wonders of this plant, it is the blossoms that change colour – not the leaves, making a fantastic spectacle even more incredible. And in his less botanical version, the plants 'hourly change', so that the reader imagines it happening before one's eyes, as the line 'budding, fading, faded flowers' describes a process of continual decay and renewal taking place. However the impetus for this atemporal description could well have come from Bartram's choice of genre. As Pamela Regis points out Bartram's text is not simply a travel account, it also seeks to compete with, or take its place among the botanical texts of the day. Bartram's static Linnaean descriptions of plants (and the plates he drew) conform to the scientific requisite that all aspects of a plant (bud, leaf, blossom and fruit) are incorporated in the same description.⁵⁸ The seasonal, cyclical time frame of Bartram's descriptions therefore compete with the linear narrative of his journey, and it is this aspect of his text that Wordsworth absorbs and replicates here.

However this fantastical re-working of the *Travels* occurs elsewhere in the poem. Bartram's journal gives a lengthy account of:

Pistia stratiotes, a very singular aquatic plant. It associates in large communities, or floating islands, some of them a quarter of a mile in extent, which are impelled to and fro, as the wind and current may direct.⁵⁹

He goes on to say:

These floating islands present a very entertaining prospect; for although we behold an assembly of the primary productions of nature only, yet the imagination seems to remain in suspense and doubt.

In Wordsworth's poem, the floating islands – always of interest to Wordsworth and his sister Dorothy in their domestic poetry – become 'fairy crowds/Of islands' (ll. 69-70). Perhaps the hint in Bartram's text about what 'the imagination' could make of these islands leads Wordsworth to see them as ethereal. Both excerpted passages from Bartram – themselves 'the imposition on nature of a visual ideal that one carried into the wilderness rather than the representation of a real wilderness'⁶⁰ – have become the stuff of exotic fables in Wordsworth's hands, rather than realistic accounts of the landscape of another continent.

Wordsworth in fact, while using Bartram's *Travels* to make his own poem more exciting, unusual and beautiful, aims to civilise the foreign elements he finds there. The picturesque appeal of Bartram's writing is released in the poem, only to be encased in Ruth's story, with its unhappy outcome, to warn against exciting fantasies of other lands. Wordsworth exposes the reader to its exoticism in order to inoculate him or her against the unbalancing effects of American climate and landscape,⁶¹ where nature will 'feed voluptuous thought' (l. 133) and even:

The wind, the tempest roaring high
The tumult of a tropic sky,
Might well be dangerous food
For him, a Youth to whom was given
So much of earth – so much of heaven
And such impetuous blood
(ll. 121-6)

The passage reads as if a tropical infection of the blood, brought on by climatic conditions, has caused this failing in the 'lovely youth' to be faithful and true. This continent has led to character changes in him, so that his good intentions have gone awry in a lawless wilderness of 'wild men's vices', and 'His genius and his moral frame/Were thus impaired' (ll. 149-52). Wordsworth portrays America as a heady, exotic land that has disfigured the youth's 'moral frame' and now has ruined Ruth's life with its seductive foreign images. He advocates taking possession of what is familiar, and accepting the limits of lived experience in one's own world, instead of desiring another existence.

But is Wordsworth really blaming the 'tropic sky' of another continent for the mental imbalances that take place in 'Ruth', or is he critiquing Bartram's account of his travels in America, if not the genre of travel narratives itself? Ruth is not seduced by a factual account of a known continent but by the rose-tinted production of a traveller there. While Bartram's account is based on a real journey, it is a fictional construction in that it relies on authorial intent and traditional literary devices, as much as on the landscape that it describes. And texts like Bartram's, describing an idyllic landscape and idealised pictures of Indian life, certainly influenced Coleridge and Southey in their plans to emigrate to America. Like the Georgian youth, they were blinded by a vision of liberty:

Before me shone a glorious world –
Fresh as a banner bright, unfurled
To music suddenly:
I looked upon those hills and plains,
And seemed as if let loose from chains,
To live at liberty.

(ll. 169-74)

In 'Ruth' Wordsworth responds to contemporary idealisations of colonial life in America, the apogee of which can be seen in Southey's and Coleridge's 1794 scheme

of Pantisocracy.⁶² Wordsworth constructs an idyllic vision of the American landscape, but he does so in order to expose the fallaciousness of such idealisations, replicating the contrived nature of colonial visions in order to critique them. In 'Ruth' Wordsworth is not blinkered by the Pantisocrats' search for an ideal society in an idyllic setting. In fact in this poem Wordsworth provides the 'antidote' to such infectious enthusiasm for the American colonies. 'Ruth' is written to combat such misplaced feelings among his contemporaries, by demonstrating how unbalancing an idealised vision of America could be.

Several of the passages in 'Ruth' – and notably those describing Indian life – are not exotic at all, in fact they could have taken place in the safe and familiar Somerset countryside. The 'youth' envisions married life in America for Ruth and himself not as the harsh and dangerous reality that most settlers faced, but as an idyllically 'pleasant' existence where the couple are free to find 'a home in every glade' (l. 78). And in 'Ruth' the strawberry-picking passage from Bartram, analysed above, loses any hint of sexuality to become a safe, homely description, which without reference to the 'Indian town' could well have been a Quantock outing;

He told of girls – a happy rout!
 Who quit their fold with dance and shout,
 Their pleasant Indian town,
 To gather strawberries all day long;
 Returning with a choral song
 When daylight is gone down.
 (ll. 49-54)

Wordsworth has the youth seduce Ruth with his idyllic construction of American life in his poem, as Bartram could be said to seduce his readers with descriptions of life as a 'noble savage' in his narrative. Bartram's enthusiasm is infectious, 'What an elysium it is! Where the wandering Siminole, the naked red warrior, roams at large'⁶³ and his intimate admission that he has himself been 'Seduced by these sublime

enchancing scenes of primitive nature and these visions of terrestrial happiness' contributes to make his text ineluctable.⁶⁴

So Wordsworth replicates the seductive images of Bartram's *Travels* in 'Ruth' but in order to expose the illusion of pioneering life in America as a pastoral utopian existence. And his portrayal of Ruth's own self-sufficiently idyllic life 'over dale and hill' (l. 5) in Somerset, before being attracted by another world, supports the message of the poem. Wordsworth's didactic intent is to show that we should be happy living in our own world, or discontent may lead to mental instability. By reworking Bartram's idyllic construction, he takes possession of the fantasy in order to create alienation in his characters. Their displaced and dysfunctional position as a result of desiring an idealised life in another land underlines his message that identity and self-possession rely on being content at home. The lesson that Wordsworth advocates in 'Ruth' is the one that he also employs in 'Poems on the Naming of Places'. He uses the ideology of exploration to claim his place on the land around him in his poetry, but confines the limits of his art to what he knows – his own world. While 'foreign' images make his poetry more exciting, his writing is underpinned by a cultural pact of knowledge with his metropolitan reader. Rather than travel abroad to make an emotional investment for posterity in a new land, Wordsworth's reading of travel narratives enabled him to claim imaginative possession of his domestic landscape.

2.11 Conclusion

So what can we conclude about the way in which Southey and Wordsworth 'take possession' in their poetry. Naming the landscape is just one aspect of that process. While each writer has his own motives for poetic naming, and his own distinctive practice, each nevertheless contributes to a discourse of appropriation. Naming may

begin as a private process but personal acts of possession are given a public dimension in published poetry, as they are in explorers' journals and on official maps. Wordsworth's claim that places are 'unnamed or of unknown names', or Carver's that 'there was no name that I could distinguish it by' can be seen as ground-clearing exercises which turn someone else's place into free space.⁶⁵ Naming that 'cleared' *space* turns it into Southey's and Wordsworth's *place*, silencing others' voices, others' claims to it. And once the place has been re-named, it too becomes a territory to be defended against those whose name for it has been obscured. Southey, then, is simply more explicit in *Madoc* about the process that Wordsworth implicitly develops in his 'Poems on the Naming of Places'. Naming is an essential element of colonisation because it silences prior claims to the land, and the Romantic aesthetics of these poets legitimise this first step in the process.

As has been shown in this chapter, subsequent techniques learnt from travel narratives were also adopted by both Southey and Wordsworth in order to 'take possession' in their poetry. The contradictions that are evident in their different poetics reflect the dichotomy found in these narratives, between the optimistic self-confident explorer – of William Bartram's narrative, for instance – and pragmatic accounts of the tensions and hardships of pioneering life. Each writer brings his own polemical intentions to these texts so that the descriptions of the wild open spaces of America from travel accounts can be recycled as either Wordsworth's 'green savannah' or Southey's 'savage lands'. When Wordsworth describes America in 'Ruth', he overturns the conventional picture of eighteenth-century colonial politics such as that found in *Madoc*. He also reverses the 'cultural imperialism' of texts such as Southey's that attempt to impose the author's vision on the American territories. In 'Ruth' it is America – or more correctly the *idea* of America – that exerts an influence

on British nationals, through the vehicle of Wordsworth's active colonial character, who seduces the passive Ruth. Ultimately Wordsworth's version of America resists the ideology of colonisation, because whilst being shown as exotic and exciting it is also shown as 'irregular', 'dangerous' and unassimilable. The foreign dangers that Southey's text imports and then attempts to control implausibly, are released in 'Ruth' in order to challenge conventional, beneficent views of colonialism.

Southey systematically writes about cultures he has little knowledge of – whether that may be the medieval Welsh court, or native Americans – relying on the observations of pseudo-scientific 'authorities'. *Madoc* is therefore imbued with the dangerous realities of the travel narratives Southey read, but he manipulates his text speciously to expel or suppress them and so present the territories as ultimately governable. One of the reasons why *Madoc* fails to present a plausible vision of colonial relations is due to the depiction of its colonising hero. Southey does not permit Madoc to question his conduct and so he is untouched by the anxieties harboured by Southey himself, regarding colonisation of the American territories. He is presented as a one-dimensional figure, remote from those he governs – as well as Southey's readers – an inadequate model of an imperial administrator or 'governor' of colonial territories.

In the wake of exploratory expeditions and voyages by travellers like Cook, Carver, Bartram and Hearne, it was Southey's and Wordsworth's generation of writers, settlers and politicians that was faced with solving the problems of colonising new territories. Southey was committed all his life to Britain's colonial future and his subsequent poetry and journalism provided a literary forum for him to discuss the complexities of colonising new lands in America, the South Pacific, Africa and the Caribbean.⁶⁶ Unlike Southey, Wordsworth could indulge in exotic fantasies because

he was not attempting to solve the problems of colonial life in his writing and so was free to resist the colonising impetus of the period. It is worth noting that such an 'anti-colonial' position is also the message of his poem 'The Female Vagrant' (*Lyrical Ballads*, 1798). Southey however felt that colonisation of land abroad would provide opportunities for those like himself who were disenchanted with the British political system. He would also come to embrace foreign expansion for nationalist reasons (as this thesis will demonstrate) claiming that Britain's future depended on its position as a colonial power. Wordsworth's later poem *The Excursion* (1814) shows how much the ideology of colonialism would be absorbed and recycled by his generation of writers, with its unselfconscious promotion of the idea of 'taking possession' for Britain:

So the wide waters, open to the power,
The will, the instincts, and appointed needs
Of Britain, do invite her to cast off
Her swarms, and in succession send them forth;
Bound to establish new communities
On every shore whose aspect favours hope
Or bold adventure; promising to skill
And perseverance their deserved reward.
(*WPW*, V, p. 298, ll. 375-82)

Notes

¹ James Cook and James King, *A Voyage to the Pacific Ocean... in the Years, 1776, 1777, 1778, 1779 and 1780*, ed. John Douglas, 3 vols. (London: W. & A. Strahan et al., 1784), I, p. xxxvii.

² *The Journals of Captain Cook* (Prepared from the original manuscripts by J.C. Beaglehole for the Hakluyt Society, 1955-67), ed. Philip Edwards (London: Penguin, 1999), pp. 135, 264.

³ Captain James Cook, *A Voyage Round the World Performed in His Britannic Majesty's Ships The Resolution and Adventure in the Years 1772, 1773, 1774, 1775*, 4 vols. (Dublin, printed for W. Whitestone, S. Watson, R. Cross, J. Potts, J. Hoey and 13 others, 1777), II, pp. 39, 221.

⁴ David Andrew, 'The Charts and Coastal Views of Captain Cook's Voyages' in *Annual Report and Statement of Accounts for 1987* (London: The Hakluyt Society, 1987), 11-20 (p. 11).

⁵ Simon Schama, *Landscape and Memory* (London: Fontana Press, 1996).

⁶ Amanda Gilroy, *Romantic Geographies: Discourses of travel, 1775-1844* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000).

⁷ Michael Wiley, *Romantic Geography: Wordsworth and Anglo-European Spaces* (London: Macmillan, 1998).

⁸ *North America*, ed. Tim Fulford with Carol Bolton, vol. I of *Travels, Explorations and Empires: Writings from the Era of Imperial Expansion 1770-1835*, eds. Tim Fulford and Peter J. Kitson, 8 vols. (London: Pickering and Chatto, 2000 and 2001), p. xxv.

⁹ 'The great explorers' writings are nonfictional quest romances in which the hero-authors struggle through enchanted or bedeviled lands toward a goal, ostensibly the discovery of the Nile's sources or the conversion of the cannibals. But that goal also turns out to include sheer survival and the return home, to the regions of light.' Patrick Brantlinger, 'Victorians and Africans: The Genealogy of the Myth of the Dark Continent' in *Race, Writing, and Difference*, ed. Henry Louis Gates, Jr. (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1986), pp. 185-222 (p. 195).

¹⁰ Schama, *Landscape and Memory*, p. 13.

¹¹ Marlon B. Ross, 'Romantic Quest and Conquest' in *Romanticism and Feminism*, ed. Anne K. Mellor (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988), pp. 26-51 (p. 31).

¹² Christopher J. P. Smith, *A Quest for Home: Reading Robert Southey* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1997), p. 66.

¹³ Jonathan Carver, *Travels Through the Interior of North America, in the Years, 1766, 1767 and 1768* (London: for the author, 1778), William Bartram, *Travels Through North and South Carolina, Georgia, East and West Florida, the Cherokee Country, the Extensive Territories of the Muscogulges, or the Creek Confederacy, and the Country of the Chactaws* (1791), introduction by G. De Wolf (Savannah, Georgia: The Beehive Press, 1973), Thomas Cooper, *Some Information Respecting America* (London: J. Johnson, 1794).

¹⁴ Carver, *Travels*, p. 122.

¹⁵ Southey's definitions of 'Pantisocracy' and 'Aspheterism' come from a letter to Thomas Southey, 7th September 1794, *NL*, I, p. 75.

¹⁶ James C. McKusick, "'Wisely forgetful": Coleridge and the politics of Pantisocracy', in *Romanticism and Colonialism: Writing and Empire 1780-1830*, eds.

Tim Fulford and Peter J. Kitson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp. 107-28 (p. 108).

¹⁷ Robert Southey, *Madoc* (1794), British Library, London, Add MS 47883, f. 20.

¹⁸ Kenneth Curry, Southey's *Madoc*: The Manuscript of 1794', in *Philological Quarterly*, 22 (Oct. 1943), 347-69 (p. 348).

¹⁹ Southey, 'Madoc' (1794), Add MS 47883, f. 3.

²⁰ Southey, 'Madoc' (1794), Add MS 47883, f. 3.

²¹ Southey, 'Madoc' (1794), Add MS 47883, f. 18.

²² John Keats, 'On First Looking into Chapman's Homer' (1816), *Romanticism*, ed. Duncan Wu (Oxford and Malden, Ma.: Blackwell Publishers Ltd, 2000), pp. 1012-3.

²³ *De-Scribing Empire: Post-Colonialism and Textuality*, eds. Chris Tiffin and Alan Lawson (London: Routledge, 1994), p. 3.

²⁴ *The Journals of Captain Cook*, ed. Edwards, pp. 108, 171.

²⁵ Cook, *A Voyage Round the World*, II, pp. 147, 230.

²⁶ Lynda Pratt, 'Revising the National Epic: Coleridge, Southey and Madoc', in *Romanticism*, 2.2 (1996), 149-63 (p. 152).

²⁷ Edward W. Said, *Orientalism: Western Conceptions of the Orient* (London: Penguin, 1995), pp. 58-9.

²⁸ Thomas Gray, *The Complete Poems of Thomas Gray*, eds. H. W. Starr and J. R. Hendrickson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1966), p. 24.

²⁹ Pratt, 'Revising the National Epic: Coleridge, Southey and Madoc', p. 160.

³⁰ Samuel Hearne, *A Journey from Prince of Wales Fort in Hudson's Bay to the Northern Ocean... in the Years 1769, 1770, 1771 and 1772* (London: A. Strahan & T. Caddell, 1795).

³¹ Carver, *Travels*, pp. 313-25 (p. 319).

³² Hearne, *A Journey*, pp. 148-64.

³³ For example, Mark Akenside, William Shenstone, Chiabrera – see Geoffrey Hartman, *The Unremarkable Wordsworth* (London: Methuen, 1987).

³⁴ The 'Naming' poems also conform to a genre of poems such as 'The Thorn' and 'We Are Seven', where Wordsworth retains those who have died, in the landscape itself – so that they are embedded in it literally as well as in spirit.

³⁵ William Wordsworth, *Home at Grasmere: First Book of First Part of The Recluse*, ed. Beth Darlington (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1977), pp. 68-9. Of course I refer to an imaginative process here; Wordsworth and his family were all too aware of who did own the land due to Wordsworth's father's employment as land agent for the powerful Lowther family. For references to Wordsworth and land-ownership see: Kenneth Johnston, *The Hidden Wordsworth* (London: Pimlico, 2000); Tim Fulford, *Landscape, Liberty and Authority* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996); Anne Janowitz, *England's Ruins* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1990).

³⁶ Wiley, *Romantic Geography*, p. 81.

³⁷ For instance, 'The first edition of *Travels in the Interior Districts of Africa* [Mungo Park] appeared in April 1799, and its 1,500 copies sold out in a month', Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (London: Routledge, 1992), p. 34.

³⁸ As Wordsworth's note to the poem 'The Complaint of a Forsaken Indian Woman' (*Lyrical Ballads*, 1798) relates (*WPW*, II, 40), Samuel Hearne's description of the Indian practice of leaving the sick and weak to die, when they are travelling, was the source for his poem. Duncan Wu suggests Wordsworth read Hearne's *Journey* in

April/May 1798, see *Wordsworth's Reading 1770-1799* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), p. 72.

³⁹ Hearne, *A Journey*, p. xxxviii.

⁴⁰ Painting or carving one's name on a rock was a common device used by explorers in Canada to claim land on behalf of the company they worked for. Alexander Mackenzie records his arrival at the Pacific coast in this way in his *Voyages from Montreal, on the River St. Lawrence, through the Continent of North America, to the Frozen and Pacific Oceans; in the Years 1789, and 1793* (London: T. Caddell et al, 1801).

⁴¹ Duncan Wu claims in *Wordsworth's Reading 1800-1815* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), p. 43, that Wordsworth probably did not read this text until 1802, however my intention in this essay is to show the idiomatic similarities between Carver's narrative (as an exemplar of travel narratives from the period) and Wordsworth's 'Poems on the Naming of Places'.

⁴² Carver, *Travels*, p. 73.

⁴³ Peter J. Taylor, *Modernities: A Geohistorical Interpretation* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1999), p. 97.

⁴⁴ Carver, *Travels*, pp. 83-4.

⁴⁵ Carver, *Travels*, p. 74.

⁴⁶ Carver, *Travels*, p. 105.

⁴⁷ Carver, *Travels*, p. 144.

⁴⁸ Hearne, *A Journey*, p. 77.

⁴⁹ Carver, *Travels*, p. 106.

⁵⁰ Even Wordsworth's own *A Guide Through The District of the Lakes in the North of England* (1810) conforms to place-names of general consensus, rather than providing an 'emotional' route through the area as might be expected from reading his poems.

⁵¹ See Wu, *Wordsworth's Reading 1770-1799*, p. 9, Mary Jacobus, *Tradition and Experiment in Wordsworth's Lyrical Ballads 1798* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976), pp. 198-203.

⁵² Two of Bartram's drawings of the 'Horn-tailed Turtle' were published in the *Gentleman's Magazine* (1758), see *William Bartram, Botanical and Zoological Drawings, 1756-1788*, ed. Joseph Ewan (Philadelphia: The American Philosophical Society, 1968), p. 22.

⁵³ See *Visions of Empire: Voyages, Botany and Representations of Nature*, eds. David Philip Miller and Peter Hans Reill (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

⁵⁴ Bartram, *Travels*, pp. 337, 399.

⁵⁵ Bartram, *Travels*, pp. 96, 428.

⁵⁶ All references to this passage are from Bartram, *Travels*, pp. 354-6.

⁵⁷ Bartram, *Travels*, p. 159.

⁵⁸ Pamela Regis, *Describing Early America: Bartram, Jefferson, Crèvecoeur and the Rhetoric of Natural History* (De Kalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 1992), pp. 54-8.

⁵⁹ Bartram, *Travels*, pp. 86-7.

⁶⁰ Regis, *Describing Early America*, p. 70.

⁶¹ 'One immunizes the contents of the collective imagination by means of a small inoculation of acknowledged evil...this protects it against the risk of a generalized subversion', Roland Barthes, *Mythologies* (London: Vintage, 1993), p. 150.

⁶² Wordsworth first met Coleridge in August 1795 when the two Pantisocrats' enthusiasm for the scheme (after Southey's suggestion that they carry out the project in Wales) was disintegrating into bitterness and resentment.

⁶³ Bartram, *Travels*, p.105.

⁶⁴ The references to Seminole Indians and sections of text copied from Bartram's work into Coleridge's notebooks suggest that he was also so seduced, *The Notebooks of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, ed. Kathleen Coburn, 5 vols. (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1957), I, entries 218, 220, 222, 228.

⁶⁵ Carver, *Travels*, p. 74.

⁶⁶ There is not space here to list the many reviews in which Southey promotes his colonial vision. Kenneth Curry and Robert Dedmon have provided a very useful list of *Quarterly Review* articles in 'Southey's Contributions to the *Quarterly Review*', *TWC*, 6 (1975), 261-72.

Chapter Three

'Eden's happy vale': Romantic Representations of the South Pacific

3.1 Introduction

At this moment I could form the most delightful theory of an island peopled by men who should be Xtians not Philosophers and where Vice only should be contemptible. Virtue only honourable where all should be convenient without luxury all satisfied without profusion ... Otaheitia independent of its women had many inducements not only for the sailor but the philosopher. He might cultivate his own ground and trust himself and friends for his defence – he might be truly happy in himself and his happiness would be increased by communicating it to others. He might introduce the advantages and yet avoid the vices of cultivated society. (*NL*, I, p. 19)

This letter written by Southey to his friend Horace Bedford in January 1793 shows how attracted he was at nineteen to the idea of living on an island in the South Pacific. Here he would be isolated from what he considered to be the 'vices of cultivated society' and their perverse influence on humanity. In this year – before Southey met Coleridge and they formulated their plan to emigrate to America and institute their egalitarian society of Pantisocracy – Southey's correspondence reveals his philosophical quest for an ideal model of society as well as a geographical location for its setting. One of the possible loci for his proposed ideal society of 'Southeyopolis' was certainly the South Pacific.

One philosopher who dominated Southey's thought-processes at the time he was considering emigrating was the French 'philosophe', Jean Jacques Rousseau. His discussion of the merits of 'savage' and 'civilised' societies in *A Discourse Upon the Origin and Foundation of the Inequality among Mankind* (1755) provided a frame for questions of how society could be improved. Rousseau traced human society from man's primitive condition to its present depraved state and mourned the 'Golden Age'

when people subsisted in small societies by hunting and gathering. He presented a positive view of the savage in a natural state, contrasting his physical strength and robustness to civilized man's vulnerability and dependence on 'machines'.¹ At this time when Southey felt that British society would not answer his needs the Rousseauesque dichotomy between 'savage' and 'civilized' societies was one that he often employed as a metonym for his understanding of the oppositional values of 'community' versus 'society'.² A further letter written in 1793 reveals how much Southey saw his own, and his friends' problems in terms of the society that had shaped them, making their personal animadversions general and political:

The more I see of this strange world, the more I am convinced that society requires desperate remedies. The friends I have ... are many of them struggling with obstacles, which never could happen were man what nature intended him. (LC, I, pp. 198-9)

His view of 'man' as a perverted version of humanity that is no longer as 'nature intended him' dramatically exemplifies Rousseau's arguments against 'civilized' man in his *Discourse*.³ The thrust of Southey's ambition for 'Southeyopolis' is in Bernhardt-Kabisch's words, 'the restoration of the primordial social contract and, thereby, of the moral and cultural conditions of the Golden Age as the Enlightenment dreamed of it'.⁴

Southey's reading of travel accounts to the South Pacific was also an early influence on the formation of his ideas, because that location (as the opening quotation reveals) provided the conditions that he considered necessary to be 'truly happy'. These conditions were not only physical but might also provide a 'savage' model of society that would answer his philosophical needs. Published accounts of South Pacific exploration, were, like those of America, avidly consumed by late eighteenth-century and early nineteenth-century European readers – as Bernard Smith

shows in *European Vision and the South Pacific 1768-1850* (1960) – who were totally reliant on them for knowledge of newly ‘discovered’ territories.⁵ Reports of primary encounters between Europeans and indigenous races were to shape perceptions of other cultures by being absorbed and recycled in British fiction and disseminated to a wide audience. Southey and other writers were inspired by their reading to discuss these new cultures, but they were also selective, extracting those aspects that conformed to their ideology. Therefore it is important to consider the information that was extracted, how it was re-worked, and why.

One of the most important facets of South Pacific travel narratives was the insight they offered British readers into a culture and society that was governed by a totally different set of morals and constraints to their own. Journals of voyages to the South Pacific predicated it as a land of liberty – sexual, political and societal. This vision was of concern to Southey, who, as a commentator of his time recognised the social implications, not just for Polynesia but for Europe. Southey’s reading about South Pacific voyages led him to see those indigenous natives as having certain essential characteristics. For instance, first encounters with this culture reported the active sexuality of Tahitian women, which he perceived as being at odds with his own society. The way that female sexuality was depicted in South Pacific travel narratives provided an ideological focus for Southey and other writers to compare ‘savage’ models of society with their own. This chapter examines how far such discussions of female sexuality led to restrictions in the textual representation of women, as well as a curtailment of female roles in British society, so feeding into the gender politics of the period. It also considers Southey’s own ideas within the context of other writers of the period. As a leader in contemporary opinion he influenced poets such as P. M. James, Mary Russell Mitford, Coleridge and James Montgomery. Byron, it is argued, was

provoked by attitudes like Southey's, to oppose his version of the South Pacific in his own poem *The Island* (1823). Southey's impact on these writers - and society in general - demonstrates how influential he was as a poet and a reviewer on visions of empire.

3.2 European encounters with the South Pacific

First it is necessary to examine the South Pacific travel narratives that led to the construction of so much of Southey's ideology and formed the basis of his journalism on Polynesian culture and society. From the 1760s onwards the South Pacific had become a focus for European navigators. The primary motives for exploring this region were territorial and scientific - to claim new potentially valuable territories and to increase anthropological, geographical and biological knowledge of the area. The accounts of voyages to the South Seas disseminated to an avid reading public these advances in knowledge. Voyages to the islands of the South Seas could take at least six months, or even longer if stops were made en route, or adverse weather conditions were encountered.⁶ However once there they could be surveyed and mapped quite easily by ships' crews. Moreover the society, food and even sexual relations of an island such as Tahiti were instantly accessible to European sailors from the safety of their floating wooden fortresses. Accounts of voyages increasingly reported sexual relations between European sailors and female Polynesians, and these sexual first encounters were important because they transgressed the boundary between the two alien cultures, affecting both. Though sexual involvements could enable greater understanding between sailors and islanders and often led to loving relationships, there were wider social implications such as miscegenation and the spread of sexually transmitted diseases. Historians have shown the deleterious effects of these sexual

encounters on Polynesian social structure, as well as the increase of practices such as abortion and infanticide.⁷

The aspect of these first reported encounters that I will focus on is the part they played in creating a mythical sexual status for Polynesian women in Western literature, so that they became the sexual 'other' for a more restrained European society. This was because the first explorers understood the sexual exchange within the restrictions of their own moral code rather than in Polynesian terms. The texts examined here specifically refer to the Polynesian islands rather than to the more westerly Melanesian Islands (also known to European explorers) such as the Fiji group. As Peter Kitson shows, European sailors valued more highly the lighter-skinned and lighter-haired inhabitants of these islands whom they considered themselves physically and culturally closer to, than the darker skinned Melanesians who were portrayed as depraved cannibals.⁸

One of the first recorded visits to Tahiti (or 'Otaheite' as it was known to eighteenth century explorers) was by the British captain, Samuel Wallis, in 1767. The visit was governed by mutual mistrust, with the guns of his ship *HMS Dolphin* opening fire on the islanders on several occasions. Eventually to placate the British sailors and peacefully resolve the situation, the Tahitians offered their women to the ship's crew in the first recorded sexual exchange of this kind. However Wallis himself recorded in the ship's log that 'notwithstanding all their civility, I doubt not but it was more thro' fear than love that they respected us so much'.⁹

The French explorer, Louis Antoine de Bougainville, in his *A Voyage Round the World, In the Years 1766, 1767, 1768 and 1769* (1772) provided a more positive representation of native populations, than that found in previous accounts.¹⁰ The Tahitians had learnt from Wallis's visit the easiest way to propitiate their visitors. But

as Nicholas Thomas suggests, sex was used for trade but also to absorb visitors and give them a role in Polynesian social and belief systems.¹¹ Bougainville describes 'periguas' (native boats), coming out to the ship containing naked 'fair females', as 'the men and the old women that accompanied them, had stripped them of the garments which they generally dress themselves in'.¹² It is clear to Bougainville in his account, that the crew are expected to take advantage of the women's sexual favours. He says 'they pressed us to choose a woman, and to come on shore with her; and their gestures, which were nothing less than equivocal, denoted in what manner we should form an acquaintance with her'.¹³ Bougainville goes on to relate what happened when the ship's crew continued in their work:

It was very difficult, amidst such a sight, to keep at their work four hundred young French sailors, who had seen no women for six months. In spite of all our precautions, a young girl came on board, and placed herself upon the quarter-deck, near one of the hatchways, which was open, in order to give air to those who were heaving at the capstern below it. The girl carefully dropt a cloth, which covered her, and appeared to the eyes of all beholders, such as Venus shewed himself to the Phrygian shepherd, having, indeed, the celestial form of that goddess. Both sailors and soldiers endeavoured to come to the hatch-way; and the capstern was never hove with more alacrity than on this occasion.¹⁴

This first encounter with Tahiti is a sexual one. To describe this world, which is as strange to the sailors in terms of the new sights they see and people they meet, as it is in terms of social mores, Bougainville retreats into the safety of classical precedent. The attempt to seduce the ship's crew by artless native women and artful 'men and old women' is in fact really a very familiar commercial exchange which he transforms into a 'celestial' manifestation. The native female body is elevated to a 'celestial form' appearing 'upon the quarter-deck' with the worshipping multitude of 'sailors and soldiers' below in the hatch-way. Bougainville finds a proper classical frame to dignify the sex show as well as the French sailors' responses to it.

Bougainville endeavours to describe the islanders' social structures, their food, the plants they grow and the landscape of the island in a proto-scientific way. But the emphasis is on a romantic presentation of the island and his descriptions have more to do with the ideological and cultural baggage he brings with him, than with what he actually finds there. Looking for the paradise, or 'Golden Age' of his European literary heritage, he describes Tahiti in biblically and classically inspired terms. While walking in its interior he says 'I thought I was transported into the garden of Eden'¹⁵ and emphasises the casual way in which property is shared and food is consumed freely by its inhabitants - 'every one gathers fruits from the first tree he meets with'.¹⁶ In this paradise the native woman (his 'Venus') is worshipped and the sexual atmosphere is all pervading:

The very air which the people breathe, their songs, their dances, almost constantly attended with indecent postures, all conspire to call to mind the sweets of love, all engage to give themselves up to them.¹⁷

Bougainville even goes so far as to name the island 'La nouvelle Cythere' in honour of Aphrodite – the Venus of his text - so dedicating the island to the worship of the ideal female form and spontaneous female sexuality.

Rousseau's *Discourse* had already pre-conditioned the perceptions of explorers so that they were looking for the 'noble savage', assimilating 'him' with the heroes of Homer and Ossian - those other cultural influences that relied on the cult of primitivism - rather than an open-minded reporting of what they found.

Bougainville's representation of the Tahitians, and his emphasis on the island as a paradise on earth, with female sexuality freely available to visiting males, was also to influence European perceptions of the Pacific islands until modern times.

Bougainville's account led to a contemporary writer and philosopher, Denis Diderot,

employing such depictions of Tahitian society in his own critique of European morality in his *Supplement au Voyage de Bougainville* (written in 1772 when Bougainville's *Voyage* appeared, but not published until 1796). Diderot at this time shared the concerns of Rousseau that life as a 'savage man' had many advantages to that of 'civilized man' which had made the latter 'weak, fearful and mean-spirited'.¹⁸ In his *Supplement*, Diderot uses Bougainville's description of 'free' love to criticise the European institution of marriage, which he shows to be (in Peter Jimack's words) 'an utterly unjustifiable extension of the right of property over another'.¹⁹ Diderot goes on to argue that European society is based on a morality which overrules male sexuality, 'demanding of men a kind of behaviour which is simply alien to them' and leading to them being 'racked by internal contradictions, torn between the demands of nature and those of moral laws'.²⁰ Diderot's text is an example of the gap between the documentary 'reality' of detail (employed by Captain Cook for instance in his descriptions of Tahiti) and the 'literary' portrayal of the island, which is primarily indebted to the male writer's fantasy of a sexual paradise. Diderot even ignored the contradicting details within Bougainville's account (such as the presence of syphilis, or instances of social inequality) preferring to foreground his first impressions of the land as 'Eden', populated by the readily accessible female Eve/Venus.

Cook's journals do not evoke the idyllic, sexual paradise of Bougainville's account, or even the murderous exchanges of Wallis's but are governed by calm, scientific detachment. Cook's first voyage to the South Pacific (1768-1771) was instigated by the Royal Society, whose members desired him to (among other aims) build an observatory on the island of Tahiti, in order to observe the transit of Venus. Cook's visit was successful, but dominated by a long, stressful balancing act, of keeping his crewmen busy and the natives happy, between sporadic attempts at theft

by the latter and violence against the islanders by the former. Though there are individual accounts of sexual encounters between the men and the native women, Cook is quite circumspect on this subject, and these have been more often described by other members of the crew in their published accounts. In the manner of a dispassionate observer, Cook also seems reluctant to make overarching statements about Tahitian society. However in the account of his second voyage to the Pacific (1772-1775) he is keen to put the record straight with regard to such claims about the islanders' sexuality as Bougainville's:

Great Injustice has been done the Women of Otaheite and the Society Isles, by those who have represented them, without exception, as ready to grant the last favour to any man who will come up to their price. But this is by no means the case; the favours of married women and also the unmarried of the better sort, are as difficult to obtain here as in any other country whatever. Neither can the charge be understood indiscriminately of the unmarried of the lower class, for many of these admit of no such familiarities. That there are prostitutes here as well as in other countries is very true, perhaps more in proportion, and such were those who came on board the Ship to our people and frequented the post we had on shore. By seeing these mix indiscriminately with those of a different turn, even of the first rank, one is, at first inclined to think that they are all disposed the same way, and that the only difference is in the price.²¹

Cook's journal shows his astute realisation that Bougainville's account of a sexual paradise is a fictional one inspired by Enlightenment idealism rather than true observations of the Tahitians. Cook's assumption that sexual relations between islanders and crew members was often no more than an economic exchange was one that Bougainville declined to recognise in his text, presenting Tahitian female sexuality in terms of classical beauty and the innocence of a biblical Eden. However it is also likely that Cook, like other Europeans, does not take into account the cultural differences between British and Polynesians, instead attributing Western ideas of prostitution to these sexual encounters.²² Cook's account is also a construct, and is inspired by his need as a naval officer to be perceived as sober and detached. He was

anxious to avoid speculation in this account of his second voyage, because the first one had gained notoriety from the scandalous details included by John Hawkesworth.

Hawkesworth's *Account of the Voyages...in the Southern Hemisphere* (1773)²³ had titillated the British reading public by including descriptions of sexual acts, such as:

A young man, near six feet high, performed the rites of Venus with a little girl about eleven or twelve years of age, before several of our people, and a great number of the natives, without the least sense of its being indecent or improper, but, as appeared, in perfect conformity to the custom of the place. Among the spectators were several women of superior rank ... who may properly be said to have assisted at the ceremony; for they gave instructions to the girl how to perform her part, which, young as she was, she did not seem much to stand in need of.²⁴

It had also outraged many. The presentation of Polynesian women as sexually active seductresses was becoming less attractive to a larger British reading public that included an ever-increasing number of female readers. It gave impetus to contemporary opinion that would restrict the way in which women could be represented in literature. Robert Southey by this time was at the vanguard of such opinion. In 1809 he saw Tahiti (the locus for his early enthusiasm) as an island governed by a 'lasciviousness which degrades the Taheiteans even below the brute creation'.²⁵ As I will show, Southey reviewed several South Pacific texts for different periodicals during his career as a journalist and his estimation of Tahitian society underwent a sea-change. As a commentator Southey reflected and also precipitated, the changing perception of the British public towards the South Pacific. The death of Cook in 1779 had been elegised in the poetry, art and even the theatre of the period.²⁶ Cook's portrayal as 'mild and liberal',²⁷ being hacked to death by brutal natives, led to his deification in British terms, if not Polynesian, as Gananath Obeyesekere points out in *The Apotheosis of Captain Cook* (1992).²⁸ Cook's death and the increase in

commerce between British ships and Pacific islanders was to lead to greater knowledge of the society and culture of the latter and a less favourable view of island life.

3.3 Southey's reviews of Polynesian missions

One of the largest changes in public opinion was to be caused by the graphic accounts of Polynesian society sent back to Britain by missionaries in the South Pacific.

Southey reviewed the London Missionary Society's publication, *Transactions of the Missionary Society in the South Sea Islands*, for the *Quarterly Review* in 1809. The *Transactions* recount the efforts made by the LMS to raise money by subscription, and their selection of thirty candidates from 'Christians of all denominations', for their missionary project.²⁹ The company set off in the naval ship, the *Duff*, under the command of Captain Henry Wilson in August 1796.³⁰ On arrival in the South Pacific, the missionaries were distributed in groups on 'Taheite', 'Tongataboo' (Tongatapu, or Amsterdam Island) and two were left to begin a mission on 'St. Christina' (Tahuata in the Marquesas Islands). The *Duff* did not return to Britain but maintained a patrol between the three islands to support, and if necessary protect, the missionaries from the islanders. The only mission of the three that survived for any length of time was the Tahitian one (although other ships and missionaries were despatched by the Missionary Society to follow this first project).

In his account of the mission to 'St. Christina', Southey recounts the missionaries' response to the native women:

The missionaries had been disappointed in their expectations of Taheitean beauty. They were not so here, and they say of the women that as models for the statuary and the painter their equals can seldom be found.³¹

Southey is as concerned as the missionaries to dispel the myth of Tahitian sensual beauty. If the women are not described as beautiful then they will not be idealised in European literature, which has set up a secular, sexual version of Eden in opposition to the biblical one. The women of St. Christina, though beautiful, should not be appreciated for their sexuality, but for their aesthetic value in terms of artistic representation. And Southey goes on to reveal the dangerous active sexuality behind such beauty, which proves to be frighteningly intimidating for the missionaries. While one of the men on St. Christina explores the island in the company of the 'Chief', the other (named Harris) stays behind at the native settlement, close to the not yet departed British ship, where:

The Chief to accommodate him in the most obliging manner he could, left him his wife to be treated as if she were his own, till he came back. It was in vain that poor Harris protested he did not want the woman! She was left with him – and finding herself neglected, called some of her female friends to satisfy themselves concerning his sex while he was asleep. This inquest was not made without awakening him; his fear at being awakened, and his horror at the thought of remaining among a people so 'given up to wickedness' then completely overcame him. He got down to the beach with his chest, at evening; none of the crew were ashore, and the ship lay out of hail; there he remained sitting on the chest till about four in the morning when the natives drove him away, and stole his clothes. A fisherman had compassion enough to swim off to the vessel and tell the Captain of his situation; the boat was sent for him, and he was found in a pitiable condition, like one out of his senses.³²

After this encounter Harris refuses to return to the island. Southey brings to light the disturbing sexuality – as he considers it – of Polynesian females, in that Harris is shown to be at the mercy of not just one, but several native women. The terror he feels is revealed in the fact that he returns to the safety of the *Duff* 'like one out of his senses', having been rescued by a, if not British, at least *male* 'fisherman'. Southey's account portrays female sexuality as a major problem that the missionaries have to face. In fact the story is comical because it portrays the sexuality of the chief's wife as

a natural urge, while the missionary seems absurdly repressed. That the Marquesan women are so disbelieving in the face of British male chastity probably has more to say about first encounters with British sailors, than native female sexuality.

Southey describes the barbaric nature of the Polynesian natives. On Tongataboo the islanders are shown as irreligious and superstitious, taking part in ritual self-mutilation and torturing of prisoners. Tribal war breaks out on the island and three of the missionaries and an American sailor are killed, while the rest escape by boat and fortunately meet their ship. One of their number who has engaged in 'profligate habits' remains safely among the natives because he has 'accommodated himself to their vices'.³³ Again the natives seem more 'natural' than the missionaries. The Polynesians are sceptical of those who repress human desires and are more accommodating of those who succumb. Southey sets up a separation in the text between those Westerners who are aligned with the natives, living their life-style - described as 'profligate' and given to 'vices' - and those who maintain their independent lives, chastity and piety. The missionaries cannot just rely on marking the boundary between their religious beliefs and native 'superstitions' but have to maintain physical boundaries too, preserving the body as well as the spirit from intercourse with the native population. Fearful of native sexuality they erect a barrier between those who 'go native' and their core group who maintain sexual purity as well as their distinct British identity. Therefore those who succumb to the temptations of the flesh are despised, as was one 'Mr. Lewis' for taking 'one of the natives to wife'. He was disowned by the other missionaries, despite having been 'one of the best educated and most useful members of the mission'.³⁴ The story ends in 'biblical' justice:

He continued to live with her about sixteen months...At the end of that time he was murdered: the woman with whom he cohabited grew tired of him, she had formed a connection with another man, his presence was an interruption to them, and his property a temptation.³⁵

Again the strong sexual nature of female islanders is portrayed as dangerous, in fact life-threatening, as Lewis's death is shown to be the result of female promiscuity.

The 'Taheiteans' of Southey's report are also examples of fallen humanity. They indulge in human sacrifice, they are cruel to their sick and old people, and practise infanticide. As such they are unrecognisable to Southey as the idealised inhabitants of Eden described by first voyagers there:

When Taheite was re-discovered in our fathers' days, it became the admiration and envy of Europe. The philosophists who placed happiness in the indulgence of sensual appetite and freedom in the absence of legal and moral restraints, were loud in their praises of this 'New Cythera' and even men of healthier intellect and sounder principles, regarded these islanders as singularly favoured by Providence, because their food was produced spontaneously, and they had no other business in life than to enjoy existence. But now that they are better known, it appears indisputably that their iniquities exceed those of any other people, ancient or modern, civilized or savage; and that human nature never has been exhibited in such utter depravity as by the inhabitants of these terrestrial Paradises!³⁶

The outraged tone of Southey's journalism on this subject often comes from the recognition that his vision of 'savage' societies has been shaped more by Western philosophy than detached reporting. The Tahitian fall from grace, is in fact the responsibility of European thinkers and writers - another example of how crucial travel narratives and secondary commentaries on these texts were, in forming fundamental perceptions of 'other' races. Southey's invective comes from his resentment at being 'deceived' by these European thinkers in his own revolutionary phase. Part of Southey's strong reaction towards the Tahitians as 'the scales fall from

his eyes' can be attributed to his desire to blame *them* (like the English labouring classes and French Jacobins) for not conforming to *his* ideal model of society.

Among the atrocities that Southey recounts in his *Transactions*, he includes those 'crimes not to be named [which] are habitually committed without shame'.³⁷ Their offensiveness is deliberately heightened by not being identified, but the fact that he shrouds them in this way hints at sodomy. The diseases that are rife on Tahiti have the significance of Old Testament plagues after Southey's imprecations against its inhabitants. One particular disease that is present would seem to be venereal disease:

The most destructive is that dreadful malady which seems destined, as an appropriate punishment and consequence of their vices, to exterminate this most sinful and most wretched people.³⁸

Southey's moralistic solution to Tahiti's problems - an 'appropriate punishment' for their lascivious behaviour - is to have that same disease 'exterminate' the sexually active inhabitants of the island. He attempts also by his portrayal in this article to eradicate the European fascination with Tahiti as a 'second Eden'. This can be seen as the missionary imperative too. If Tahiti is shown to be a lapsed Eden then their presence is justified in the islands, as pointed out by Bernard Smith:

During the succeeding years [after the establishment of the Tahitian mission] the missions to the Pacific gradually substituted for the noble savage of the eighteenth century a strikingly contrasting type; an individual thoroughly treacherous and deceitful in his native state who could yet be transformed into a Christian citizen obedient to the laws of God and the laws of Europeans as a result of the intercession of the Holy Spirit in Christian conversion.³⁹

So effective was the missionary campaign that Coleridge, like Southey, conformed to their view of Polynesian society:

The missionaries have done a great deal for us in clearing up our notions about savage nations. What an immense deal of harm Captain Cook's *Voyages* did in that way! Sailors after being a long time at sea, found a fertile island, and a people of lax morals, which were just the things they wanted; and of course there never were such dear, good, kind, amiable people. We know now that they were more detestably licentious than we could have imagined.⁴⁰

The warm welcome given to needy sailors of the eighteenth century had become the 'lax morals' of the nineteenth century. But the denigration of the Tahitian people by the missionaries is of course tied to another agenda - that of colonial politics. Southey says:

It is, however, only by colonization that these countries can be civilized, and that it is our interest and the interest of the whole commercial world that they should be civilized will presently appear.⁴¹

Many missionaries of the period considered themselves in conflict with commercial empire, but Southey sees the two as closely related. He considers in his review that the missionaries will influence these islands for the better and prepare for the two-pronged civilising influence of religious improvement with commercial gain. Southey goes on to show in this article, why and how, Tahiti and the other 'Society Islands' should be colonised. However their colonisation was envisaged by him as early as 1803 – not simply to serve European commercial interests, but sincerely for their own benefit, as 'savage' societies have to progress as his own has done from its 'innocent' state in order to be improved:

Upon my view of the moral government of the world, these progressive steps have all been needful, a state of *innocence* is necessarily insecure. The Tree of Knowledge must be tasted, & good and evil must be experienced before mankind can obtain a state of wisdom. (*RSJM*, p. 76)

Faulty as 'civilized' societies may be, they are further advanced than 'savage' societies in progressing towards 'a state of wisdom'. Southey is creating a hierarchy in his argument between 'civilized' and 'savage' societies which justifies the

colonisation of the South Pacific. His beneficent paternalism is to be physically imposed upon these less advanced societies if necessary:

The only atonement which can be made to this wretched people, for the injury we have done them, and the disease we have communicated, is to communicate also our religion, our morals and our knowledge; our religion foremost and first, not only as of first importance, but as the necessary and only possible means of imparting morality and science. This is to be done by colonization and by force.⁴²

3.4 P. M. James' 'The Otaheitean Mourner'

The idea of Tahiti as a haven for free love and uninhibited sexuality was to play its role in an event that was to have important consequences in Britain. The mutiny on board *HMS Bounty* in April 1789 after the ship's departure from Tahiti was perceived by some as having occurred because of the attractions of the native women. The subsequent journalistic reporting of events simply added to the interest in the island, which had begun with accounts of voyages to the South Pacific.⁴³ The *Bounty* had left England finally after many delays on 23rd December 1787, with the now infamous Captain William Bligh in command. It arrived in Tahiti, after battling against bad weather, in October 1788. Bligh's orders were to collect as many indigenous bread-fruit plants as were necessary to fill the ship's hold and then sail with the plants to the West Indies. The plants were to be transported to provide a cheap source of food for the slave plantations there.⁴⁴ The ship spent over five months at Tahiti, and approximately three weeks after it left, at the beginning of April, the mutiny occurred. Bligh, and nineteen members of the crew, who had remained loyal to him, were made to leave the *Bounty* in the ship's launch.⁴⁵ Bligh and his men were exposed to many dangers, but most of them survived a two-month voyage to Timor. Since then there has been, and still is, much speculation about the reasons for the mutiny.



Figure 3. The mutineers turning Bligh and his accompanying officers adrift.

The *General Evening Post* reported the mutiny to the British public on the 16th March 1790. The account contributed to the mythologised sexuality of Tahitian women by suggesting that the mutineers 'were so greatly fascinated by the Circean blandishments of the Otaheitean women, they took this desperate method of returning to scenes of voluptuousness unknown, perhaps, in any other country'.⁴⁶ Probably the most widely publicised account of the event was Bligh's own *A Narrative of the Mutiny on Board His Majesty's Ship Bounty*⁴⁷ which he rushed to publication in June 1790. His narrative did much to sustain the idea of Tahiti as the 'Eden' of Bougainville's account in readers' minds, particularly in his speculation on the reasons for the mutiny:

It will very naturally be asked, what could be the reason for such a revolt? In answer to which I can only conjecture that the mutineers had assured themselves of a more happy life among the Otaheiteans, that they could possibly have in England, which, joined to some female connections, have most probably been the principal cause of the whole transaction.⁴⁸

The idea of the women's and the island's seductive power was an attractive one, and while it is arguable that Bligh gave this reason to detract attention from his own actions in causing the mutiny, he had in fact created a valid justification in the public imagination, whether accurate or not. The subsequent court-martials, in October 1790 and August 1792, as well as Edward Christian's defence of his brother's character only fuelled the fire.⁴⁹ While comparisons were being made between Eden and the Pacific Islands, the mutiny could be perceived as being caused by men wanting to return to the idyllic life they found there. As Diderot had shown in his *Supplement*, there was a conflict in society between men's 'natural' desires and the imposition on them of a strict moral code. Southey had also identified this conflict between society and its individual members when he saw men 'struggling with obstacles, which never

could happen were man what nature intended him'. The mutiny could be interpreted as a result of that strain, and Southey certainly sympathised with the mutineers, referring to them as 'poor fellows' and to Bligh as a 'thorough rascal' (*NL*, I, p. 519).

The story of one of the mutineers, George Stewart, and his Tahitian 'wife,' was particularly appealing owing to its unhappy ending. The *Monthly Magazine* of December 1808 gave the following explanation:

Peggy Stewart was the daughter of an Otaheitan Chief, and married to one of the Mutineers of the *Bounty*. On Stewart's being seized and carried away in the *Pandora* Frigate, Peggy fell into a rapid decay, and in two months died of a broken heart, leaving an infant daughter, who is still living.⁵⁰

When Stewart and some of the other captured mutineers were returned to Britain in the *Pandora* to face court-martial, his story became even more tragic. The ship was wrecked on its way home, and he was among the prisoners who drowned. A poem, named 'The Otaheitean Mourner', was written on the subject of the lovers' tale by P. M. James and was published in the *Monthly Magazine* in 1808.⁵¹ Southey read and admired the poem and gave it wider publicity by the inclusion of two stanzas in his review of the *Transactions of the Missionary Society*, for the *Quarterly Review* of 1809.⁵² James' poem sets up an opposition between the authoritarian actions of 'civilised' Britain and the 'natural' emotional reactions of Peggy. Southey approved of its sentimental depiction of monogamous romantic love centred on the familiar Western motif of the lovelorn damsel who is faithful to her hero. Because the poem is written from Peggy's point of view, simple language incorporates an idyllic vision for the reader:

From the isle of the distant ocean
My white Love came to me;
I led the weary stranger
Beneath the spreading tree.

With white and yellow blossoms
I strew'd his pillow there;
And watch'd his bosom's heaving,
So gentle and so fair.

(ll. 1-8)

As if he is sick and certainly 'weary' from the life he leads, Peggy's ministrations, combined with the beneficent beauty of Tahiti, heal and refresh Stewart and the two fall in love:

Before I knew his language,
Or he could talk in mine,
We vow'd to love each other,
And never to resign.
O then 'twas lovely watching
The sparkling of his eyes;
And learn the white man's greeting,
And answer all his sighs.

(ll. 9-16)

Stewart's condition improves, until his eyes are 'sparkling'. Though Peggy seems to be a passive lover who is prepared to 'answer all his sighs', in fact in the rest of the poem the native female is an active figure:

I taught my constant white Love
To play upon the wave
To turn the storm to pleasure,
And the curling surge to brave.
How pleasant was our sporting,
Like dolphins on the tide;
To dive beneath the billow,
Or the rolling surf to ride

To summer groves I led him,
Where fruit hangs in the sun;
We linger'd by the fountains,
That murmur as they run.
By the verdant islands sailing,
Where the crested sea-birds go;
We heard the dash of the distant spray,
And saw through the deeps the sunbeams play,
In the coral bow'rs below,

(ll. 17-33)

'Peggy' is queen of the natural elements; the storm, the 'curling surge', and as 'Nature's Goddess', she initiates Stewart into a knowledge of nature such as the islanders have. The active verbs, 'I led' (twice), 'I taught' 'I strew'd' show her active role in their relationship too.

The difference in culture and colour of Stewart and Peggy is emphasised. There are barriers of language between them but these are brought down by their mutual attraction so that they can speak their love: 'We vow'd to love each other'. While Peggy is not described, the insistence on Stewart being her 'white love' (repeated several times) heightens the difference between them, though this is also depicted as a source of value to her:

My kindred much would wonder,
The white man's love to see;
And Otaheitan maidens
Would often envy me
(ll. 38-41)

The poem's author assumes that the racial qualities of the 'white man' are prized above Polynesian characteristics by 'Otaheitan maidens'. The implication of this is that in the relationship, the female gender and dark skin are given equal, lower status, reinforcing white male superiority.

There is of course an ambiguity in the poem as Peggy, despite her lower status, takes a dominant role in the relationship, albeit briefly. However this position of female dominance is one that is happily allocated to her by James. She controls a sexual paradise, described in terms suggesting playfulness and leisure, but defers to her man, is loyal to him and bereft without him, so conforming to an idealised picture of female obedience and dependence. Peggy teaches Stewart to 'play upon the wave' and 'turn the storm to pleasure' in this idyllic 'play area' which is divorced from any

real location of power. As Byron intimates in the often-quoted line, 'Man's love is of man's life a thing apart' (*BCPW*, V; *Don Juan*, Canto I, l. 194), men and women inhabit separate spheres. The feminine world of the South Pacific islands is one that men of 'duty' find attractive but are nevertheless forced to recognise their displacement from another parallel existence of morality and authority. The true source of power in terms of British male authority is safely located elsewhere, and the poem ends with Stewart being re-constrained – 'in iron bands they bound him' (l. 54) – for his return to the male world of duty and accountability.

Peggy, who is alienated from any appeal to the disciplinary processes of the British navy by her gender and her race, is powerless to prevent her lover being taken – 'they tore him from my clasping' (l. 56). The only thing she can wish for is to become a 'little bird' to 'chase/My lover o'er the deep' (ll. 84-5) – a lightweight, ineffective force against the might of British authority. Her insignificance (in terms of British priorities) is highlighted by the way in which she passively 'pined away, and died' – literally of a broken heart.⁵³ The poem is a lamentation that evokes pity, but without an alternative ending envisioned, the lovers' fate is seen as inevitable. Southey's admiration for the poem comes from its conformity to conventional morality. Authority and duty are bowed to and Peggy (despite her playfulness - a metaphor for her sexuality) conforms to the ideal feminine virtues of British morality in her fidelity to her 'husband' - an extreme response which ends in her death. The reader is provided with an exotic escapism, but this vision is nevertheless constrained by Western patriarchal authority.



Figure 4. An engraving of a painting by Captain F.W. Beechey of the interior of Pitcairn Island, showing John Adams with children and women roasting a pig.

3.5 Mary Russell Mitford's *Christina, The Maid of the South Seas*

Southey's interest in the virtues of monogamous love and feminine fidelity - seen in his promotion of James' poem - were to influence another contemporary writer, Mary Russell Mitford. Her long poem *Christina, The Maid of the South Seas* (1811) like James' owes its existence to fascination with the mutiny and the subsequent reporting of the fate of the mutineers, particularly the account of their settlement on Pitcairn Island. An American ship, the *Topaz*, had discovered the mutineers' presence on the island in 1808. In the 'Advertisement' that prefaces *Christina*, Mitford attributes information about Pitcairn to 'the kindness of a gentleman, who heard from several officers of the *Topaz* an account of the manners, the virtues, and the happiness, which she has attempted to pourtray' (C, pp. vi, ix). The *Quarterly Review* of February 1810 had also reported details of Captain Folger's visit, and the discovery of the post-mutiny community. Folger is told the history of the Pitcairn settlement by Adams - named Smith in the account, as this was the name he had used when enlisting on the *Bounty*.⁵⁴ Adams' story was subsequently corroborated by other ship's captains visiting the island - though historians have identified instances where he changed details to protect himself.⁵⁵

According to Folger, after the *Bounty* had left Tubuai with the mutineers on board, they returned to Tahiti where some of them elected to stay (such as George Stewart) and were captured by the naval force from the *Pandora* and shipwrecked or survived to return for trial to Britain. The rest of the mutineers, Christian and Adams/Smith and seven others, with twelve women and six Polynesian men, settled on Pitcairn.⁵⁶ The island was divided into plots between the British sailors, and the Polynesian men were expected to work the land with their 'masters'. Each of the British men had a 'wife' and the Polynesian men shared the other women. As there

were not enough women for all the men to have wives this caused resentment in the community. Folger relates Adams' story:

About four years after their arrival (a great jealousy existing) the [male] Otaheiteans secretly revolted and killed every Englishman except himself, [Adams/Smith] whom they severely wounded in the neck with a pistol ball. The same night the widows of the deceased Englishmen arose and put to death the whole of the Otaheiteans, leaving Smith the only man alive upon the island, with eight or nine women and several small children. On his recovery he applied himself to tilling the ground, so that it now produces plenty of yams, cocoa nuts, bananas and plantains; hogs and poultry in abundance. There are now some grown up men and women, children of the mutineers, on the island, the whole population amounting to about thirty five, who acknowledge Smith as father and commander of them all; they all speak English, and have been educated by him (Captain Folger represents) in a religious and moral way.⁵⁷

This 'official' account taken from the log-book of the *Topaz* is reproduced in the notes to *Christina* by Mitford, and is a source for her story (*C*, pp. 315-6). Though her poem is framed by the love-story between two fictional characters, Christina (supposedly the daughter of Christian and his Tahitian wife) and Henry (a British sailor on the *Topaz*), the main action is provided by the story of the island's settlement in 'Fitzallan's Narrative'. Fitzallan is a romanticised name for Smith (Adams) because according to Mitford, his name is 'surely the most unpoetical appellation by which ever hero was distinguished' (*C*, p. 318). Mitford depicts the British sailors as romantic adventurers (in the vein of Southey's *Madoc*) - who 'long'd on other worlds to gaze' (*C*, Canto II, 8).

In Mitford's letters she acknowledges a debt to Coleridge for correcting *Christina* and adding some of 'his own beautiful lines'.⁵⁸ Mitford was also grateful to Captain James Burney (Fanny Burney's brother, who was developing a literary career now in lieu of a naval one⁵⁹) 'for the friendly assistance which he has rendered her in arranging and revising her notes' (*C*, pp. ix-x). However the largest literary debt was owed to Robert Southey whose text *The Curse of Kehama* (1810) is referred to as a

'sublime poem' in the notes (C, p. 201). It is possible to see the influence that Southey had on Mitford in her correspondence where she regularly refers to him and reviews his latest works. There are many similarities between Mitford's and Southey's poetry, not least in that *Christina* follows the pattern of Southey's epic poems in its division between the main poetic content and an exhaustive notes section, containing factual details that underpin the poetic narrative. In these notes Mitford is quite concerned to provide documented evidence about the South Pacific as a background for her fiction. She cites her main sources as: Wallis's, Carteret's and Cook's accounts of their voyages in John Hawkesworth's *Collection of Voyages* (1773)⁶⁰ and Bligh's *Voyage to the South Seas* (1792).⁶¹ However her literary representation conforms to the techniques of Southey and Diderot in her deliberate selection of certain apposite details for her construction.

Mitford presents in her poem an archaic, idealised vision of England as 'Albion'. This owes much to the fascination during this period with medieval romance as a reaction to the increasing urbanisation and industrialisation of society. Mitford's construction was no doubt due to the influence of her mentors, Coleridge and Southey. The increasingly mechanistic manufacturing processes of British industry were particularly of concern to Southey. So much so, that discussion of them dominated his *Letters from England: by Don Manuel Alvarez Espriella. Translated from the Spanish* (1807). In this text where Southey hides his authorship by presenting his arguments through the pseudonymous author, he is free to discuss the problems of British society. Perceptively he recognises some of the issues that were to become more exacerbated by the growth of industrialism in Britain. He rails against the circulation of wealth that leaves the poor excluded, and the manufacturing system that

does not value its members, except for how they contribute to its revenue.⁶² In his letters too his anxiety is evident:

The condition of the greater part of society – of the poor, is more uniformly miserable now than it ever has been in any former period, & that, in consequence of the inevitable effects of our commercial system... the peasantry and labourers of England in old times enjoyed a degree of comfort which they now never can obtain. Their morals and health were not poisoned by the soul-&-body murdering plan of herding together in large and unwholesome manufactories. (*RSJM*, p. 76)

Southey's radicalism embraced England's past and idealised peasant life in order to uphold the rural values that he feared were quickly becoming obsolete. As an antidote to the spread of manufacturing industries and the growth of the cities, the cottage society of 'England in old times' is romanticised in his texts and elegised, for instance in his 'English Eclogues' (written between the years 1798 to 1803). In 'The Alderman's Funeral' (1803) Southey contrasts a 'natural', pastoral childhood with the old Alderman's actual existence dominated by commercial interests:

When yet he was a boy and should have breathed
The open air and sunshine of the fields,
To give his blood its natural spring and play,
He in a close and dusky counting-house
Smoke-dried and sear'd and shrivell'd up his heart.
(*PW*, III, p. 52)

Like Southey, Mitford endeavours to find a location for her rural idyll in opposition to the industrialisation of her own society. An idyll that she also depicts in her later prose writings (for which she is better known) such as *Our Village* (1824), which is concerned to uphold rural lives and values.⁶³

Christina is a sentimental portrayal of the pathetic love-story of Christian and his Tahitian 'wife', Iddeah, paralleled with the more successfully concluded romance between Christina and Henry. Mitford frees herself to deal with the controversial

subject of the mutiny by using these latter characters – rather than the instigators of the rebellion – as the vehicle for their stories. As Rod Edmond notes ‘there is a displacement of Christian in order to contain the troubling sympathies he provoked’.⁶⁴ The second-generation love story enables Mitford to distance herself as a writer from the mutiny and also from the less moral love affair of the first-generation but nevertheless to include these details that were so fascinating to the public. Christina’s name still indicates her close blood-link to Christian but she is employed in the text to make recompense for his actions by her recognition of duty and her display of piety and morality.

The reader is introduced to Mitford’s hero first, ‘British Henry’, who is sailing to the Pacific aboard ‘Columbia’s vessel’:

A Briton calmly pac’d the deck;
Can storms the British spirit check?
That spirit which still higher soars,
As tyrant threats, or cannon roars!
No, firm as Albion’s rugged rock,
He stemm’d old Ocean’s rudest shock
(C, Canto I, 2)

As the sun rises on the numerous islands of the South Pacific, they are described in exuberant terms:

How many a fair and desert isle
Basks in the southern sunbeam’s smile!
Numerous they glow upon the main,
Like stars that gem the peacock’s train
Whilst the high mountain’s purpled blue,
Brightens o’er Ocean’s verdant hue.
(Canto I, 7)

A view only to be surpassed by the first sighting of Pitcairn, which takes on a mythical status:

With quick surprise, and new delight,
The sailors view'd that island bright:
Fair as the fabled isles it rose,
Where erst Ulysses found repose
(Canto I, 9)

Mitford is very careful to distance her text from representations of the island as a sexual paradise such as Tahiti. Pitcairn, though also beautiful, is a moral paradise in her poem, so that the 'Eden' that was lost to Christian and Iddeah by their immoral relationship, will be regained for Christina and Henry through their respectable courtship and marriage and the expiation of sin. Therefore even the first description of Pitcairn portrays it as a civilised outpost where the land has been cultivated and contained by garden walls, distinguishing it from the more lush, primitive (and hence more sexually corrupt) Tahiti:

But not o'er hut or rude morai
Wav'd lofty bough or flexile spray;
No! those luxuriant branches fall
O'er garden trim and cottage wall:
Cots, such as Thames' mild waters lave,
Or shine in Avon's mirror wave;
Where English peasants feel the power
Of evening's sweet domestic hour;
Where wearied veterans cease to roam;
Where comfort cries "here is my home!"
(Canto I, 11)

As well as creating a false impression of Pitcairn as a quaintly neat, village pastoral scene – where did the house-building materials come from if not the reclaimed planks of the Bounty? – this description owes much more to the idealised literary version of England which mythologises the 'trim' pleasant 'cots' of happy 'peasants', than a perfunctory infant settlement in the South Pacific. This is because Mitford uses her text to create a version of her British rural idyll in the South Pacific. Southey and Coleridge were attracted to the idea of settling in the 'new world' themselves because of the possibility that offered for returning to the agrarian society of the 'cottag'd dell'

– a central image of Coleridge’s 1794 poem, ‘Pantisocracy’ (CPW, I, p. 69, l. 5). The seeds of Pantisocracy’s failure were of course in its conception as an English cottage society, ruled over by English gentleman farmers, and anachronistically overlaid on colonial territories. Such a vision could never survive, and even in *Madoc* Southey’s hero dreams of just such a community only to find it threatened by hostile tribes and imperial politics. But the eulogisation of ‘cottage society’ both in Southey’s domestic poetry and his foreign epics goes to the heart of the debate about British society and his fears that it was being corrupted by the growth of industry and urbanisation. And his marked influence on Mitford’s writing can be seen in her ‘new world’ settlement that relies on the ‘exportation’ of an English village setting. The rural idylls which both writers construct are early instances of the colonial imperative to create a British model for life in any land, and one which numerous British writers and colonisers were to impose on many different locations – despite unsuitability of climate or terrain.

Henry’s first sight of the Pitcairn natives through his ‘glass’ describes them in the same ideal terms as the island:

A bright pair trod the simple plank.
In baskets, gayly deck’d, they bore
Refreshing fruits and flowery store.
The towering youth, the graceful maid,
Were both in Indian garb array’d;
But not a trace of Indian feature
Appear’d in either glorious creature:
For his warm blood as brightly glow’d
As if in British veins it flow’d;
And she – the roses of her cheek
Might shame the dawn’s refulgent streak.
(Canto I, 13)

Despite their ‘Indian garb’ Mitford is careful to distance the couple from any ‘savage’ qualities by describing them as having ‘not a trace of Indian feature’. Mitford was

doubtlessly faced with problems of how to represent Pitcairn's natives. Writers of the period display an anxiety towards other races in their progressively polarised descriptions of indigenous populations, portraying them either in positive or negative generalised terms (though descriptions of specific individuals are usually more complex). Southey's writing career for instance had incorporated the change in perception between two strands of thinking about Polynesians – the Enlightenment view of the 'noble savage', and the missionaries' reports of them as 'ignoble' savages (coined by Bernard Smith).⁶⁵ This dichotomy in the depiction of indigenous races is one that Southey employs in *Madoc* where the dutiful, obeisant Hoamen tribe are contrasted with the aggressive, deceitful Aztecs.

Southey's description of his 'noble' Indians differs from Mitford's:

What men were they? Of dark-brown colour, tinged
With sunny redness; wild of eye; their brows
So smooth, as never yet anxiety
Nor busy thought had made a furrow there;
Beardless, and each to each of lineaments
So like, they seem'd but one great family.
Their loins were loosely cinctured, all beside
Bare to the sun and wind; and thus their limbs
Unmanacled display'd the truest forms
Of strength and beauty.

(*Madoc*, p. 47)

But the contrast has more to do with ideology than geography. The questioning 'What men were they?' suggests these natives are an alien race, alike as 'one great family' but different from *Madoc*. Southey's Indians are a classic example of Rousseau's 'noble savages', perfect physical specimens, their lives unscarred by the 'anxiety' of civilised society. Mitford solves the ideological dilemma that Southey encountered of having to make native populations 'good' or 'bad' by distancing her text from that debate and making her miscegenetic natives more British than Tahitian, more

'civilized' than 'savage'. The percipient Henry hammers the point home "Seymor" he cried, "the English air I trace in yonder blooming pair' (Canto I, 15).

Mitford also surmounts the difficulty of portraying sexual relations between the Pitcairn natives and the British by making them all more nearly one race – the love between Henry and Christina is unencumbered by the cultural differences that Ideah and Christian encountered. The problem of how to depict interracial relationships was one that Southey had come up against in *Madoc*. Early sketches for the poem show that Southey intended a tighter plot resolution through interracial marriages – particularly between Madoc and the Hoamen Queen, Erillyab.⁶⁶ However apart from one instance of betrothal there are no depictions of relationships between the races. The effect this has on the text is to portray Madoc and his British forces as a conquering imperialist army whose leader is 'sole lord' of the land, setting up a hierarchical structure of two nations – the ruling race and subservient natives. Mitford's text, with its unrealistic portrayal of 'civilised' natives, avoids these troubling connotations.

Mitford is careful to show that her descriptions of Pitcairn clothing come from authentic accounts and so in her notes she attributes the native dress to two sources – Wallis's description of Tahitian 'white cloth' and Cook's description of 'borders' on New Zealand dress (C, pp. 208-12). For the purposes of her text she combines the two accounts (from very different locations) to construct a fictional costume for her Pitcairn islanders:

Freely their ample garments flow,
In graceful folds of spotless snow;
Save that a border richly dight,
Of vivid scarlet mantles bright,

And fringe, by rosy fingers twin'd,
Sports, like gay plumage, on the wind,
Where the long sash floats wild and free
In ever-varying drapery.

(Canto I, 18)

The description becomes more akin to the classical dress of the ancient world than one that is factually accurate. Mitford like Southey uses notes to give verisimilitude to verse which serves to anglicise (and thus appropriate) the 'Indian'. Indeed 'clothing' can be seen as a metaphor for the whole poem – for what Southey does and teaches Mitford to do as well – to clothe the foreign in English garb. This literary 'clothing' parallels the missionary programme of imposing the conformity of western dress on the South Pacific natives. It was a move that Southey approved of in his Polynesian reviews – 'the change is for the better, however much may be lost in picturesque appearance'.⁶⁷

Similarly the language used by the natives in *Christina* is described as being like that of the sailor's 'own native accents clear' (Canto I, 19). In fact the Pitcairn settlers spoke 'an odd dialect',⁶⁸ being a corrupted form of English, rather than the lyrical and correct examples of their speech given by Mitford. Her Pitcairn islanders display the civilised attributes of western culture in their classically inspired dress and well-bred use of the English language. The pseudo-British 'noble savages' here are most noble and certainly not very savage, conforming to a strict code of morality, instituted by the pious Fitzallan (Smith/Adams), that sets an example for contemporary Western society. They are idealised citizens of a utopian society that has succeeded in its conquest of nature by civilisation – revealed in the controlled, cultivated beauty of the island and the restrained sexuality of its inhabitants.

The story of the mutiny is told by 'Fitzallan', portrayed as a noble old patriarch, whose pleasure comes from knowing that Bligh survived the mutiny - 'Oh!

say we did not kill' (Canto I, 28) - and is still alive. 'Fitzallan's Narrative' (like other 'narratives' of the time) portrays the Tahitian females as sexually active, seducing the sailors with their charms:

With melting look, with merry glance,
They glided thro' the wanton dance;
Or softly trill'd the plaintive measure,
Or wak'd the song to notes of pleasure,
Told tales of love and joy elate,
Nor miss'd one art to fascinate.

(Canto II, 16)

Because Mitford is describing Tahitian rather than Pitcairn qualities, and the events are safely in the past, she feels free to refer to their sexual nature. Christian's native lover becomes pregnant - 'a living pledge of love she bears' (Canto II, 24) - while the ship is at 'Otaheite'. He realises that if he leaves her, the 'Arreoyo's' (higher status natives, of which she is one) will destroy her child and so determines not to abandon her to this fate. Despite Mitford's acknowledgement that Bligh's account of the mutiny is the source for her poem, here a material difference occurs as a result of the demands of Western morality.⁶⁹ The source of the dispute between Christian and Bligh is portrayed as moral rather than sexual; it is a matter of personal honour and duty. As Bligh will not let Christian take Iddeah to Britain with him, the implication is that he is forced into mutiny because his honourable intentions towards his lover and child are undermined. Made to leave when the ship does, Christian's dilemma becomes 'his bosom's festering wound' (Canto II, 26). Despite Mitford's intention that she avoid 'the charge of palliating a most fatal conspiracy' she is 'irresistibly attracted by the character of the gallant and amiable Christian', as she admits in her 'Advertisement' (C, p. vi). Her text abounds with strong, honourable and heroic male characters (Fitzallan, Seymor, Henry and Hubert) in the same vein as the Christian she

depicts. Even Christian's death, as a result of delusions, is caused by guilt at having put his wife and child above naval duty.

Mitford (like James) presents a version of the South Pacific that, while it is idealised and sentimentalised, is not feminised. It is firmly governed by its white male characters and increasingly conforms to a British vision of patriarchal society. This is the most obvious similarity between *Christina* and Southey's own long narrative poems. In *Madoc, Thalaba the Destroyer* (1801) and *The Curse of Kehama* (1810) (where Ladurlad fulfils this role), a central male figure around whom the plot revolves, is driven to action by the exigencies of his situation. And like Spenser's *Faerie Queene* (a text that exerted a huge influence on Southey) these 'knights' are on a righteous quest, actively resisting political evil, immorality, or superstition. The male heroes act honourably, protecting those weaker than themselves, for instance: women, children, or as in *Madoc*, compliant native races. Of all Southey's characters, Mitford is likely to have been influenced most in *Christina* by his colonising hero:

Madoc, the British Prince, the Ocean Lord,
Who never for injustice rear'd his arm;
Whose presence fills the heart of every foe
With fear, the heart of every friend with joy;
(*PW*, V, p. 77)

Mitford referred to *Madoc* as a 'fine' poem and Southey's depiction of honourable masculine strength is undoubtedly a model for her male authority figures.

'British Henry' and Madoc are 'new-world' pioneers whose relationships with the native inhabitants are governed by restraint and honourable intentions. In Southey's poem, Madoc's motives for leaving Britain are governed by radical politics, whereas Henry is spurred on by patriotism to spread the civilising ethics of old 'Albion'. However Madoc's original motives soon disappear leaving him an

'exporter' of old world values much like Henry. Because Madoc and Mitford's heroes conform to a standard of controlling, superior government that strives to be firm but compassionate, they appear as interchangeable stereotypes without any psychological depth. In order to rule fairly and temperately it seems that individual character traits must be suppressed. Even when these colonial heroes act aggressively it is shown as justifiable. Madoc is forced to oust the Aztecs by their duplicitous hostility to him and their cruelty to other native Americans. Henry draws his 'falchion' on the native Hubert to show the strength of his love for Christina. The heroes of both texts conform to ideals of patriarchal leadership and are rewarded at the end. Madoc becomes rightful 'sole lord' of the land, Christina marries Henry and leadership will pass from Fitzallan to their offspring, who inherits the best of both races. Both endings conform to the British imperial project – by the implication that the lands depicted become British colonies, instituting a hierarchical government abroad (rather than Southey's radical egalitarianism) – which as I have already argued in Chapter One was the true source of *Madoc*.

After the mutiny, despite returning to save Iddeah, Christian's actions, forbidden by British law, have made Mitford's honourable hero unhappy and 'on his brow of care/He wore the livery of despair' (Canto II, 32). Mitford's mutineers cannot relax in paradise, unreleased as they are by the call of naval duty and British authority:

We were not born unnerv'd to lie
 Basking in woman's sunny eye
 Neglecting every nobler claim
 Soft ditties to those eyes to frame.
 (Canto II, 33)

Christian's plan according to Mitford is to found a virtuous community by leaving the 'female' pleasures of Tahiti to gain control in a moral, masculine world:

No! far from that enfeebling land,
To seek some fair, yet lonely strand,
Where comrades, servants, children, wives,
Might gild with tranquil beams our lives,
Where joys, which virtue can bestow,
Where piety's diffusive glow,
Where years to peaceful duty given,
Might lead each wandering soul to Heaven,
Was Christian's plan.

(Canto II, 34)

While later writers, such as Byron, would celebrate the South Seas as an area of feminine agency and vitality, Mitford perceives it as a 'enfeebling land' that saps masculine energy. The emphasis is on locating male authority in a new place where 'servants, children, wives' can be controlled by 'virtue' and 'piety'. 'Christian' (as he is called in the poem rather than Fletcher Christian) has now become an allegorical figure of crusading Christianity.⁷⁰ He has to throw off the vices of Tahiti, a false sexual paradise, which originally seduced him, in order to regain the 'true' Eden of the South Pacific. He also has to convince the rest of the 'rebel crew' and lead them to righteousness, as the evangelising tone of the author suggests:

In luxury and vice they trod,
Woman their idol, sense their God.
Few were there wise. Well was it time
To quit this soft voluptuous clime.

(Canto II, 34)

If Tahiti has become a lapsed Eden, Mitford's literary paradise on Pitcairn will not be allowed to make the same mistake. Pitcairn is not depicted as a land of 'soft primitives' like Tahiti, whose population by being exempt from Adam's curse has become a corrupted, libidinous, fallen humanity. Fitzallan's story breaks off with Christian's band voyaging in search of an island to found a community with their servants and wives - the ideal ingredients for creating a British colonial outpost in the South Pacific. 'Work' is the solution that Southey advocated for human excesses in

his South Pacific journalism because he was convinced that it was the Edenic existence of Tahiti's population that had caused many of their problems:

The cause of their degradation is equally certain. It exists in the very circumstances for which they were envied by the sensual sophists of Europe – *their food was produced spontaneously, and they had no other object in existence than enjoyment.*⁷¹

So in Mitford's text the luxuriant nature of Pitcairn comes under the control of the 'British spade', differentiating between her moral Pitcairn colony and the laxness of Tahitian society. In *Madoc* too, Southey's hero's superiority to the more backward Hoamen tribe that he colonises is depicted in these terms. The Hoamen inhabit a land of 'rank luxuriance', enjoying a passive relationship with the natural world. The changes Madoc makes on the landscape, and his industry and application in cultivating the land, and protecting his colony from 'savages' and wild animals, shows him to be an active and therefore 'deserving' possessor of the land (*PW*, V, p. 37).

The central female figure in Mitford's text is Christina, a demure and chaste early nineteenth-century female heroine. Mitford's construction of idealised feminine virtue represents the growth in female conduct literature during this period, as I will show, but Southey's reviews of South Pacific society, demonstrating his abhorrence of female 'depravity', were also widely read. These articles were governed as much by considerations of British society as Polynesian, because in Southey's discussions of foreign cultures, what is at issue is also often a domestic concern. The example Tahiti offered was of a people who despite being blessed with all the advantages of paradise, lapsed into sin and immorality. Southey feared a similar cultural decline in Britain. He anticipated that the poverty of the lower classes would lead to a corresponding deterioration in moral standards where 'want fills our streets with

prostitutes'. As a response to this Southey planned to write 'an essay upon the state of women in society and its possible amelioration' that would act as 'a leaven which must ultimately ferment and purify society...states of females in society and the evils thereon attendant' (*RSJM*, pp. 52-4). His Polynesian reviews act as a warning to British readers, at a time when issues such as female conduct were under discussion.

Questions of how women should behave were also linked to how women should be portrayed in the literature of the period. Many writers felt a didactic duty to depict women in a restrictive way in order to control morality, and the character of Christina shows the influence of texts such as Hannah More's didactic literature on feminine virtue. *Coelebs In Search of a Wife* for instance, which More intended to be character-forming in its display of ideal female qualities, was published in 1808 at the height of public interest in the discussion of female roles in society.⁷² Mitford's position as a writer was also particularly delicate at a time when conduct literature was attempting to restrict female activities, and she was no doubt aware of the dire imprecations against female authors in texts such as Richard Polwhele's *The Unsex'd Females* (1798). In his poem, Polwhele divided female writers up into those who comprised 'a female band despising NATURE'S law' and a second group who are 'By modest luxury heighten'd and refin'd'.⁷³ The first group included, among others, Mary Wollstonecraft and Helen Maria Williams, who had become 'unsex'd' according to Polwhele, by their radical politics and their desire to re-inscribe the female role in British society. Polwhele sought to defend the popular, sentimental ideal of femininity in the literature of the period – that Wollstonecraft objected to – with its depiction of women as irrational, emotional beings. She argued that such portrayals led to the assumption that women were inferior to men in their capacity for rational understanding. And this perception of women meant they were allocated a

narrow role in society, condemned to a domestic sphere of activities, and trivial occupations.⁷⁴ If women were seen to stray outside their proper sphere – as Wollstonecraft was accused of doing by Polwhele – they were portrayed as unfeminine (or ‘unsex’d’), lacking the proper female qualities of modesty, virtue and deference.⁷⁵

In fact women like Mitford and Wollstonecraft, in the public eye as authors, could not just avoid setting a bad example, but had to provide a positive role model in their lives and their writing. Mitford’s female character, Christina, therefore conforms to these pressures. She is circumscribed by a domestic role in the text, and is an exemplary figure (such as More’s heroine Lucilla in *Coelebs*) of modest virtue. Mitford had already discovered that reviews of her poetry concentrated as much on the (male) reviewer’s perceptions of what was considered appropriate for a female writer, as her technical ability. Her *Miscellaneous Poems* (1810) which contained poetry on the ‘male’ sphere of politics was severely criticised in the *Quarterly Review*:

In the present case, we must take the liberty of hinting to Miss Mitford, that in selecting the objects of her admiration, she has manifested as little female delicacy as judgement.⁷⁶

Mitford’s vision of the South Seas therefore would always only be able to be depicted within the limitations of what would be considered ‘female delicacy’, and, as a result, is (unlike Southey’s or Byron’s) constrained by gender politics. Her subsequent poetry such as *Narrative Poems on the Female Character* (1813) is also carefully conservative in its depiction of feminine virtue with which she intends to ‘exemplify, though in very different degrees and situations, the nearly similar virtues of sweetness, gentleness and forbearance’.⁷⁷

In Canto Three of *Christina*, the story of Pitcairn's settlement breaks off - the day ends in native 'manly sport' and a feast - enabling the development of the parallel love story between Henry and Christina to develop. Henry plays music for Christina from 'a rustic flute', or 'the sylvan pipe of England' (C, Canto III, 3) a representation of the pastoral as a plaything of those, like Henry, who work and have authority. When Christina cannot play the flute, having 'spent her fragrant breath in vain' (Canto III, 3), she gives it back to Henry saying:

It bows but to its Lord's command;
And, like a Briton bold and free,
Will own no foreign mastery
(Canto III, 4)

Within this text which sees mutual attraction between male and female in terms of chaste, idealised love this is a curious passage where the strong feelings that Henry has for Christina are brought out as she asks him to play for her again. The action becomes sexually charged in the passing of the flute from Christina's mouth to Henry's:

Her breath on the smooth ivory dwelt,
His lips the balmy moisture felt,
While to his heart's emotion true,
Trembling and faint the notes he drew;
Yet could those trembling notes entrance
That girl of love - inspiring glance, -
Bewitching in her ignorance.
(Canto III, 4)

But in fact this passage highlights the difference between Christina's Tahitian female forebears and herself. It is not an active or overt seduction that takes place here, but an involuntary one. It is Christina's naivety and 'ignorance' that seduces Henry. Mitford restricted by social mores, depicts female sexual 'power' as unconscious and innocent. As such she contributes towards the dominant patriarchal ideology of

passive female sexuality which would find its place in the literary and pictorial representation of women during the Victorian period.

This portrayal was one that Mitford had inherited from Southey's depictions of female sexuality - the sentimentalised heroines that he champions in his epics - arguably part of his drive to 'purify society'. His promotion of monogamous love, like Mitford's, demands an ideal female partner for his active, protective, hero. In *Thalaba the Destroyer*, the female heroine Oneiza is faithful and chaste in her love for Thalaba. The central couple face not only mortal but also moral perils. Thalaba saves Oneiza from rape and has to resist the temptation of dancing girls in a paradisaical garden. Overt female sexuality in *Thalaba* is a trap set to catch the hero and like Polynesian sexuality is portrayed as perilous, endangering the poem's moral mission. Thalaba chooses his monogamous relationship with Oneiza over the seductive dancers in a test of his virtue and both characters are rewarded by Thalaba's triumph over evil and their marriage in heaven.⁷⁸

The rest of the story in *Christina* is told in 'a wondrous cave' (Canto III, 12) on the island. God is put firmly at the top of Mitford's masculine hierarchy where creation, society and nature are under his patriarchal care:

Eternal nature! When to man
Unveil'd appears thy mighty plan;
Imperishable, high design,
A sweeter, holier voice is thine!
A voice which leads where saints have trod,
'Thro' nature up to nature's God.'
(Canto III, 13)

But divine power is delegated to Fitzallan as the island's patriarchal, religious leader, and he also controls the story of the mutiny (as Adams did). Shortly after settling on Pitcairn, Fitzallan recounts that Christian's wife gave birth to a baby boy who died.

Christian saw it as a punishment for his actions, even imagining that he saw the 'spectre' of Bligh and in his deranged state jumped off a cliff and died. His wife later gave birth to Christina. After Christian's death the islanders lived in peace until 'one Otaheitean boy, Tupia' (Canto III, 22) (the name comes from the account of Cook's first voyage) persuaded the natives to rebellion, and all the British men were killed except Fitzallan.⁷⁹ The women then killed the murderers of their husbands leaving themselves, the children and Fitzallan to begin the community again. Despite modern historians pointing to the murders of the native men as an autonomous act of retribution and control by the women - who are also given much credit for their part in successfully colonising the island⁸⁰ - Mitford's women are much more passive. The reason given for the women's murderous actions is one overlaid with British morality – they do so to protect their honour. The ravaging native men are too much for Mitford to describe - 'how faint/Are words those fiend-like slaves to paint' (Canto III, 30) - in their attempt to violate 'those chaste matrons' who repel them (Canto III, 31). Female aggression is justified here only because they must defend their chastity - and therefore the honour and authority of their (now dead) husbands – from the native men. Nevertheless they are 'soft and gentle' murderers:

They rose. The soft and gentle fair,
 Who even the creeping worm would spare,
 Who wept the kid's gay life to spill,
 Those fearful women rose – to kill!
 (Canto III, 32)

Fitzallan's narrative ends and the sailors prepare to leave. Christina is torn between love for 'British Henry' and Hubert, her fellow islander and mutineer's descendant. When the two men argue over her, it is Henry who draws his 'falchion' on Hubert. The latter is shown as being the more 'civilised' and restrained of the two. He is a physically strong but gentle 'noble savage' and therefore stands apart from 'polished

Europe's treacherous men' (Canto IV, 35). Hubert 'gives' Christina to Henry in a scene controlled by the two men, 'Take her, bright stranger, she is thine!' (Canto IV, 37). Christina is grateful, although she saw it as her duty to marry Hubert.

The poem ends with paradise firmly located in this moral corner of the South Pacific and the new beginning implied by Henry and Christina's marriage. Henry colonises the island for Britain in his love relationship with Christina, who is given to him by Hubert. The triangular relationship between Henry, Hubert and Christina replays the tragic struggle between British mutineers, Polynesian men and women in settling the island. The mutineers' descendants make reparation for this violence and the mutiny itself, when the Pitcairn islanders submit to British authority and government. Evidence for such a depiction can be found in the accounts of subsequent visitors to Pitcairn who reported that the mutineers' descendants 'prayed for their sovereign and all the royal family with much apparent loyalty and sincerity'.⁸¹ The Pitcairners have successfully shaken off the infamy of their links with the mutiny, which can now be seen in terms of a naval and legal crime, rather than a moral one.

In separate verses appended to her epic poem, Mitford claims the South Pacific not as a true location of paradise so much as a textual paradise, where the human soul (hers, but also her readers') is able:

To 'scape awhile life's sad realities,
Where history weeps o'er the recording page
Of human crimes and human miseries!
(C, p. 185)

Her paradise is one of balm to the soul that suffers in the world of European politics. Her construction of a virtuous, ennobled Pitcairn society is a criticism of British society, as is her glorification of 'Albion'. She hints in conclusion that paradise has

been regained in this textual reconstruction made by 'fancy' if not reality. The power of literature is to maintain an Edenic vision in the present world, a world to which 'th'enfranchised spirit flies' and which is:

Pure, unpolluted, as the crystal stream,
Perfect, as joy in Eden's happy vale
(p. 186)

The controlled, pious community of Pitcairn was one that came to be much admired at this time and during the Victorian period was held up as a perfect example of society run by patriarchal and biblical authority. It also became of abiding interest in the discussion of issues such as female behaviour and morality, and as Mitford predicted, became a model for British society. Mitford plants the roots of this vision in her text with its ending that highlights the submissive virtue and piety of Christina controlled by the British masculine authority of Henry. Eden's new inhabitants, future Pitcairners, will incorporate the best aspects of both the British and Polynesian races as Christina does already, a literal blend of her racial forbears:

For virtue here with beauty join'd
And modesty with grace combin'd.
(Canto IV, 27)

The future of the colony is based on a merging of the British and Polynesian nations, which will manifest itself not in the active sexuality of Tahitian female seduction, but in moral, monogamous marriages between the races. As in *Madoc* the implication is that the 'nobility' of the native races (the Hoamen tribe/the Pitcairners) will combine with, but show deference to, the superior controlling ability of the British colonisers.

The original motives for the mutiny can be seen as a reaction against British authority and morality. But it is the 'civilising' influence of British morality and Christianity (or Adams' version of it) that saves the islanders from the detrimental

effects of sexual desire and jealousy, that caused violence and murder in the first generation mutineers. To the more morally constrained mutineer's descendants, perhaps Britain is their utopia, a 'civilised' Eden, from which as the children of exiled nationals, they have become fallen angels unable to return. Mitford describes their plight:

England, my country! That some patriot hand
From thy majestic brow would wipe this stain!
How many banish'd from thy rocky strand
Pour forth their sad lament in foreign land!
(Canto II, 1)

In Southey's 1809 *Quarterly Review* article he published a letter from the Tahitian king Pomare asking Britain to send 'a great number of men, women, and children here' as well as 'property and cloth...muskets and powder' and 'all the curious things that you have in England'.⁸² No longer could 'savage' societies be seen as able to teach 'civilized' societies like Britain how to live. Opinion had gone full circle with Britain at the cultural centre, disseminating Christianity as well as 'arts and virtues' to its colonies. The Tahitian 'Golden Age' had passed away and become relocated in that true repository of morality and civilisation, Great Britain, proclaimed by Mitford as 'Bright Empress of the main!' (Canto II, 1). Southey's review attempts to show Britain as a strong protecting parent that encourages the 'correct' growth of its infant colonies. Mitford simply developed an agenda that Southey had publicised and defined already, writing her South Seas epic romance along the lines of his prose arguments in his reviews, but also influenced by the verse romances he had written for Arabia, America and India.

3.6 Byron's *The Island*

The influence of Southey as poet and reviewer can also be identified in the creation of Byron's long poem *The Island* (1823). Byron's Oriental poetry was in direct competition with Southey's own works during the period, and his writing represented a diametrically opposed form of morality, as a reviewer for *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* summed up:

Mr. Southey is, and always was, too much of a monk, to understand a man of the world like Byron; and Byron was too decidedly, or rather too exclusively, a man of the world, to understand a monk like Southey.⁸³

'Monk' is perhaps too strong a word, showing that the reviewer sympathised with Byron rather than Southey in their dispute, but the article shows how Southey was regarded by 1824 as one who claimed the moral high ground in his writing. This position was underpinned by the public perception of Byron as a member of what Southey had termed the 'Satanic school' of writers. The two men's personal morality, aspirations for poetry, and philosophy on life were totally opposed, as well as their opinions on colonial politics. Byron resented Southey's position of official authority (as Laureate and reviewer) attacking him in *Don Juan* (1819-1824) and his *Vision of Judgement* (1821) – written in response to Southey's laureate poem of the same name. But how great was their ideological difference with regard to South Pacific society? They were both attracted to the South Seas as an ideal location to resurrect a Rousseauesque vision of society, despite Southey's later doubts. This section of the chapter aims to examine how diverse their views really were – or identify whether they had elements in common – thereby highlighting anxieties during the period on how other races and societies should be depicted.

Byron, like Mitford, used Bligh's *Narrative of the Mutiny* as the source material for his poem on the mutiny, *The Island: or Christian and His Comrades* (1823), but for very different purposes. The poem is structured around the reasons for the event given by Bligh - that the mutineers desired a 'more happy life' with their 'female connections' - so dramatising a Diderotesque 'male' conflict between their 'natural' desires and their role as members of the British navy, constrained by the authoritarian exponent of government and law, Captain Bligh. To provide a motive for the mutiny therefore, and like Diderot, in order to comment on the morality of European society, Byron was also concerned to highlight the sexual aspects of South Pacific culture. Like the mutineers Byron wrestles with the same conflict between 'duty' and 'desire' in the writing of his text. James McKusick has suggested that Byron is caught between his source material - which (by using Bligh's account for information about the event) prioritises the 'normative role of European observer'⁸⁴ - and his obvious sympathy with those in conflict with authority, like Christian, or those seeking sexual freedom, like George Stewart ('Torquil' in the poem).⁸⁵ Therefore Byron is surprisingly sympathetic to Bligh's viewpoint, even referring to him as a 'gallant Chief' (*BCPW*, VII; *The Island*, Canto I, 2). In his correspondence Byron shows a reluctance to be publicly accused of 'eulogizing *Mutiny*' and going against the grain of British morality yet again.⁸⁶ But because of his 'profound alienation from the prevailing values of "civilization", particularly his aversion to Britain's vindictive treatment of mutineers, deserters, homosexuals, and freethinkers' he naturally empathises with the predicament of Christian and Torquil in the poem.⁸⁷

Canto I of *The Island* opens with a description of the *Bounty* at sea, with the captain unaware of the mutiny and asleep, dreaming of 'Old England's welcome

shore' (Canto I, 2) – locus of morality, naval discipline and government authority. His restless, mutinous crew are comprised of:

Young hearts, which languished for some sunny isle,
Where summer years and summer women smile;
Men without country, who, too long estranged,
Had found no native home, or found it changed,
And half uncivilized, preferred the cave
Of some soft savage to the uncertain wave
(Canto I, 2)

The case for the mutineers' actions is put. They are 'men without country', displaced by a life of service in the British navy. The idea that this way of life is unnatural is reinforced further on in the stanza when the British naval imperative of exploration and possession is contrasted to the 'unexploring navy' (Canto I, 2) of the Tahitian canoeists. The two words linked together might almost constitute an oxymoron for an early nineteenth-century European reader. The phrase deliberately highlights the political naivete of the Tahitian nation in an age of conquest and colonisation, thereby contributing to the idea of Tahiti as an artless prelapsarian idyll. The British 'young hearts' influenced by their exposure to 'summer women' and the 'soft savage' way of life in this idyllic place have become 'half uncivilized' and no longer members of a disciplined naval crew. They are therefore very different from Southey's and Mitford's colonial heroes who maintain duty and authority and spread 'old world' values in their colonisation of the new.

In Byron's text island life is depicted as so attractive that his readers sympathise with the choice of the mutineers to remain there:

The gushing fruits that Nature gave untilld;
The wood without a path but where they willed;
The field o'er which promiscuous plenty poured
Her horn; the equal land without a lord;
The wish, - which ages have not yet subdued
In man - to have no master save his mood;

The Earth, whose mine was on its face, unsold
The glowing sun and produce all its gold;
The freedom which can call each grot a home;
The general garden, where all steps may roam,
Where Nature owns a nation as her child
(Canto I, 2)

This paradise is described not only in terms of its 'promiscuous plenty' but also by the inversion of importance given to those political and economic elements which European society values: private land-ownership, commodity possession and sources of wealth. Here the mineral wealth is in 'the Earth' and it is 'unsold'. The only 'gold' is that created by the 'glowing sun'. It is an 'equal land without a lord', a 'general garden' belonging to everyone, with the only ruler being 'Nature [who] owns a nation' here. Byron is concerned to produce a version of paradise that was as appealing to a contemporary European reader in its stable, egalitarian vision of society (despite its radical content) as its lyrical evocation of the South Pacific.

After the mutiny, the ship with its new captain steers for 'Otaheite' where:

Nature, and Nature's Goddess – Woman – woos
To lands where, save their conscience, none accuse;
Where all partake the earth without dispute,
And bread itself is gathered as a fruit;
Where none contest the fields, the woods, the streams:-
The Goldless Age, where Gold disturbs no dreams
(Canto I, 10)

In calling it the 'Goldless Age' Byron makes a pun on the desires of explorers like Bougainville to discover the 'Golden Age' of classical tradition. But he also heightens the impression that this world is one that exists outside conventional European notions of paradise. Even the European search for 'Eden' is driven by the desire for economic wealth, so that the metaphor for it is 'Golden' – of the highest value. Byron's depiction is of a much more truly alien land, where desire for commercial wealth does not exist and therefore 'disturbs no dreams', and as such conforms to Southey's

pastoral ideal, where nature is abundant and wealth is redundant. Byron echoes Southey's polemical cry; 'Why is there not some corner of the world where wealth is useless!' (*NL*, I, p. 19). Here Byron is consciously writing the radical idealistic poetry of the 1790s that he has criticised Wordsworth, Coleridge and Southey for abandoning.

In this land then, the reigning concerns are not economic wealth but sexual desire. Fecund 'Nature' rules here through her 'Goddess – Woman'. The absence of commercial wealth in the islands highlights the fact that a different currency governs here - a sexual one. In travel accounts of voyages to the South Pacific the reader is told many times that the economic exchange is that of sex for iron (nails particularly) but Byron portrays this sexuality as innocent, a spontaneous overflow of natural bounty without the legal and social constraints of marriage and family. It fulfils just one more social need, in the same way that the desire for food is answered in a land where 'bread itself is gathered as a fruit'. As such it is overt, available, unashamed and unrestricted by European moral strictures. The prelapsarian innocence of the first couple's relationship may be recoverable here for Byron in this paradise, however unobtainable it is in western society. The sexual freedom that Byron gives to his characters can be seen as a deliberate attack on those like Southey who felt that society should be more constrained and that female sexuality was not a fit subject for literary representation. Southey, who in his youth had opposed official censorship of literature, was prepared to say in 1821 in his 'Preface' to *A Vision of Judgement*, 'The publication of a lascivious book is one of the worst offences that can be committed against the well-being of society. It is a sin' (*PW*, X, p. 204). It was published opinions like these that led Byron to lampoon Southey as a sexless, even impotent

(‘dry Bob’) prude in *Don Juan* (BCPW, V, Dedication, stanza 3) - a ‘monk’ in the words of the *Blackwood* reviewer.

Canto II of *The Island* incorporates ‘the songs of Toobonai’ within it from Byron’s other main source for the poem, *An Account of the Natives of the Tonga Islands in the South Pacific Ocean...* (1817).⁸⁸ This text tells the story of a young sailor, William Mariner, who was captured by the Tongan islanders and lived among them for many years. The published text was based on Mariner’s ‘extensive communications’ to John Martin who ‘compiled and arranged’ the account for him.⁸⁹ The loose, more prosaic aspects of ‘A Tonga song’ in the *Account of the Natives of the Tonga Islands* is skilfully reworked into the rhyming iambic pentameter of Byron’s poem, as are the language and spiritual beliefs of the natives. The Tongan islands or Friendly Islands as they were known, were actually geographically quite separate from the ‘Toobonai’ (or more properly Tubuai) of Byron’s account, which is part of the Austral Islands group. Byron ignores any differences in language, structure of society and customs that may have existed. His locus is an imaginary amalgam of Mariner’s Tonga Islands, and the paradisiacal Tahiti that had filtered down to European readers from travellers’ tales and fictional re-workings.

Byron’s ‘song’ is a remnant of a past, happier time in the South Pacific:

Thus rose a song – the harmony of times
Before the winds blew Europe o’er these climes.
(BCPW, VII, Canto II, 4)

It incorporates his opposition to the vicious influence of European society. Though all of mankind shares some of those ‘vices’ which ‘man’s fall hath fixed’, the ‘Old World [is] more degraded than the New’ (Canto II, 4). The implication is that Eden’s second lapse occurred when European explorers brought the ‘sordor [filth or dregs] of

civilization' with them (Canto II, 4). Byron's 'song' is a product of his very Western desire to locate a sanctuary for political and personal liberty – a desire that Southey shared in his youth with his dreams of Pantisocracy – and also inspired Byron's Greek songs in *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* (1812-1818)⁹⁰ and *Don Juan* (1821).⁹¹ The idyll that Byron depicts (which owes much to Rousseau's perspective on savage societies) is lamented as a world that has been lost through contact with Western society, and can only be recaptured in a 'song' that locates it in a far-flung exotic location, and an idealised past.

Like Southey and Mitford, Byron creates an idealised pastoral society in order to project his values. But Byron's poem is politicised further by his support of the struggle for Greek independence, *The Island* being completed within a year of his joining the Greek militants in Missolonghi. Angus Calder has shown how Byron's pastoral vision of the islands is adopted for ideological purposes, so that his South Pacific is an amalgam of the Romantic savagery of the idyllic 'Tonga songs', his Scottish boyhood landscape, and ancient Greece – incorporating these sites of resistance to dominant, imperial powers, within his vision.⁹² Despite their differences, Byron and Southey both adopted foreign cultures and landscapes to promote a personal political ideology. This ideology was initially similar in seeking a geographical location for liberty, based on Rousseau's philosophy. Southey however became an apostate in colonial as well as domestic politics, making the same ideological progression as his hero, Madoc, from radical crusader to conservative imperialist. The major difference however between the two writers, is that Byron, in *The Island*, but also in *Don Juan*, used sexual freedom as a metaphor for political and social freedom – and as a stick to beat Southey with for his apostasy. For Southey, the

libidinous life-style of the Polynesians (as he considered it) was a warning to his own society of the dangers of immorality on its infra-structure.

Byron generally ignored those elements in Martin/Mariner that did not conform to his construction of a harmonious South Pacific society. The sensual, tranquil existence of the islanders is designed to contrast with the tempestuous, discontented relations between the mutineers and British authority. But Mariner's account is dominated by descriptions of political intrigue, assassinations and constant warfare between the natives of the Tongan island group. By omitting these details - given by a knowledgeable commentator who spent many years there, and who 'evinced no disposition to overrate or to embellish what to him was neither strange nor new'⁹³ - Byron deliberately contributes to a mythical European perception of these islands, as his literary predecessor, Diderot did before him. Byron selects the most picturesque or Romantic aspects of the narrative. The 'charming young girls' of 'Licoo'⁹⁴ in Mariner's 'song' are transformed by Byron into:

Ye young enchantresses of gay Licoo!
How lovely are your forms! How every sense
Bows to your beauties, softened, but intense,
Like to the flowers on Mataloco's steep,
Which fling their fragrance far athwart the deep
(*BCPW*, VII, Canto II, 3)

As could be expected, Byron makes much of the female beauty of the islanders. By being likened to flowers with a pervasive 'fragrance' that spreads far from them, it is made to seem as if a female sexual presence hangs over the islands. Like Bougainville's account 'the very air' does 'conspire to call to mind the sweets of love'.⁹⁵

Another part of Mariner's account that has been identified in the poem is the tale of a beautiful young girl who is saved from death by her lover, a young chief, by

being hidden for months in a submarine cave. The story's appeal was identified by Southey in 1817 when he reviewed Mariner's *Account* for the *Quarterly* and predicted that 'it will probably be sung in more than one European language, so beautifully is it adapted for a tale in verse'.⁹⁶ Southey focused on the tale because it exposed the evils of Polynesian society and politics, triumphed over by moral strength and fidelity, in the traditional form of a love-story. As such it conformed to a Western epic tale along the lines of Southey's own construction in *Thalaba the Destroyer*, where virtue is shown to overcome all obstacles.

Byron, however, uses the material differently in *The Island*, making it a device whereby his mutinous hero, Torquil, is saved from re-capture by a naval force from Britain by his female Tahitian lover. Byron re-works Mariner's account because the romance for him, as for other British writers, is in the love between a native woman and a British man. In Mitford and P. M. James' fictional constructions of the South Pacific, the action is also centred around a similar couple. Because the islands are presented as Eden, where man does not even have to work to earn his daily bread, and the women are perceived as 'Venus' or 'Eve', then the logical literary extension of this is to place an 'Adam' in the garden with her. 'Adam' is not a native man but a British male seeking to live out his 'natural' desires, and return to the Garden of Eden. It seems therefore that these texts highlight (even unconsciously) a discontent with the political and social environment, causing writers to look abroad for solutions to the shortcomings of their own society. Romantic literature explores in fiction other possibilities for British society, even if this often ends conventionally in a reinforcement of just those values that their writers seemed opposed to.

In Byron's poem, Neuha, though young, is portrayed as 'Aphrodite' (Venus) and at the height of her sexual maturity and attractiveness:

A form like Aphrodite's in her shell;
 With all her loves around her on the deep,
 Voluptuous as the first approach of sleep;
 Yet full of life – for through her tropic cheek
 The blush would make its way, and all but speak;
 The sun-born blood suffus'd her neck, and threw
 O'er her clear nut-brown skin a lucid hue,
 Like coral reddening through the darkened wave,
 Which draws the diver to the crimson cave.
 (BCPW, VII, Canto II, 7)

The 'blush' or flush of sexual awareness makes its way over her skin, creating the heat of 'sun-born blood' throughout her body, and encouraging the 'diver' or explorative lover to discover the secrets of the 'crimson cave'. However earlier in the same passage Neuha has been described in terms of innocence. Eve-like, she is 'The infant of an infant world, as pure/From Nature' (Canto II, 7). It seems that Byron, like Bougainville and Diderot, combines those aspects of female iconography that are valued in European culture, so finding a locus for 'Venus' and 'Eve' within the Tahitian woman.

In Neuha's love Torquil finds peace from conflict:

No more the thundering memory of the fight
 Wrapped his weaned bosom in its dark delight;
 No more the irksome restlessness of Rest,
 Disturbed him like the eagle in her nest,
 Whose whetted beak and far-pervading eye
 Darts for a victim over all the sky;
 His heart was tamed to that voluptuous state,
 At once Elysian and effeminate,
 (Canto II, 13)

In this 'effeminate' paradise, Torquil becomes a passive character like James's Stewart. He surrenders his active masculine role, leaving the other mutineers to fight their last battle. Unlike Mitford's or Southey's texts, Byron's heroes are not depicted as masculine authority figures firmly in control of themselves or the native population. In a reversal of Mariner's original story where the resourceful chief saves

his young lover, here Neuha is given the operative role and is as Caroline Franklin states, 'an active autonomous being'.⁹⁷ The sexual freedom that Byron gives to Neuha in her relationship with Torquil extends into a representation of her as a free agent in the text. She leads Torquil to the cave:

Young Neuha plunged into the deep, and he
Followed: her track beneath her native sea
Was as a native's of the element,
So smoothly, bravely, brilliantly she went
(Canto III, 6)

Her knowledge of the cave, lack of fear and her ability in the 'element' of her island home - the ocean that surrounds it - makes her supreme, and in control, in a way that the British sailors can never be. Neuha is 'mistress' of her environment, like Peggy in James' poem – although neither woman is given a voice in either text and is only in control of a limited 'playground'. Torquil is quiescent; he follows Neuha, is hidden and nourished by her and released when it is safe. As 'Nature's Goddess' (a conflation of Eve and Venus), Neuha's position of control parallels the sexual power she has over Torquil. She initiates him into the secrets of the concealed cave:

And Neuha took her Torquil by the hand,
And waved along the vault her kindled brand
And led him into each recess, and showed
The secret places of their new abode.
(Canto III, 8)

The metaphor of the 'diver' seeking the 'crimson cave', used to describe Neuha's sexual readiness, parallels the events in the story, when the 'diver' is shown the secrets of this cave too. In the womb-like 'grotto', Neuha is the hierophant (and 'Goddess') at the altar of nature's 'chapel of the Seas' (Canto III, 7), so that Byron's heroine is conflated into this feminised landscape. Neuha and Torquil's love is sanctified under the quasi-religious 'self-born Gothic canopy' (Canto III, 7) of the

cave, where the ceremonial music is provided by the ocean, in a marriage made by nature, not the church and patriarchal society.

Caroline Franklin considers that 'it was a vision of how sex relationships could be different in a non-European cultural situation that inspired *The Island* and constitutes the real revolutionary agenda of the poem'.⁹⁸ In a period of retrenched morality, aspects of this version of sexuality are 'revolutionary', but in other ways it is still a conventional vision. Neuha is unconstrained by society, authority, or sexual mores, and so is as free in the Garden of Eden as the biblical Eve. And like the first woman, Neuha is the active partner in the relationship – here preserving her lover's existence in the garden rather than initiating his expulsion. She gives her love freely, but is protective and caring rather than independent. This is because she conforms to a patriarchal view of women as virtuous and faithful partners. She is more like James's Peggy, Mitford's Christina and Southey's Oneiza than their obverse, the dangerously sexual Polynesian women reported by the missionaries. Byron's text includes elements that would be approved of by Southey – the idealisation of romantic love, the innocence of Neuha, and the monogamy of the central couple's relationship. Byron may give his women sexual appetite but he conforms to similar Western ideals in other respects.

It has often been asked why Byron fictionalised the events in his poem, as the outcome was reported at various times in the British press.⁹⁹ The mutineers did go to Tubuai (or 'Toobonai'), but they left after failing to live in harmony with the natives there and eventually settled on the uninhabited Pitcairn Island. The fates of Christian (who died on Pitcairn) and George Stewart were reported in newspapers and journals, before *The Island* was written, so one can only conclude that Byron preferred to substitute the real ending for his own.¹⁰⁰ His version of events is more romantic than

the reality. Christian is a truly Byronic hero with a terrible secret that haunts him. In Bligh's *Narrative* when Bligh questions Christian as to his reasons for leading the mutiny, he answers 'I am in Hell!'.¹⁰¹ These words are replicated in the poem and imaginatively interpreted, in order to depict Christian as a tortured 'Byronic' hero. Angus Calder says that 'like Conrad or Alp he represents a quasi-heroic mentality torn by conflict between conscience and will'.¹⁰² When facing re-capture, Byron's Christian attempts a last stand on a cliff, preferring to dash himself on the rocks below rather than be taken back to British justice.

Another departure from real events in *The Island* is that Torquil escapes due to Neuha's efforts – instead of the couple suffering separation and death, as George Stewart and his wife did. The importance of this central relationship to the text could well be the reason for it differing from the 'official' account. If Byron's poem does constitute for him a vision of an ideal sexual relationship – and also a utopian fantasy of a new society beginning in a re-discovered paradise – then he may have been reluctant to sacrifice his idyll in the true ending of the story. Byron's earlier depiction of ideal love in Canto II (1819) of *Don Juan*, between Haidee and his hero, had been killed off in Canto III (1821) when Juan is forced by Haidee's father, Lambro, to leave their island and she dies of a broken heart. Instead of the 'dead end' of that story, where all hope for liberated love and sexual freedom in society is shown as unrealistic, in this rendition the couple's union is an optimistic hope for a new society. Torquil and Neuha figure as the central ideal couple who salvage humanity from the wreck of the mutiny and will unite the best of both British and Tahitian cultures.

When the British ship sent to capture the mutineers has left the island, and Torquil and Neuha emerge from their cave, the poem ends on hope for the future:

Again their own shore rises on the view,
 No more polluted with a hostile hue;
 No sullen ship lay bristling o'er the foam,
 A floating dungeon: all was Hope and Home!
 A thousand proas darted o'er the bay,
 With sounding shells, and heralded their way;
 The Chiefs came down, around the People poured,
 And welcom'd Torquil as a son restored
 (BCPW, VII, Canto IV, 15)

The island belongs to the couple now, the shore is 'their own', retrieved from the influence of the British ship which 'polluted' it. Torquil returns to jubilation 'as a son restored' to the community. The couple's reward is:

A night succeeded by such happy days
 As yet only the infant world displays.
 (Canto IV, 15)

This is an 'infant world' because Byron posits it as the beginning of society, as the original Garden of Eden was. For him then the 'best' aspects of society – God's race on earth, made in his own image – are united in the combination of native 'Eve' and British 'Adam', as in Mitford's *Christina*, where hope for the future resides in uniting the two races. This story was of course actually played out on Pitcairn and there has been an abiding interest ever since in the combination of cultures, and the legacy for the children of the two races, in their 'infant' society.

So with regard to the specific area of gender politics, South Pacific texts can be seen as battlegrounds in the conflict over how women should be portrayed in the literature of the period. At first sight the Byronic version of female sexuality, despite being also a construct, if not a fantasy, seems to give more agency to women than Mitford's or Southey's. But despite Neuha's sexual autonomy, she speaks through her male creator who envisions her as an ideal woman (symbolic of natural liberty in the New Cytherea) and she does not act outside the gender stereotype of a monogamous lover. *The Island* does not simply conform to Southey's view of a 'lascivious book',

but is more complex, incorporating aspects that uphold traditional moral values. And rather than having a 'revolutionary agenda', Byron is attempting to preserve in his text an Enlightenment idyll, that he found to be quickly vanishing from European literature. Because Byron creates a positive vision of island society and female sexuality – which opposes the more conventional one created by the missionaries and Southey – he preserves for posterity the views of those explorers and settlers who looked at the South Pacific through Rousseau's Enlightenment eyes. The two contrasting strands of depiction would again re-surface throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries in texts such as Robert Louis Stevenson's *South Sea Tales* (1889-1890) and are still present in the modern consciousness. But this analysis shows that in fact they are less separate than appears, intertwined as they are in all colonialist fantasies and centring on Western models of romantic monogamous love.

3.7 James Montgomery's *The Pelican Island*

A writer who shared Southey's optimism for missionary activity and settlement in the territories of the 'New World' was the now relatively unknown, evangelical poet and journalist, James Montgomery (1771-1854). Like Southey his youthful development was shaped by radical politics. He was even imprisoned in York Castle for several months in the years of 1795 and 1796, for printing seditious literature on the press of his newspaper the *Sheffield Iris*. During his lifetime he wrote several long epic poems as well as short poems and hymns. In 1809 he produced a poem on the slave trade, *The West Indies*, which gained great popularity.¹⁰³ His abolitionist position was one shared by Southey, and in the notes to *The West Indies*, Montgomery quotes from a 'splendid passage' in *Madoc* where Southey's colonial hero is urged to a 'nobler conquest' across the ocean. Montgomery regarded *Madoc* as 'the noblest narrative Poem in the English language, after the Faerie Queene and Paradise Lost'.¹⁰⁴

Montgomery's admiration was reciprocated by Southey – who wrote an appreciative letter to him in 1811, adding 'I feel as ardently as you do respecting the Missions' (NL, II, p. 14) – and they became friends and correspondents. Like Southey also, Montgomery was concerned by the inequalities of British society and showed much compassion and philanthropy towards those he perceived as suffering from oppression, such as chimney sweeps and other child labourers.

Montgomery was dubbed the 'Missionary poet' due to his Moravian Mission parentage and his firm advocacy that Christianity should be spread to all the outposts of a beneficent British Empire. Despite being less outspoken than Southey on the politics of colonialism, he saw British expansion abroad as bringing progress and education as well as Christianity. The British possession of India for instance meant that 'a better day has dawned on that land of darkness', breaking the 'chain' of 'ignorance, debasement and superstition'.¹⁰⁵

In 1827 Montgomery wrote a curious, lyrical, long poem called *The Pelican Island*, which is most striking for the quasi-evolutionary theory of creation that it espouses. As such it has echoes of Erasmus Darwin's poem *Economy of Vegetation* (1791) which was also concerned with the theory of the formation of continents. The poem describes in epic form the evolution of a coral island; its population by plants, animals and humans until it forms a major continent. It is also concerned to show the progression of 'savage' man from a dark benighted state to enlightenment and Christianity. *Pelican Island* contributes to the genre that Southey began, of long epics in foreign climes, versifying explorer's accounts, but also promoting the idea of Britain as a model of civilisation to which the whole world should aspire. Montgomery was, like the previous writers I have discussed, influenced by reading accounts of South Pacific voyages and their descriptions of idyllic islands, so that his

island too is 'A world unsoil'd by sin; a Paradise' (*PI*, p. 39).¹⁰⁶ Despite the poem's celebration of God's handiwork however, the less conventional deities of 'Earth' and 'Nature' are personified in the poem, to conjure up a pleasant vision of the island's 'luxuriant foliage' that conforms to representations of South Sea islands (*PI*, p. 40).

When the newly formed island is ravaged by a hurricane, it is 'renovated' by resourceful 'Nature', however the only members of its population that return are two pelicans – hence the name of the poem. Because of the pages Montgomery invests in describing them, and the human qualities he allocates to them, these birds are obviously meant to represent, or be compared to, human society. The pelican dynasty develops from its first parents:

Love found that lonely couple on their isle,
And soon surrounded them with blithe companions

...

They bred, and rear'd their little families,
As they were train'd and disciplined before.
Thus wings were multiplied from year to year,
And ere the patriarch-twain, in good old age,
Resign'd their breath beside that ancient nest,
In which themselves had nursed a hundred broods,
The isle was peopled with their progeny.

(*PI*, pp. 61, 68)

Montgomery has 'peopled' his island with a race of 'noble birds' as he refers to them, rather than native inhabitants:

Nature's prime favourites were the Pelicans;
High-fed, long-lived, and sociable and free,
They ranged in wedded pairs, or martial bands,
For play or slaughter.

(p. 77)

Fantastic as it may seem, Rousseau's 'noble savages' have been reincarnated into pelicans. This was because the *idea* of an innocent 'natural' humanity obviously appealed to Montgomery, but to depict his native races in such a way would have tied

him into idealised Enlightenment thought, rather than Calvinist belief in man's sinfulness and crime. By depicting humans rather than pelicans as 'noble' his agenda of bringing morality and Christianity to the 'New World' would have been restricted, and there would have been no agency left for the missionary impetus that he was advocating. It seems oddly pathetic that the only repository for 'noble' (human) values that Montgomery can envisage is a pelican! However when this is compared to the 'brutish' humans he depicts it is possible to see why he allocates the best human attributes to animals and the worst characteristics to his native humans. He does so because he is anxious to show that humans have lost all their 'noble' qualities and have sunk to the level of beasts. He extends this idea to make a parallel between the lives of pelicans and humans in which the pelicans emerge more favourably:

Man's history, in that region of oblivion,
 Might be recorded in a page as small
 As the brief legend of those Pelicans,
 With one appalling, one sublime distinction,
 (Sublime with horror, with despair appalling,)
 – That Pelicans were not transgressors
(p. 136)

Montgomery does eventually people the island with humans, though by then it has evolved to become an archipelago – the islands of which conform to a European vision:

...gardens redolent with flowers,
 And orchards bending with Hesperian fruit,
 That realized the dreams of olden time.
(p. 71)

Finally 'Pelican Island' becomes a 'spacious continent'. Montgomery's airy narrator ranges across the world looking at human examples from a heavenly perspective. Moving east he encounters prelapsarian Adam:

Amidst the crowd of grovelling animals,
A being more majestic stood before me;
I met an eye that look'd into my soul,
And seem'd to penetrate mine inmost thoughts.
(p. 92)

However due to the biblical fall from grace, the next time he encounters humanity, it is a very different figure he meets – an irredeemable 'Caliban':

I saw him sunk in loathsome degradation,
A naked, fierce, ungovernable savage,
Companion to the brutes, himself more brutal
(p. 95)

God's curse that Adam must toil for his bread, which became such a focus for debate in South Pacific texts, is also mentioned here, but for Montgomery the 'curse' is not that man must work for his 'bread' but rather that he does not need to:

That curse was here, without the mitigation
Of healthful toil, that half redeems the ground
Whence man was taken, whither he returns,
And which repays him bread for patient labour,
Labour, the symbol of his punishment,
Labour, the secret of his happiness.
(pp. 95-6)

In Montgomery's Calvinist philosophy, work is the source of man's redemption. Without 'labour' the South Pacific natives are not noble inhabitants of Eden but degenerated versions of humanity, feeding off the land like beasts, 'Fed without care or forethought, like the swine/That grubb'd the turf' (p. 96).

Eighteenth-century travel narratives of voyages to the South Pacific had pointed up the natural luxuriance of the islands where food grew naturally without the necessity for agriculture. The implication was that these islanders were therefore exempt from the biblical curse – 'in the sweat of your face/you shall eat bread' (Genesis, 3:19) – because here 'bread itself is gathered as a fruit' (*BCPW*, VII; *The Island*, Canto I, 10). Sir Joseph Banks, the gentleman scientist who accompanied

Captain Cook on his first voyage to Tahiti (1768-71), emphasised this point in his account:

These happy people may almost be said to be exempt from the curse of our forefather; scarcely can it be said that they earn their bread with the sweat of their brow when their chiefest sustenance Bread fruit is procurd with no more trouble than that of climbing a tree and pulling it down¹⁰⁷

Such comments were to influence the European imagination and lead to the perception of the South Seas as paradise. Southey who had subscribed to such views in his period of initial enthusiasm was concerned, like Montgomery and the missionaries in Polynesia, to overcome such a positive vision of the islanders in his reviews:

That which was supposed to be their blessing has been their curse; it is in their exemption from labour that the efficient cause of this unparalleled wickedness is to be found. When the Creator decreed that in the seat of his brow man must eat bread, the punishment became a blessing; a divine ordinance necessary for the health of soul as well as body while man continues to the imperfect being that we behold him.¹⁰⁸

Southey believes in the moral value of work, equating the Tahitian 'lascivious nature' with an absence of the work ethic that he believes drives civilised societies and edifies the body and soul of men.

Montgomery, like Southey, gives much space to negative descriptions of 'unparalleled wickedness' by the natives. Because he conflates island and continent into one in the poem, there is also a compression of ideas relating to the natives he describes, so that his reader is never sure whether he is discussing Polynesian, Australian, Indian, African or North American races. As such he follows in the footsteps of Rousseau and Southey by producing a homogenous species of 'savage',

that elides all differences and so represents all the native communities of the 'New World' in their 'ignoble' nature:

Large was their stature, and their frames athletic;
Their skins were dark, their locks like eagles' feathers;
Their features terrible; - when roused to wrath,
All evil passions lighten'd through their eyes,
Convulsed their bosoms like possessing fiends
(*PI*, p. 98)

Montgomery's descriptions display even more than Southey's the Hobbesian tenet that life in a state of nature is 'solitary, poore, nasty, brutish and short'.¹⁰⁹ They are shown as ferocious, treacherous, aggressive cannibals, and governed by 'the pride of tyranny and violence' they oppress the 'weak and innocent of their tribe' (p. 102). One of their worst crimes is in their treatment of women:

Woman was here the powerless slave of man;
Thus fallen Adam tramples fallen Eve,
Through all the generations of his sons,
In whose barbarian veins the old serpent's venom
Turns pure affection into hideous lust
(p. 105)

Here however men are more culpable of 'hideous lust' than women. The female natives Montgomery portrays are not the sexually active Polynesian stereotypes of Bougainville, Diderot and Byron, but conform to the sentimental, idealised vision of 'woman' as native man's 'meek companion'. Through her virtuous nature and 'self-denial' the male will be lifted out of his denigrated state as a 'sordid, selfish savage' (*PI*, pp. 106-8). So in a glorification of female values, Montgomery allocates women the power to redeem men by the influence of their virtuous lives. This strand of female representation belongs to the sentimentalised literature that Southey applauded, and Mitford adopted.

Montgomery's call for missionary influence on 'savage' man is justified by their ignorance of their own spiritual nature:

Oh! twas heart-sickness to behold them thus
Perishing without knowledge; - perishing,
As though they were but things of dust and ashes.
They lived unconscious of their noblest powers
(*PI*, p. 117)

At last however the narrating 'spirit' meets a chieftain who appears to have more nobility and intelligence than the rest of mankind, with his grandchild. The chieftain is looking for some spiritual quality in his life, and on being shown evidence of God's existence he weeps with joy and teaches his grandson to understand. Though the old man dies, he has passed on a spiritual lesson to his grandson who 'lived to see/The Patriarch's prayer and prophecy fulfill'd' (p. 164). The poem's message of evangelical hope is invested in this final figure of Christian patriarchal authority. His teachings, promulgated by missionaries, will lead to a progression in human spirituality:

Changes more wonderful than those gone by,
More beautiful, transporting, and sublime,
To all the frail affections of our nature,
To all the immortal faculties of man;
Such changes did I witness; not alone
In one poor Pelican Island, nor on one
Barbarian continent, where man himself
Could scarcely soar above the Pelican.
(p. 165)

3.8 Conclusion

Montgomery's poem depicts a narrative of 'savage' man's redemption in the recognition of his spiritual nature. With Christianity also comes civilised values. This fictional progression parallels Southey's view of Polynesian enlightenment and the benefits of civilisation to the islands. In 1830 Southey 'revisited' the Polynesian

islands in his review of William Ellis's *Polynesian Researches, during a Residence of nearly Six Years, in the South Sea Islands* for the *Quarterly Review*. Southey's earlier reviews had shown that, while he was convinced of the efficacy of missionary influence on these islands, he had his doubts about the abilities of the first missionaries regretting 'that their zeal has not been accompanied with more knowledge, or directed with more wisdom'.¹¹⁰ The Tahitian mission had been forced to leave the island in 1809 due to internecine war there, but had returned to the Society Islands two years later settling on the island of Eimeo (also York Island, now Moorea) with the Tahitian king Pomare. The 1830 review now relates the success of the missionary programme in a triumphant tone – 'We have nowhere so full and satisfactory an account of any national transition from paganism to Christianity, as in the case of these islands'.¹¹¹

Pomare's conversion to Christianity is eased by the death of his wife, who conforms to Southey's view of Polynesian women in being 'addicted to all the vices of her country' including infanticide.¹¹² Pomare's fervent desire to convert the rest of his people to Christianity is therefore unhampered by her corrupting influence. His crusading religious enthusiasm – supported by the missionaries – spreads to other nearby islands, colonising them for Christ and Pomare. As in the European colonisation programme there is an uneasy relationship between politics and religion here. Pomare's forces (sanctioned and supplied by the missionaries) invade Tahiti and attack the 'idolaters' there. A prolonged battle ensues until the missionaries report that 'Pomare was now, by the unanimous consent of all, reinstated in the supreme authority'.¹¹³ Other islands such as Huahine and Tubuai also adopt Pomare's Christian laws and his rule. According to Southey's review the programme of education,

religious instruction (and construction of 'the cathedral of Tahiti') brings peace, religion and progress to the island of Tahiti.

Montgomery had abandoned his early radicalism, like Southey, by the time *The Pelican Island* was published. Despite his efforts on behalf of the underdogs of British society he had now reached an apolitical stance that sought the solutions of religion rather than government. Montgomery's vision is of a Christian Empire rather than a British one, and the civilisation of Britain's colonies is a shoring up process in the wake of evangelical Christianity. Southey's ambitions for Polynesia however were different to Montgomery's. While he advocated the islanders' religious conversion he was as much concerned to examine 'whether the missionaries have proceeded as wisely and as unexceptionally in the civil as in the religious part of their ministry'.¹¹⁴ Bringing 'civilisation' to the islands is still Southey's priority. He applauds the fact that the Tahitians are prevailed upon to build houses, adopt European dress and farm the land. He is also concerned to relate the political development of the island and its governance by civilised laws punishing adultery, infanticide, abortion and murder. The first three forms of transgression are undoubtedly aimed at the female population of the islands. Infanticide and abortion, particularly were for Southey the extremest examples of female iniquity, which he identified in his reviews as the logical extension of promiscuity. With laws constraining these actions, female behaviour is brought under control.

Also important to Southey is the introduction of property laws – gone are his Pantisocratic days when he called for egalitarian ideas such as 'aspheterism' – and a representative government for the islands. Southey is still projecting his vision of an ideal society on other nations, however now this vision is very far from his youthful embracing of Rousseau's 'savage' model and much more closely linked to the

example that Britain offers. The Society Islands can successfully 'import' the efficacious models of British society and government by following the example of its laws and constitution, and by the dissemination of learning and literacy to the Polynesians from that cultural centre. That the Tahitians recognise the beneficial effects of these structures is evident for Southey, in their 'frequent exclamation' of 'O Britain, land of knowledge!'¹¹⁵

By tracing the transition in Southey's ideas from his early idealism to his forceful views on colonisation, it is possible to see the impact he had on other writers of the Romantic period. He influenced James, Mitford and Montgomery - as a reviewer and a poet - putting the South Seas on the imaginative stage and creating a fictional discourse whereby Britons could define their imperialist ideology. An authoritative figure during the Romantic period and beyond - in his role as Poet Laureate, as 'man of letters' and commentator on society - it was precisely Southey's perceived power in this capacity that made Byron so keen to challenge his supremacy in his own poetry. Southey was crucial in transforming the imaginative strain of Rousseau's Enlightenment thought - and its more sympathetic approach towards female members of society and the native populations of the 'New World' - into a literature and politics dominated by white, male, patriarchal society. However because Southey was a radical as well as a reactionary during his lifetime there are complexities and ambiguities in these versions of the South Seas that should not be ignored. Similarly Byron's oppositional construction is undermined by his conformity to the values of the patriarchal society to which he belongs. Such tensions in the texts highlight the tentative colonial and gender politics of the Romantic period - a watershed in British history before a more restrictive moral code and structured imperialism took its place.

Notes

¹ Jean Jacques Rousseau, *A Discourse Upon the Origin and Foundation of the Inequality among Mankind* (London: printed for R. and J. Dodsley, 1761), p. 19.

² These oppositions would be summed up by German social philosophers, such as Max Weber, who distinguished between *Gemeinschaft* (community) and *Gesellschaft* (society) in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. See *The Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy*, Gen. ed. Robert Audi, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), p. 857.

³ Southey was of course also influenced in his views of society by his reading of William Godwin's *Enquiry Concerning Political Justice* (1793).

⁴ Ernest Bernhardt-Kabisch, *Robert Southey* (Boston, Ma.: Twayne Publishers, 1977), p. 23.

⁵ Bernard Smith, *European Vision and the South Pacific 1768-1850* (London, Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 1960), pp. 8-35.

⁶ 'The average voyage from the South of England to Tahiti took about six months – provided that the ship stopped only once on the way, usually at the Canary Islands for water and fresh food', Trevor Lummis, *Life and Death in Eden: Pitcairn Island and the Bounty Mutineers* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1999), p. 19.

⁷ See *The Cambridge History of the Pacific Islanders*, ed. Donald Denoon (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

⁸ *South Seas and Australasia*, ed. Peter J. Kitson, vol. VIII of *Travels, Explorations and Empires: Writings from the Era of Imperial Expansion, 1770-1835*, eds. Tim Fulford and Peter J. Kitson, 8 vols. (London: Pickering and Chatto, 2000 and 2001), p. xiv.

⁹ Quoted by Neil Rennie, *Far-fetched Facts: The Literature of Travel and the Idea of the South Seas* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), p. 87.

¹⁰ Louis Antoine, Comte de Bougainville, *A Voyage Round the World, In the Years 1766, 1767, 1768 and 1769, Translated from the French by John Reinhold Forster* (London: Printed for J. Nourse and T. Davies, 1772).

¹¹ Nicholas Thomas, *Entangled Objects: Exchange, Material Culture and Colonialism in the Pacific* (Cambridge, Ma., and London: Harvard University Press, 1991), pp. 91-2.

¹² Bougainville, *A Voyage Round the World*, p. 220.

¹³ Bougainville, *A Voyage Round the World*, p. 221.

¹⁴ Bougainville, *A Voyage Round the World*, p. 221.

¹⁵ Bougainville, *A Voyage Round the World*, pp. 230-1.

¹⁶ Bougainville, *A Voyage Round the World*, p. 255.

¹⁷ Bougainville, *A Voyage Round the World*, p. 260.

¹⁸ Rousseau, *A Discourse Upon the Origin and Foundation of the Inequality among Mankind*, p. 30.

¹⁹ *Diderot Supplement au Voyage de Bougainville*, ed. Peter Jimack (London: Grant and Cutler Ltd., 1988), p. 40.

²⁰ *Diderot Supplement au Voyage de Bougainville*, ed. Jimack, pp. 40-41.

²¹ Captain James Cook, *A Voyage Round the World Performed in His Britannic Majesty's Ships The Resolution and Adventure in the Years 1772, 1773, 1774, 1775*, 4 vols. (Dublin, printed for W. Whitestone, S. Watson, R. Cross, J. Potts, J. Hoey and 13 others, 1777), I, pp. 183-4.

- ²² See Jocelyn Linnekin 'Contending Approaches' and Malama Meleisea and Penelope Schoeffel 'Discovering Outsiders', in *The Cambridge History of the Pacific Islanders*, pp. 3-36 (pp.10-11) and pp. 119-51 (pp.130-131) respectively. The authors speculate on the reasons for this relationship from a native perspective rather than European.
- ²³ John Hawkesworth's *An Account of the Voyages Undertaken By The Order Of His Present Majesty For Making Discoveries in the Southern Hemisphere*, 3 vols. (London: Printed for W. Strahan and T. Cadell, 1773).
- ²⁴ Quoted by Rennie, *Far-fetched Facts*, pp. 98-101.
- ²⁵ Robert Southey, 'Transactions of the Missionary Society in the South Sea Islands', *Quarterly Review*, 2, no. 3 (Aug., 1809), 24-61 (p. 33).
- ²⁶ Rod Edmond, *Representing the South Pacific: Colonial Discourse from Cook to Gauguin* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), pp. 23-62.
- ²⁷ Hannah More, 'Slavery: A Poem' (1788), in *Romantic Women Poets: An Anthology*, ed. Duncan Wu (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Ltd., 1997), p. 49.
- ²⁸ Gananath Obeyesekere, *The Apotheosis of Captain Cook: European Mythmaking in the Pacific* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1992).
- ²⁹ Southey, 'Transactions of the Missionary Society in the South Sea Islands', p. 25.
- ³⁰ Wilson had also captained *The Antelope*, which was shipwrecked in the Pacific in 1783 and whose narrative formed the basis of George Keate's *An Account of the Pelew Islands, situated in the western part of the Pacific Ocean* (1788). Wilson was also responsible for bringing the ill-fated (Prince) Lee Boo to England.
- ³¹ Southey, 'Transactions of the Missionary Society in the South Sea Islands', p. 28.
- ³² Southey, 'Transactions of the Missionary Society in the South Sea Islands', p. 29.
- ³³ Southey, 'Transactions of the Missionary Society in the South Sea Islands', pp. 36, 38.
- ³⁴ Southey, 'Transactions of the Missionary Society in the South Sea Islands', p. 49.
- ³⁵ Southey, 'Transactions of the Missionary Society in the South Sea Islands', p. 50.
- ³⁶ Southey, 'Transactions of the Missionary Society in the South Sea Islands', p. 45.
- ³⁷ Southey, 'Transactions of the Missionary Society in the South Sea Islands', p. 45.
- ³⁸ Southey, 'Transactions of the Missionary Society in the South Sea Islands', p. 47.
- ³⁹ Smith, *European Vision and the South Pacific*, p. 108.
- ⁴⁰ Quoted by Smith, *European Vision and the South Pacific*, p. 109.
- ⁴¹ Southey, 'Transactions of the Missionary Society in the South Sea Islands', p. 55.
- ⁴² Robert Southey, 'Transactions of the Missionary Society', *Annual Review* for 1803, 2 (1804), chap. 2, no. 62, 189-201 (p. 200).
- ⁴³ See reports in the following articles: 'Dentrecasteaux - Voyage a la Recherche la Perouse', *Quarterly Review*, 3, no. 5 (Feb., 1810), 21-43 (pp. 23-4), and 'Porter's Cruise in the Pacific Ocean', *Quarterly Review*, 13, no. 26 (July, 1815), 352-83.
- ⁴⁴ Tim Fulford, 'Romanticism, the South Seas and the Caribbean: the Fruits of Empire', *European Romantic Review*, 11, No. 4 (Fall, 2000), 408-34.
- ⁴⁵ Lummis, *Life and Death in Eden*, pp. 65-6.
- ⁴⁶ Quoted by Rennie, *Far-fetched Facts*, p. 146.
- ⁴⁷ William Bligh, *A Narrative of the Mutiny on Board His Majesty's Ship Bounty; And the Subsequent Voyage of Part of the Crew, in the Ship's Boat, From Tofoa, one of the Friendly Islands, To Timor, a Dutch Settlement in the East Indies* (Dublin: Printed for L. White, P. Byrne, J. Moore, J. Jones, B. Dornin et al., 1790).
- ⁴⁸ Bligh, *A Narrative of the Mutiny*, p. 14.

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- ⁴⁹ *Minutes of the Court-Martial held at Portsmouth, August 12, 1792, on Ten Persons Charged with Mutiny on Board His Majesty's Ship Bounty with an APPENDIX (by Edward Christian) containing a full account of the real Causes and Circumstances of that unhappy Transaction* (London: J. Deighton, 1794)
- ⁵⁰ *The Monthly Magazine or British Register*, 26 (December 1808), p. 457.
- ⁵¹ *The Monthly Magazine, or British Register*, 26 (December 1808), pp. 457-8.
- ⁵² Southey, 'Transactions of the Missionary Society in the South Sea Islands', p. 50.
- ⁵³ Southey, 'Transactions of the Missionary Society in the South Sea Islands', p. 50.
- ⁵⁴ Richard Hough, *Captain Bligh and Mister Christian* (London: Chatham Publishing, 2000), p. 131.
- ⁵⁵ For instance: Hough, *Captain Bligh and Mister Christian*; Glynn Christian, *Fragile Paradise* (Sydney, Auckland, Toronto, London, New York: Doubleday, 1999); Lummis, *Life and Death in Eden*.
- ⁵⁶ Rennie, *Far-fetched Facts*, p. 166.
- ⁵⁷ 'Dentrecasteaux – Voyage a la Recherche la Perouse', p. 24.
- ⁵⁸ Rennie, *Far-fetched Facts*, p. 169.
- ⁵⁹ See James Burney's, *A Chronological History of the Discoveries in the South Sea or Pacific Ocean* (1803-1817).
- ⁶⁰ John Hawkesworth's *An Account of the Voyages Undertaken By The Order Of His Present Majesty For Making Discoveries in the Southern Hemisphere*, 3 vols. (London: Printed for W. Strahan and T. Cadell, 1773).
- ⁶¹ William Bligh, *A Voyage to the South Sea, undertaken by command of His Majesty, for the purpose of conveying the breadfruit to the West Indies, in his Majesty's Ship the Bounty ... Including an account of the mutiny on board the said ship...* (London: George Nichol, 1792).
- ⁶² Robert Southey, *Letters from England*, ed. Jack Simmons (London: The Cresset Press, 1951). See particularly Letter XXXVIII, 'The Manufacturing System', pp. 207-13.
- ⁶³ Mary Russell Mitford, *Our Village: Sketches of Rural Character and Scenery* (London: Geo. B. Whittaker, 1824).
- ⁶⁴ Edmond, *Representing the South Pacific*, p. 80.
- ⁶⁵ Smith, *European Vision and the South Pacific*, pp. 243-7.
- ⁶⁶ Bernhardt-Kabisch, *Robert Southey*, p. 126.
- ⁶⁷ Robert Southey, 'Polynesian Researches', *Quarterly Review*, 43, no. 85 (May, 1830), 1-54 (p. 40).
- ⁶⁸ Hough, *Captain Bligh and Mister Christian*, p. 271.
- ⁶⁹ In her notes to *Christina*, Mitford reproduces the whole chapter containing the details of the event from Bligh's *A Voyage to the South Sea* (1792).
- ⁷⁰ In fact according to the historical accounts, it was John Adams who instituted Christianity on Pitcairn after Fletcher Christian's death.
- ⁷¹ Southey, 'Transactions of the Missionary Society', p. 199.
- ⁷² Hannah More, *Coelebs In Search of a Wife* (1808-9), ed. Mary Waldron (Bristol: Thoemmes Press, 1995).
- ⁷³ Richard Polwhele, *The Unsex'd Females* (London: Cadell & Davies, 1798), pp. 6 and 10.
- ⁷⁴ Mary Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792), ed. Miriam Brody (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1992), pp. 142-222.

⁷⁵ In the 1790s Southey much admired Wollstonecraft, even writing a poem in her honour, 'To Mary Wollstonecraft', included in *Poems* (1797). In this poem however he couches his admiration for her in just those sentimentalist terms that she would have objected to:

The lily cheek, the 'purple light of love',
The liquid lustre of the melting eye,...
Mary! Of these the Poet sung, for these
Did Woman triumph;....turn not thou away
Contemtuously from the theme.

(*P* (1797), 3, l. 1-5)

Southey seems to imagine that females 'triumph' in the recognition of their feminine graces rather than by the perception of them as rational human beings.

⁷⁶ 'Mary Russell Mitford's Poems', *Quarterly Review*, 4, no. 8 (Nov., 1810), 514-8 (p. 516).

⁷⁷ Mary Russell Mitford, *Narrative Poems on the Female Character*, Advertisement, p. ix.

⁷⁸ See Chapter Four for a fuller discussion of these aspects in *Thalaba the Destroyer*.

⁷⁹ There were actually three men left: Adams, Matthew Quintal and Edward Young.

⁸⁰ See for instance Lummis, *Life and Death in Eden* pp. 107-23.

⁸¹ F.W. Beechey, *Narrative of a Voyage to the Pacific... in the Years 1825, 26, 27, 28*, 2 vols. (London: Henry Colburn and Richard Bentley, 1831), I, p. 121.

⁸² Southey, 'Transactions of the Missionary Society in the South Sea Islands', p.57.

⁸³ *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*, 16 (1824), p. 711.

⁸⁴ James C. McKusick, 'The Politics of Language in Byron's *The Island*', *ELH*, 59 (1992), 839-56 (p. 852).

⁸⁵ While Stewart is generally considered as the source for Torquil, Rod Edmond in *Representing the Pacific* differs in his opinion - 'Stewart, who became Fletcher Christian's lieutenant, was too involved in the mutiny for such an innocent role and, if an original there must be, Peter Heywood better fits the bill' (pp. 75-6).

⁸⁶ *Byron's Letters and Journals*, ed. Leslie A. Marchand, 10 vols. (London: John Murray Ltd., 1980), X, p. 90.

⁸⁷ McKusick, 'The Politics of Language in Byron's *The Island*', p. 852.

⁸⁸ John Martin, *An Account of the Natives of the Tonga Islands in the South Pacific Ocean... Compiled and arranged from the extensive communications of Mr. William Mariner, several years resident in those islands*, 2 vols. (London: John Murray, 1817), I, pp. 307-8.

⁸⁹ Martin, *An Account of the Natives of the Tonga Islands*, titlepage.

⁹⁰ *BCPW*, II; *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, Canto II, 1-15.

⁹¹ *BCPW*, V; *Don Juan*, Canto III, 1-16 (inserted between stanzas 86 and 87).

⁹² Angus Calder, 'The Island'; Scotland, Greece and Romantic Savagery' in *Byron and Scotland: Radical or Dandy*, ed. Angus Calder (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1989), pp. 132-50.

⁹³ Martin, *An Account of the Natives of the Tonga Islands*, I, p. vii.

⁹⁴ Martin, *An Account of the Natives of the Tonga Islands*, I, p. 308.

⁹⁵ Bougainville, *A Voyage Round the World*, p. 260.

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- ⁹⁶ Robert Southey, 'Accounts of the Tonga Islands' (A review of James Burney's *History of the Voyages and Discoveries in the South Sea* and William Mariner's *An Account of the Natives of the Tonga Islands*), *Quarterly Review*, 17, no. 33 (Apr., 1817), 1-39 (p. 33).
- ⁹⁷ Caroline Franklin, *Byron's Heroines* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), p. 92.
- ⁹⁸ Franklin, *Byron's Heroines*, p. 91.
- ⁹⁹ See note 43.
- ¹⁰⁰ Byron mentions 'Toobonai' as 'the last island where any distinct account is left of Christian and his comrades', *BCPW*, VII, pp.146-7.
- ¹⁰¹ Bligh, *A Narrative of the Mutiny*, p. 13.
- ¹⁰² Calder, "'The Island"; Scotland, Greece and Romantic Savagery', p. 144.
- ¹⁰³ James Montgomery, *The West Indies*, in *Poems on the Abolition of the Slave Trade*, by James Montgomery, James Grahame and E. Benger (London: R. Benger, 1809).
- ¹⁰⁴ Montgomery, *The West Indies*, pp. 67-8.
- ¹⁰⁵ James Montgomery, *Lectures on Poetry and General Literature* (1833), (London: Routledge/Thoemmes Press, 1995), p. 300.
- ¹⁰⁶ Montgomery was particularly influenced by Matthew Flinders' *A Voyage to Terra Australis, 1801-1803* (1814).
- ¹⁰⁷ Quoted by Fulford, 'Romanticism, the South Seas and the Caribbean: the Fruits of Empire', p. 410.
- ¹⁰⁸ Southey, 'Transactions of the Missionary Society in the South Sea Islands', p. 45.
- ¹⁰⁹ Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, (1651), ed. Richard Tuck (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1992), p. 89.
- ¹¹⁰ Southey, 'Transactions of the Missionary Society', p. 200.
- ¹¹¹ Southey, 'Polynesian Researches', p.5.
- ¹¹² Southey, 'Polynesian Researches', p. 6
- ¹¹³ Southey, 'Polynesian Researches', p. 22.
- ¹¹⁴ Southey, 'Polynesian Researches', p. 31.
- ¹¹⁵ Southey, 'Polynesian Researches', p. 5.

Chapter Four

Thalaba the Destroyer - Southey's 'Arabian romance'

4.1 Introduction

The publication of *Thalaba the Destroyer* in 1801 marked a shift in Southey's publishing oeuvre for several reasons. Firstly, it was his initial attempt in an ambitious project to depict all the mythologies of the world in epic form.¹ Secondly, the poem provides evidence of a transitional period in Southey's life, during which it is difficult to pin down exactly his political beliefs. As the previous chapter shows, much of Southey's early radical fervour was evaporating as a quieter mood of domesticity came over him, but he had not yet become the reactionary apostate of his accusatory contemporaries. His first visit to Portugal provided the basis for much of his later conservatism, due to his realisation that the English constitutional monarchy and the Anglican Church – he reacted strongly to what he perceived as the religious despotism of Roman Catholicism in Portugal – were superior to other models of polity and religion abroad. Even the ideals of the French Revolution, a political model that he had particularly admired in his youth, were slowly unravelling before his eyes into corruption and tyranny. Southey had not totally abandoned his earlier radicalism, but his former hot-headedness had been replaced by a self-acknowledged 'sombre assumption of gravity' (*NL*, I, p. 110). Letters written while *Thalaba* was being composed, show him to have been hovering between two positions. On the one hand he was critical of British policy with regard to France, and supportive of Bonaparte 'I do not hesitate in pronouncing him the greatest man that events have called into action

since Alexander of Macedon' (NL, I, pp. 221-2). On the other hand he said during his second visit to Portugal (where he finished *Thalaba*), that being abroad, 'makes an Englishman proud, and [you] will easily conceive that I am all Anglicized already' (NL, I, pp. 224-5). *Thalaba* is still informed by Southey's quest for political enlightenment and a way for society to progress but this text came into existence on the cusp of his changing views. Southey's new found 'gravity' had manifested itself in practical plans to alleviate the indigence of those around him, hence projects to set up a convalescent home for the poor, and to publish the works of Chatterton on behalf of his female relatives. Another aspect of this seriousness was that having abandoned various alternative careers, his writing was becoming his occupation, as he increasingly came to recognise that 'poetry is my province'.² Therefore at this stage of his life, Southey felt able to accomplish the first step in his long held 'design of rendering every mythology, which had ever extended itself widely, and powerfully influenced the human mind, the basis of a narrative poem' (LC, III, p. 351).

In this chapter I will examine *Thalaba the Destroyer* within the context of other Orientalist texts, in order to reveal the ways in which it conforms to, or differs from, this strand of literature to which it contributes. I also intend to show how Southey's more conservative approach to the values of his own culture (that he was at odds with for so long) was formed by his responses to the Oriental material of his poem. *Thalaba* is the story of a young man's quest to find the murderer of his family and avenge their deaths. This entails Southey's hero renouncing human love, until his quest ends, when he is united in heaven with the object of his love, Oneiza. *Thalaba* has many trials to go through in the meantime, against forces of evil in the form of wicked sorcerers, who attempt to abrogate God's power. *Thalaba* is not simply constructed as a personal revenge plot because the retribution he seeks is divinely

inspired and predetermined by God. As Southey said of this device 'It must be remembered that the most absolute fatalism is the main-spring of Mohammed's religion, and therefore the principle is always referred to in the poem' (*SL*, I, p. 214). Nevertheless, as I will show, the poem contains many conventional Christian aspects, as Southey combined his knowledge of Islam with his own religious precepts to construct an Orientalist fantasy, rather than provide a realistic reflection of Islamic faith or Arabian life. Southey's poem is therefore a curious mixture of his responses to Islam, a Christian quest, and an Oriental tale of tyranny and magic (such as the *Arabian Nights* and William Beckford's *Vathek*). This conglomeration formed a text that comments on the Oriental world in order to define Southey's own principles – which he increasingly considered to be 'British' values.

So if this text breaks away from Southey's earlier, more radical poetry – his *Morning Post* poems, *Wat Tyler* and *Joan of Arc* – what were the creative sources and influences for *Thalaba*? Southey's letters provide the contextual biographical detail for the period over which it was written. Southey returned from his first visit to Portugal in May 1796, the year in which *Joan of Arc* was completed and published. An embryonic form of *Thalaba* is mentioned as early as July 1796 in Southey's plan to write 'My Oriental poem of The Destruction of the Dom Daniel' (*LC*, I, p. 288). This early sketch is referred to several times by Southey in letters as his 'Dom Daniel' poem, before being worked up into the long narrative poem that would be *Thalaba the Destroyer*. Until the end of 1796 Southey was living in Bristol and finishing his *Letters from Spain and Portugal* (published 1797). At the beginning of 1797 he went to London to begin the law studies that he had decided to pursue with a view to taking up a legal career. Once he had found lodgings he wrote to Joseph Cottle saying 'As to my literary pursuits, after some consideration I have resolved to postpone every other

till I have concluded *Madoc*' (*LC*, I, p. 303). So Southey continued studying law in the daytime and writing *Madoc* at night, and his plan to write 'The Destruction of the Dom Daniel' was put on hold. Ever keen to escape London – 'a place for which I entertain a most hearty hatred' (*LC*, I, p. 310) – and his legal studies, Southey became quite nomadic over the next few years. Nevertheless while in London he met several important writers and thinkers of the time, particularly the Joseph Johnson circle via his friend George Dyer, for instance: William Godwin, Mary Wollstonecraft, Ann Batten Cristall and Gilbert Wakefield. In June 1798 Southey set up home in Westbury (Wiltshire), where he became very involved in his literary pursuits and achieved a prolific output. In the year of his residence in Westbury, Southey was working on *Madoc*, a second edition of *Letters from Spain and Portugal*, editing the first volume of his *Annual Anthology* as well as spending a lot of his time on 'abundant periodical employment' (*LC*, II, p. 2).

In a letter of 9th May 1799 Southey speaks of the 'Dom Daniel' project being still one of his 'unborn family' (*LC*, II, p. 16). The Southseys' left Westbury at the end of a year's tenancy and stayed with friends while finding another home. On 12th July Southey wrote to his brother Tom that he had finished *Madoc* and 'my brain is now ready to receive the Dom Daniel, the next labour in succession. Of the metre of this poem I have thought much, and my final resolution is to write it irregularly, without rhymes' (*LC*, II, p. 21). Bernhardt-Kabisch points out the influence of Frank Sayers on the form and content of *Thalaba* – his use of unrhymed, irregular verse and mythological subject matter in his *Dramatic Sketches Of Northern Mythology* (1790, 1792) impressing Southey enough to make him want to write his own 'mythopoesis'.³ Another earlier influence on his plan to write about the mythologies of the world had been Bernard Picart's *Ceremonies et coutumes de tous les peuples du monde* (1723),

revealing Southey's comparativist interest in world cultures. *Thalaba* can be seen as a synthesis of the many texts that Southey read: poetry, travel accounts and ethnological descriptions of the Middle East and Africa.⁴

Other sources for *Thalaba* were literary representations of the Orient that were becoming popular in Europe, such as the *Arabian Nights Entertainments* which were made known in Europe through the French translation of Antoine Galland (between 1704-1717). These stories were a boyhood influence on Southey, and the intervention of magical 'machinery' into the human world which they depict can be seen in *Thalaba*.⁵ Southey was also familiar with the *Arabian Tales: or A Continuation of the Arabian Nights Entertainments* (1788-99) which is the most obvious source for *Thalaba*, as Southey mentions himself in the 'Preface to the Fourth Edition'⁶:

In the continuation of the Arabian Tales, the Domdaniel is mentioned; a seminary for evil magicians, under the roots of the sea. From this seed the present romance has grown. (*PW*, IV, p. xv)

The *Arabian Tales*, from which the story of the 'Domdaniel' comes, were claimed to be translations from the Arabic by Dom Chavis and M. Cazotte. A large part of one of the volumes of these stories is devoted to a magician called Maugraby whose evil operations emanate from:

the formidable Dom-Daniel of Tunis, that school of magic, whose rulers tyrannise over all the wicked spirits that desolate the earth, and which in the den where those monsters are engendered that have over-run the country of Africa.⁷

William Beckford's *Vathek* (1786) was another Oriental tale that Southey admired. He considered that *Thalaba* 'compares more fairly with 'Vathek' than with any existing work, and I think may stand by its side for invention'.⁸ These texts will be explored during my analysis of *Thalaba*, but it is worth looking first at two other,

more immediate influences on Southey that were especially significant in forming the design of his 'Arabian tale'.

4.2 Walter Savage Landor's *Gebir*

Over the summer of 1799 Southey was reading Walter Savage Landor's *Gebir* (1798) and reviewing it for the *Critical Review*.⁹ His letters reveal his opinion that *Gebir* is constructed of 'some of the most exquisite poetry in the language' (*LC*, II, p. 24). By his own admission this poem had great influence on Southey's own writing:

Gebir is the only contemporary poem to which I am, as a poet, in the slightest degree indebted, and it was certainly from *Gebir* that I learnt ever to have my eye awake – to bring images to sight, and to convey a picture in a word. I know no poem from which I have ever derived so much improvement. (*NL*, I, p. 476)

The selections Southey made for his review provide a potted discussion of imperialism, incorporating sovereign authority and responsibility, aspects that he would apply to *Thalaba*. The poem's main plot tells of the invasion of Egypt by Gebir, an Iberian ruler, and his subsequent love for the Egyptian queen, Charoba. Though ostensibly the poem is set in Egypt, it subscribes to a generalised picturesque Orientalism that is loosely linked to its location and heightened by aspects of local colour such as the 'crocodile crying oft', references to the Nile and the architectural remnants of ancient civilizations.¹⁰ A second strand of the story is strangely at odds with the 'Egyptian' setting, having a classical, pastoral element, in which Gebir's brother Tamar, who on 'rich meadows' protects the 'royal flocks', falls in love with 'a nymph divine'.¹¹ This combination of different literary traditions, and disparate geographical locations is not unusual in Orientalist texts, and is an aspect that Southey replicates in *Thalaba*.

The aspects of *Gebir* that Southey valued can be identified from his review – the exotic love story, the descriptions of ancient ruined cities (and their rebuilding), and a journey to the underworld to view the consequences of Oriental tyranny:

Here are discover'd those who tortured law
To silence or to speech as pleased themselves;
Here also those who boasted of the zeal,
And lov'd their country for the spoils it gave.¹²

A further passage Southey selects is one describing the occult partisan actions of the witch-like Dalica, which result in Gebir's death on his wedding day. Gebir's imperial and amorous aspirations therefore end, before the Iberian and Egyptian nations can be united. The fact that Gebir's father (who he meets in Hell) comes to reject the project he initiated of invading Egypt – combined with Gebir's death on the point of victory – contributes to the poem being read as 'an anti-colonialist fable' by Marilyn Butler.¹³ But the poem's message is ambiguous, because Landor also praises Napoleon – 'A mortal man above all mortal praise'¹⁴ – who was at this time 'sweeping through northern Italy' and went on to invade Egypt in the same year that *Gebir* was published.¹⁵

Southey was impressed with *Gebir* because Landor employed a similar political, as well as poetical, agenda to his own. For both poets the occult was a central theme, with the Orient portrayed as 'a land of incantation'.¹⁶ Southey also included the story of the destruction of an ancient civilization in *Thalaba* (the 'Adites' – in *Gebir*, the 'Gadites'), as well as portraying ruined cities in *Thalaba*'s wanderings. Southey, like Landor, comments on tyrannical pride and imperial rule, and *Thalaba* also visits the underworld – which as in *Gebir* underpins the narrative of events on earth. Finally Landor displays the same ambivalence to imperial politics as Southey and many other 'Jacobins' in celebrating Napoleon's achievements, while rejecting

imperialist strategies. Both men used the Orient as an imaginative space in which to discuss contemporary European politics – detached from criticism or censorship – to comment on political and (in Southey's case) social morality. The major difference between the two texts however is that while Landor's is not framed by any recognisable religious system, as his poem was set in a pre-Christian and pre-Islamic period, Southey made the Islamic religion a central theme of *Thalaba*. Why that came about can be seen in a further influence on *Thalaba* that arose from Southey's renewed friendship with Coleridge.

4.3 'Mohammed' (1799) and George Sale's *Koran*

After their reconciliation through their mutual friends and a cautious correspondence, Southey and Coleridge spent August and September 1799 touring the West of England. Here they made several attempts at collaborative writing 'at the same table' (*SL*, I, p. 78) once more, in their long ballad 'The Devil's Walk' and their plan to write a poem based on the life of Mohammed. In July of that year Southey had already revealed his interest in George Sale's translation of the *Koran*.¹⁷ In a letter to John May (from Minehead where the couple had gone for Edith's health) Southey said 'Of the few books with me I am most engaged by the *Koran*: it is dull and full of repetitions, but there is an interesting simplicity in the tenets it inculcates' (*SL*, I, p. 77). It was that perceived 'simplicity' – the rudimentary principle that all things are achievable if one submits to the will of God – that Southey attempted to replicate in *Thalaba*.

Southey planned to use his research into the *Koran* in his poem, 'Mohammed', but the idea was abandoned leaving only an extract that was published much later – as was a separate and quite different extract by Coleridge entitled 'Mahomet'.¹⁸

However, Southey's plan to write 'Mohammed' was crucial to *Thalaba*, as he was writing the two poems at the same time, and the problems that Southey reveals himself having with the Koran – and which led to him abandoning 'Mohammed' – are also the problems that haunt the text of his 'Arabian Romance'.¹⁹ The four extant pages of 'Mohammed' follow very closely the details of the prophet's life given by George Sale in 'A Preliminary Discourse' to his translation of the Koran.²⁰ For instance Sale includes an account of Mohammed's escape from the 'Koreish' (more properly Quraysh – the Arab tribe to which Mohammed belonged) who are upset by his teachings and attempt to kill him. In both Sale's account and Southey's poem, Mohammed is saved by his cousin Ali masquerading as him in his room until morning, when his assassins break down the door and find they have been tricked. Meanwhile Mohammed has escaped from his persecutors by concealing himself in a cave, where a pigeon (two in Sale's account) and a spider are instrumental in saving his life.

Southey obviously approved of Sale's ethnological intent to make the 'law of Mohammed' more accessible to his European readers.²¹ That Southey also shared this desire formed the impulse behind his plan to write 'Mohammed' and also influenced *Thalaba*. I will now examine Sale's intentions in translating the Koran, and also Southey's responses to it. The first edition of Sale's *Koran* was published in 1734 and reveals a guiding principle of Enlightenment relativism:

To be acquainted with the various laws and constitutions of civilized nations, especially of those who flourish in our own time, is, perhaps the most useful part of knowledge.²²

Sharafuddin points out how committed Sale was to his text:

So striking was his knowledge of and identification with Islam, in an age of dogma and prejudice, that he was known in some conservative circles by the title 'half-Mussulman' for his positive view of the Koran.²³

Where Southey found the Koran full of 'dull tautology' (*Thal*, I, p. 4), Sale was enthusiastic, finding the style in which it is written to be 'generally beautiful and fluent', and even 'sublime and magnificent' at times.²⁴

However the stumbling block Sale had with the Koran (and which he shared with other Westerners) was the belief of the Islamic faithful that it constituted the word of God, transmitted through his mouthpiece, the divinely inspired Mohammed. In the 'Dedication' Sale refers to this as an 'imposture' on Mohammed's part and often in his 'Preliminary Discourse' terms it a 'pretence'.²⁵ As Edward Said points out, Christian critics constructed Mohammed as a fraudulent 'other' for Jesus Christ, the inspired prophet of their own belief system.²⁶ This led to an ambiguity in Sale's position in presenting his text to the British public. While he argues for the study of Islam and against those who are hostile without knowledge, he cannot prevent his text being imbued with Western scepticism. This may have been due to the fact that he was nervous about the reception of his text because:

The remembrance of the Calamities brought on so many nations by the conquests of the *Arabians*, may possibly raise some indignation against him who formed them to empire²⁷

However a more likely reason for the 'detestation with which the name of *Mohammed* is loaded' is due to the doubt and suspicion that Christians feel towards the figure of the prophet because:

He has given a new system of religion which has had still greater success than the arms of his followers, and to establish this religion made use of an imposture: and on this account it is supposed that he must of necessity have been a most abandoned villain, and his memory is become infamous.²⁸

But in Sale's eyes 'Mohammed gave his Arabs the best religion he could, as well as the best laws' and so deserves 'equal respect' with other prophets, 'tho' not with *Moses* or *Jesus Christ*, whose laws came really from heaven'.²⁹ He falls short of attributing the same importance and divinity to Islam as he did to Christianity for obvious reasons. To many of his readers Christianity was the one true revealed religion, despite the similarity of other religions to the biblical account.

While Sale might have intended his translation to be a positive attempt to present the Koran dispassionately to a critical public, there are other reasons why Sale can be seen as an unwittingly equivocal commentator on the Koran. As Sharafuddin also shows:

Sale's major innovation, the importance of which cannot be exaggerated, was his readiness to depend on the famous Muslim exegetists of the Koran – such as Beidawi and Zamakshari; and on fundamental controversies he insisted on quoting Islamic rather than western authorities.³⁰

While such scholarly detachment should be applauded, it also means that for good or ill, Sale made little personal investment in the text (as a Biblical exegetist would have done in a translation of the Bible from the Hebrew and Greek languages) except in his 'A Preliminary Discourse'. And in this discussion he detached himself further from his text by presenting a familiar version of Mohammed as a false prophet to his Western readership.

Sale's approach to the *Koran* was one that Southey inculcated and displayed in *Thalaba*. He too, had a comparativist interest in other cultures and religions, but because he had inherited Sale's ambivalence, questions the prophet's motives:

What was Mohammed? self-deceived, or knowingly a deceiver? If an enthusiast, the question again recurs, wherein does real inspiration differ from mistaken? (*SL*, I, p. 77)

This question worried Southey as it had worried Sale before him. In *Thalaba* Southey does not distinguish between real or misguided faith in order to justify his hero's beliefs, as he felt he would have had to do in 'Mohammed'. Because the hero of *Thalaba* is a fictional construct with no Islamic precedent, Southey could avoid proving the verity of his beliefs. Instead he simply relied on the dramatic effects of that intuitive faith. Southey's poem becomes a Protestant epic (such as Spenser's *Faerie Queene*) as much by this omission of stated religious tenets – and therefore the authorial assumption of a shared belief system with his readership – as anything else.

There was to be a further problem with using the Islamic prophet as the hero of a poem:

But of Mohammed, there is one fact which in my judgement stamps the imposter – he made too free with the wife of Zeid, and very speedily had a verse of the Koran revealed to allow him to marry her. The vice may be attributed to his country and constitution; but the dispensation was the work of a scoundrel imposing upon fools (*SL*, I, p. 77).

The fact that Mohammed committed adultery with another man's wife and then licensed his act in the Koran was outrageous to Southey. He saw sexual desire as part of that 'vice' particularly endemic to such a 'country and constitution', whereas Sale was much more forgiving of what his own culture would consider to be Eastern sexual anomalies. For instance Sale states of polygamy – another practice attributed to Mohammed – that though it was:

forbidden by the Christian religion, was in *Mohammed's* time frequently practised in Arabia and other parts of the east and was not counted an immorality, nor was a man the worse esteemed on that account³¹

For Sale, Mohammed should only be judged in terms of his own society's cultural mores. But for Southey, even if Mohammed's act in taking another man's wife could be (reluctantly) understood in terms of racial or cultural difference, nevertheless his position as a religious leader should have placed him above secular physical desire. Southey does two things here, firstly he treats lechery as an Arabian vice and secondly he overlays the morality of his own culture and religion (as he did with Polynesia) onto Islam.

In writing 'Mohammed' the problem that Southey faced was the gap between the poetic sincerity he needed to invest in his text and his source material. The ambiguities that he imbued from Sale's commentary only served to reinforce his own doubts about writing the life of the Islamic prophet. Such a poem would make Islam the central belief system in his project as well as holding Mohammed up as a hero, in spite of having been, in Southey's eyes, an immoral 'imposter'.³² As Ernest Bernhardt Kabisch points out the project was abandoned because Southey 'could not suspend his disbelief sufficiently to create Mohammed as the hero of a serious work'.³³ Unable to empathise with the figure-head of another faith and an alien culture, Southey transferred all his research on the Koran and Arabian society into *Thalaba* – leaving him free to explore Islamic belief, but also to syncretise it with what he valued from the Protestant religion. Southey therefore overlaid his reading of European commentaries on Arabian life with his own version of a spiritual quest, featuring a pious hero who could never be considered to be an imposter, and is virtuous to the point of prudishness. That *Thalaba* owed as much to his Christian beliefs and morality, as his Oriental source material, was not strange or indefensible for Southey.

4.4 Southey's 'commonplace book versified'

In writing *Thalaba*, Southey was, like William Beckford (and Samuel Henley) in *Vathek*, modernising the established genre of Oriental tales by effectively incorporating two texts within a single framework.³⁴ *Thalaba*'s obvious text is the long narrative poem, providing an Oriental fantasy story, that could still exist without annotation, in an unanchored, ahistorical and geographically unspecific location – like the first edition of *Gebir* which was produced without any notes to the text.³⁵ In fact versions of *Thalaba* existed like this in later nineteenth-century editions, when the notes were often excised altogether. The second text is formed by Southey's impulse as a cultural historian to append footnotes to his poem (as with his other long narrative poems), providing a synthesis of all his reading on the subject. The notes therefore comprise a general survey (or 'history', in the eighteenth-century looser meaning of the term) of the customs, religious practices, climate, geography, history and natural history of the modern Arabs – limited only by their relevance to the poem. Arguably the factual information of the notes was made more accessible and digestible for a general European readership when presented in this way, promoting knowledge of other cultures. But rather than being enriched by this process *Thalaba* became more problematic because Southey, a keen and able history writer, tried to combine both genres within one publication. Therefore Southey made the loose associations within his fictional text fit his 'factual' material, or what is more likely, fictionalised his documentary accounts – admittedly constructions themselves – in a 'method of writing his poems to fit his footnotes' as H. N. Fairchild identifies.³⁶

Francis Jeffrey's comments on *Thalaba* being a 'patchwork' of other texts – in his article for the *Edinburgh Review* of 1802 – are perceptively apposite:

The author has set out with the resolution to make an oriental story, and a determination to find the materials of it in the books to which he had access. Every incident, therefore, and description,— every superstitious usage, or singular tradition, that appeared to him susceptible of poetical embellishment, or capable of picturesque representation, he has set down for this purpose, and adopted such a fable and plan of composition, as might enable him to work up all his materials, and interweave every one of his quotations, without any *extraordinary* violation of unity or order. When he had filled his commonplace book, he began to write; and his poem is little else than his commonplace book versified.³⁷

While Southey could be applauded for making his oriental fantasy more 'realistic' and more accessible to his reading public, in fact he was more culpable of making sweeping assertions, or imprecise associations, between fictional events and documented social and religious practices. Also Southey's universalist approach often elided specific differences, producing one homogenous vision that combined pre-Islamic and Islamic religious beliefs, ancient and modern social practices and ignored geographical disparities, in his poem. He then gave his fiction the credence of fact by 'cherry-picking' those elements that he found interesting, peculiar or fitting his own moral code, from his sources. It is unfortunate that Southey was not more liberally open-minded in accepting the differences in culture and religion that he found. As William Haller says of Southey's motives, 'All his reading was done, ... not to enlarge his own spirit, but merely to confirm his preconceptions about life, and to condemn what disagreed with them'.³⁸ One of the most obvious manifestations of this is the way in which Southey chooses the Islamic faith and Arabian culture as the central theme of his story and then denigrates his subject matter at every opportunity in his notes. Could it be that Southey was attracted to the subject, but like Sale recognised the weight of popular prejudice against the Islamic religion, therefore conformed to Western stereotypes of Eastern cultures? Or was Southey a product himself of his own culture, blinkered to alternative cultural and religious values? It is

most likely however that Southey's awareness of his moral responsibility to his readers made him reluctant to unwittingly seduce them into an unmediated appreciation of the positive aspects of an alien culture. His notes therefore counterbalance the stimulating visions of his poem.

Nigel Leask comments on the 'poetic *affect*; namely, the actual discrepancy, rather than desired unity, between poetic text and annotation' in *Thalaba*. In his discussion, which compares eighteenth-century panoramic images to the exotic poetry of Southey and Thomas Moore, Leask goes on to say that 'the absorptive pull of the exotic visual image or allusion...is constantly checked and qualified by a globalizing, descriptive discourse which draws the viewer/reader away from dangerous proximity to the image, in order to inscribe him/her in a position of epistemological power; nothing other than the commanding vision of imperialist objectivity'.³⁹ Certainly from a presentational aspect, the first edition of Southey's poem was continually 'checked and qualified' by his notes as he recognised himself, 'There is an unpleasant effect by the manner of placing the notes; for many pages have only a line of text, and so the eye runs faster than the fingers can turn them over' (*SL*, II, p. 102). Thereby the 'eye' that desires to enjoy the 'exotic visual image' of Southey's Arabian romance' is restrained by 'imperialist objectivity'. I intend to examine these issues, while delineating the plot of *Thalaba*, in order to discover Southey's motives in castigating the subject-matter of his 'Arabian tale', despite using it in his poem to illustrate his moral and religious tenets.

Thalaba begins in an unspecific desert setting, at night. The third-person narrative opens on a wide panorama of sky and 'desert circle' until panning in on two figures who 'Wander o'er the desert sands.' (*Thal*, I, p. 2). The reader discovers that these two are the young Thalaba and his widowed mother, Zeinab. All the rest of their

family have been killed and the angry Thalaba questions – and this is the only point in the poem where he does so – why God should have allowed this to happen. Zeinab rebukes Thalaba for his lack of faith in God, in biblical rather than Koranic terms, saying ‘He gave, he takes away,’ linked by Southey’s footnote to these words in the ‘Book of Job’ (*Thal*, I, p. 3). Southey (like Sale – and providing further evidence of the *Koran*’s ambiguities) included in his footnotes several passages from the Bible, which while aiming at relativity, provide a Christian frame for the ‘Islamic’ text. There are also references in *Thalaba* to ‘Exodus’, ‘Kings’ and ‘Isaiah’ for instance, Southey claiming that ‘an allusion to the Old Testament is no ways improper in a Mohammedan’ (I, p. 119). These references provide a familiarity for Southey’s European readers by expressing ‘a feeling of religion in that language with which *our* religious ideas are connected’ (I, p. 4) (my italics). However these more familiar points of reference could be accused of nudging out, or even negating, the less familiar aspects of Arabian society and Koranic material in his text. Similarly Southey’s inclusion of material in his footnotes from Western commentators (such as Sale, Carsten Niebuhr and Constantin Volney), may have dialogically enriched his text, but also interposed European (and often critical) viewpoints into his material, preventing the reader engaging with the Islamic content.

Southey’s footnote to the words ‘He gave, he takes away,’ points out that the resignation of this statement is ‘particularly inculcated by Mohammed, and of all his precepts it is that which his followers have best observed: it is even the vice of the East’ (*Thal*, I, 4). As the word ‘Islam’ means ‘peace through surrender or submission to God’ and it demands that a Muslim ‘surrenders himself unconditionally to the divine will’, this prompted Southey to make an Islamic ‘vice’ of a Christian virtue.⁴⁰ While he admired (Christian) resignation himself – and his hero is the model of such

virtue, with his unwavering faith against all odds – it seems that the idea when applied to the East is linked to a common stereotype of excessive Oriental passivity.

Therefore what seems like an autonomous desire for revenge on Thalaba's part is channelled into a holy crusade against the Domdanielite magicians, by being presented as part of that 'absolute fatalism' or resignation to God's will, which is 'the main-spring of Mohammed's religion' (*SL*, I, p. 214). As Thalaba swears to 'hunt' his father's murderer 'thro' the earth' the dialogue is interrupted by the appearance of 'a stately palace' (*Thal*, I. pp. 6-7). Southey was intrigued by the story of the Adites – and their ruler Shedad, who built an incomparable palace in the desert – as his lengthy footnotes testify. His information came from Sale's *Koran* and 'Preliminary Discourse', and D'Herbelot's *Biliotheque Orientale* (1776),⁴¹ as well as *Gebir*. Southey describes Shedad's palace as:

Fabric so vast, so lavishly enriched,
For Idol, or for Tyrant, never yet
Raised the slave race of men
(*Thal*, I, p. 8)

The palace is an artificially fabricated edifice that symbolises secular power and challenges God's authority. Even the trees in the garden are a product of 'art' rather than God's nature:

Tall as the Cedar of the mountain, here
Rose the gold branches, hung with emerald leaves,
Blossomed with pearls, and rich with ruby fruit,
(I, p. 43)

Southey's notes incorporate the comments of Orientalist authorities, providing a discussion of Eastern arts, methods of building, ornamentation and literature. While Southey's hyperbolic description builds a magnificent palace in his poem, he comments drily in his notes, 'I have ornamented his palace less profusely than the

oriental writers who describe it' (I, p. 44), suggesting that his own description is governed by Western reserve and self-restraint, and that he has preserved his text from the extravagant flourishes of Orientalists. While indulging in such 'ornamentation' himself, in his poem, he can qualify it by referring to a yet more extreme example. Southey destabilises further these 'excessive' descriptions of the palace, with the Western cynicism of D'Herbelot's pronouncement that, 'A waste of ornament and labour characterises all the works of the Orientalists' (I, p. 9). The lavish descriptions of the building are as much a 'waste' as the 'labour' expended on building it. This moralising, tendentious voice of the captious critic is one that Southey built into his footnotes. While he could purge his fiction of the excessive ostentation of Eastern influences if he chose, his scholarly desire to include footnotes (exemplifying these faults) undermined his intention and therefore could not stand without comment. This is the reason for the dichotomy in his text between the poem and the footnotes. His fiction retains those aspects of the culture he admired, while his notes (over which, as direct quotations he has little control) had to be moderated by the voice of Western probity. However Southey further complicated this position by his comments in the 'Preface' to *Thalaba*, where he speaks of the form of his poem as suiting the content because it is 'the *Arabesque* ornament of an Arabian tale' (I, p. vii). It is precisely because such ornamentation was attractive and may have tempted him into indulgence, that the abstemious Southey felt he needed to suppress that element in his text.

4.5 'A God among Mankind'

Another reason why Southey undermines his splendid palace is in order to provide a space in which to discuss forms of Oriental tyranny. As Zeinab and Thalaba are wandering through the palace gardens they come across a young man sleeping. He

awakes, surprised that Zeinab has been able to see the palace through the 'shadow of concealment' that has kept it hidden 'so many an age,/From eye of mortal man' (*Thal*, I, p. 13). Aswad, the youth, divines that they have been guided there by heaven, so that he can divulge a warning tale to them, regarding the fate of the inhabitants of the 'Paradise of Irem' (I, p. 15). He tells his story of how the Adites worshipped idols rather than God and held his prophet's warnings in contempt. Despite a three-year drought, which still failed to convince the Adites to turn to God, they built Shedad's 'kingly pile sublime' (I, p. 22) as a symbol of his 'magnificence and power' (I, 46) and worshipped him as 'a God among mankind' (I, p. 51). A black cloud appeared but instead of bringing rain it brought 'the Icy Wind of Death' (I, p. 55) to all the people except Aswad himself who was saved because of an act of kindness to a camel. The story's obvious moral speaks for itself. Aswad has subsequently been preserved from death in the palace, even though now that is what he most desires, but at the end of the first book Azrael 'the Death-Angel' comes to 'release' both him and Zeinab from their sorrows (I, pp. 60-1).

The tale of Irem that Southey digressed to include here is important because it reveals Western cultural influences, rather than any investment in Arabic lore or belief systems. Southey's early Jacobin politics, which opposed royal despotism in all its forms and which he still embraced in the form of quiescent republicanism, are conspicuously displayed here, in the recognisable Western motif of the Oriental despot. The stereotypical figure of a tyrannical Eastern ruler who subdues his citizens for his own ends is repeatedly displayed throughout *Thalaba*. This construction could be used either to criticise Britain's monarchical rule, or it could be used to highlight the benefits of British democratic government, in comparison to Oriental models, by using the 'other' to consolidate oneself. Southey's own position is ambivalent – either

response to Oriental tyranny could have been equally valid at a time when he was less sure of his convictions, and reflects his own divided position with regard to British politics.

In *Thalaba*, Shedad's palace is a symbol of human vanity (exemplifying the same principle as the 'colossal wreck' of 'Ozymandias' (1818) in Shelley's poem⁴²) with its 'waste of ornament and labour', and those who built it no longer have access to the luxury and power it stands for. However there is a new twist to Southey's opinions on despotism here. He despises the slavish race of Adites as much as he does their ruler and blames them for allowing the existence of Shedad to dominate their lives and religious beliefs, by placing him on the 'pedestal of power' (*Thal*, I, p. 44). Sharafuddin identifies this as a specifically Islamic idea, originating in the Koran, which explicitly criticises both the tyrant and those who submit to tyranny.⁴³ While this idea might have been abhorrent to Southey when he was writing *Wat Tyler*, he includes it here because it is a further indication of Oriental passivity, even indolence – the negative side of 'resignation', that Eastern 'vice' that cannot distinguish between subjection to the will of God, or evil despotism – an invidious form of Locke's social contract.

4.6 Magic and miracles

At the end of the first book, *Thalaba*'s desire for retributive justice against his father's assassin is sanctioned by Azrael, as a divinely ordained mission to find and destroy the murderer:

To work the mightiest enterprize
That mortal man hath wrought.
Live! and remember Destiny
Hath marked thee from mankind!
(*Thal*, I, pp. 62-3)

Thalaba's task becomes a combination of the Islamic jihad – in the second sense of the word, meaning 'the personal struggle of the individual believer against evil and persecution'⁴⁴ – and the quest of the Western Christian tradition. This is signpointed by Southey's choice of the word 'romance' for his text, implying the influences of Malory's *Le Morte d'Arthur* (1485) – and his telling of the quest of the Holy Grail – and Spenser's *The Faerie Queene* (1590 and 1596), one of Southey's favourite texts. Southey prefaced the first book of *Thalaba* in editions after 1801 with a quotation from *The Faerie Queene* which reiterates the idea of justified vengeance, highlighting it as a Christian motif as well as an Islamic one.⁴⁵

The form this quest will take is against the forces of superstition and magic, which protect the sorcerers that murdered Thalaba's family. The second book of *Thalaba* plunges the reader into the underground world of the 'Domdaniel caverns/Under the Roots of the Ocean' (*Thal*, I, p. 67). A scene of Gothic horror depicts the 'Domdanielites', grouped around their 'Teraph' – a severed baby's head on a plate – which gives them the power of divination (I, p. 69). Southey was fascinated by the occult, demonology and superstitious belief, both within his own culture and other societies. Such practices were a common theme of his domestic poetry of this period – particularly his ballads, for instance 'Bishop Bruno', 'Lord William', 'Donica', 'Rudiger' and 'St. Patrick's Purgatory', the last three in particular having elements in them also found in *Thalaba* – as well as featuring in his foreign epics.⁴⁶ The Domdanielites discover through their magic processes that one of their number, Okba, has failed to kill all of Hodeirah's family, one of whom it has been predicted will kill them, and is termed 'the Destroyer'. The sorcerers learn that he was saved by 'a cloud unpierceable', sent by God. Khawla, a witch, recognises that God's power is stronger than their own:

Ye can shatter the dwellings of man,
Ye can open the womb of the rock,
Ye can shake the foundations of earth,
But not the Word of God:
But not one letter can ye change
Of what his Will hath written!
(*Thal*, I, p. 83)

The 'Domdanielites' power is manifestly great, as the first three repeated lines emphasize. But their power is nevertheless limited by God. The sorcerers can physically change the material shape of God's creation, but they have no control over his 'Word' or his 'Will', which govern destiny and supply his followers with spiritual strength. Belief in destiny (the Islamic 'kismet') manifests itself as a potent force in *Thalaba*, against which the sorcerers' powers are ineffectual.

One of the sorcerers, Abdaldar, is sent out with a magic ring that will detect 'the hated boy' (*Thal*, I, p. 84), who is destined to overpower them, but whose identity is unknown. After much searching Abdaldar finds a family of Bedouins in the desert, who according to custom, feed the travel-weary stranger. He discovers 'the Destroyer' there and while the family are 'Prostrate in prayer' attempts to kill him (I, pp. 83, 99). A 'Simoom' or 'Blast of the Desert' as it is phrased, passes over 'the pious family' but kills Abdaldar (I, pp. 99-100). Southey does not need to conjure up magical forces with which to dispel evil in his fiction, instead he employs natural phenomena as weapons of God. The descriptions he uses from his sources are miraculous enough in their effects, to a less knowledgeable readership. Southey uses extracts from the Comte de Volney's *Travels Through Syria and Egypt* (1788) and Carsten Niebuhr's *Description de l'Arabie* (1774, English translation, 1792), which describe vividly the impact of this hot desert wind. For instance Niebuhr says 'The effects of the Simoom are instant suffocation to every living creature that happens to be within the sphere of its activity, and immediate putrefaction of the carcasses of the

dead'.⁴⁷ Volney gives the same details adding that by the wind's 'extreme dryness it withers and strips all the plants'.⁴⁸ Southey uses the natural forces of this exotic environment to replicate miracles of biblical proportions. For his reader the Orient is a land where magic and miracles are founded in facts, to which educated scientific Western observers bear witness. Despite the incredibility of these events, the reader can be reassured that they are not just the accounts of superstitious Easterners, because they are verified by European travellers.

Southey uses other 'natural' events at various times to direct his hero's travels. In the desert the Bedouin family are overtaken by a 'cloud/Of Locusts'. One of them, falling from the sky, carries a message written in 'Nature's own language' (*Thal*, I, p. 168), telling Thalaba to depart from his adopted family when the sun is eclipsed from the sky. This episode occurs again as a plausible natural event that Southey incorporates in his plot as an act of God. In the manuscript of *Thalaba*, Southey has crossed out a later passage that he also introduced to surmount the problems of directing Thalaba in his quest. In this section Thalaba was to find a seashell with lines written on instructing him to go to Babylon, but this was supplanted by a vision of his mother that guides him.⁴⁹ Southey says in his commonplace book 'The shell incident must be altered. I wished to make it of the same class of miracles, of natural agents supernaturally acting, as the locust. But it is flat and very bad'.⁵⁰ Southey's design is to show God's acts as 'natural', rather than artificial and magical like those of the sorcerers. This is because God's power has to be shown as legitimate and plausible to his readers. While there are no bounds to Southey's construction of magic and evil, he is aware of the responsibility that representations of God entail.

Southey often incorporates Western superstitious practices in his notes, thereby suggesting that these local customs are universally adopted throughout the

world. As he attempts to find a common truth in the world's religions so he tries to find a link between their superstitions. The problem is that Southey relies on superstition for narrative interest, asking his reader to suspend disbelief, only then to condemn it. He justifies the incorporation of so much material as relevant because, 'No nation in the world is so much given to superstition as the Arabs, or even as the Mahometans in general' (*Thal*, I, p. 308). The fact that he presents his Islamic material in the same way – as a source of interest which he then criticises – suggests that he saw parallels between them. Perhaps Southey intends to point out that for a Western commentator it is difficult to assess where faith ends and 'superstition' begins. Certainly he seems to incorporate both in his text without always making a distinction between the two.

4.7 Bedouin Arabs

In the later edition of *Thalaba* published in Southey's *Poetical Works*, the third book of his poem has as a motto a quotation from the 'The Poem of Tarafa' from *The Moallakat, or Seven Arabian Poems Which were suspended on the Temple at Mecca* (1782) (*PW*, IV, p. 79). These poems were translated from Arabic and published by William Jones, known as 'Persian Jones' at this stage in his life, for his interest in Arabic language and literature.⁵¹ Jones attempted to raise the prestige of this literature in the West by publishing translations, and by drawing attention to the uniquely graceful imagery and language of the poetry – which he claimed, in his *Essay on the Poetry of the Eastern Nations* (1772), was due to inspiration provided by the 'sublime' and 'beautiful' 'natural objects, with which the *Arabs* are perpetually conversant'.⁵² Southey was familiar with Jones's translation of the Mu'allaqat, copying several verses into his commonplace book and making reference to the poems in his notes to *Thalaba*.⁵³ The names of some of the characters in *Thalaba* are

likely to have come from the Mu'allaqat – for instance Southey's heroine, Oneiza, is probably based on a young girl named Onaiza who figures in 'The Poem of Amriolkais'. Khaula, the mistress of Tarafa in 'The Poem of Tarafa', could also have been the source of the witch Khawla's name.⁵⁴ Michael Franklin, editor of a volume of Jones's works, says of the Mu'allaqat:

These poems, according to legend, were transcribed in gold upon Egyptian linen and hung from the Kaaba at Mecca. They are, nonetheless, pre-Moslem and decidedly hedonistic, mingling as they do the lyrical and the sensual with heroic vaunting. In the Mu'allaqat Hellenistic tradition is fully assimilated to a specifically Bedouin mentality, and these poems represent the supreme art of the herding and hunting nomad. This outburst of poetry in its unexpected confidence and maturity seemed to confirm Jones's contention that the pastoral genre was more alive in the Yemen than in Europe. Despite the difficulty of these poems, Jones was fascinated by their wild beauty, their vigorous and precise imagery, and felt that they should be introduced to a modern European audience.⁵⁵

Southey admired these poems for the same reasons that Jones did, because they were expressive of what he perceived to be the simple, harsh but also rewarding lives of the Bedouin tribes of the Middle East.

Southey's interest in the lives of the Bedouins guided his reading of Orientalist texts and provided him with material to draw on for the next stage of Thalaba's adventures. The Bedouin family – introduced to the reader in the second book – are named as Thalaba, Oneiza and Moath, the latter of which, Thalaba refers to as 'my father' (*Thal*, I, p. 108). As the family prepare to bury the wizard (Abdaldar), Thalaba finds his ring, and further evidence of its alien power is perceived by the writing on it being 'not written as the Koran is' (I, p. 108). Moath identifies the ring as belonging to those who inhabit the 'Domdaniel caverns' (I, p. 110). Abdaldar is buried but in the morning the grave is discovered, exposed and empty, his body repelled by the earth. The family moves away from the 'tainted' place but the following night Thalaba is

visited by a demon who attempts to take the ring (I, p. 122). The demon reveals that the sorcerer, Okba, of the Domdaniel caverns is the murderer of Thalaba's family. On Thalaba's command the demon brings him his dead father's bow and arrows. Thalaba from this date lives a simple Bedouin life with his new family and grows to manhood becoming proficient with the bow and arrow (as was Mohammed, according to Islamic belief).

The reader learns that Moath had taken the boy in when he found him wandering in the desert after his mother's death and that he has become a member of their family. Moath's own daughter, Oneiza, 'called him brother' and Thalaba 'More fondly than a brother, loved the maid/The loveliest of Arabian maidens she' (*Thal*, I, 130). Southey says of Thalaba's Bedouin life:

It was the wisdom and the will of Heaven
 That in a lonely tent had cast
 The lot of Thalaba.
 There might his soul develop best
 Its strengthening energies;
 There might he from the world
 Keep his heart pure and uncontaminate,
 Till at the written hour he should be found
 Fit servant of the Lord, without a spot.
(I, p. 130)

Southey's Bedouin family furnishes him with the image of the 'noble savage' (that repository figure that he sought in all cultures, as holder of the virtues he valued) to provide a suitable upbringing and life-style for his hero. Southey includes examples in his notes from Niebuhr's *Description de l'Arabie* and Volney's *Travels* that contribute towards a moral framework for Thalaba's development, and then builds on these remarks in his fiction. Volney particularly – who provides a long section on the customs and manners of the Bedouins – admires their life-style, describing it as simple, and austere, but rewarding. Volney respects the Bedouins for maintaining

their existence on a soil that is 'sterile and ungrateful'. Despite their harsh life he attributes to them 'manners' much more 'sociable and mild' than 'savages of America' due to their pastoral lifestyle as shepherds.⁵⁶ The sterility of their environment imbues them with a moral purity not found in civilized European countries 'they are no strangers to property; but it has none of that selfishness which the increase of the imaginary wants of luxury has given it among polished nations' and 'they are less exposed to temptations which might corrupt and debase them'.⁵⁷

Western commentators readily perceived the nomadic life-style of the Bedouins as one of independence and resistance to the corruption of political systems, particularly those of the Ottoman Empire. Tilar Mazzeo says that in the Romantic period the Bedouin Arabs were conceived to be:

sprung from the 'original stock' of Moses and his people, they represented the golden age of Eastern antiquity. In this respect, the Bedouins were viewed by Western travellers in much the same way as the native Greeks were imagined – as positive representations of Europe's own cultural origins in Asia.⁵⁸

These aspects impressed Southey and he promulgated them in *Thalaba*, contributing to a romanticised view of the Bedouins that has lasted into the twentieth century.

In Southey's notes to *Thalaba* he includes this passage from Volney's *Travels*:

We must not, therefore, when we speak of the Bedouins, affix to the words Prince and Lord, the ideas they usually convey; we should come nearer the truth by comparing them to substantial farmers in mountainous countries, whose simplicity they resemble in their dress as well as in their domestic life and manners. A Shaik, who has the command of five hundred horse, does not disdain to saddle and bridle his own, nor to give him his barley and chopped straw.⁵⁹

Compared to the Oriental potentate, Shedad – as well as other examples of despotism that Southey includes in *Thalaba* – the Bedouin 'Prince' is modest, pastoral,

egalitarian; a model ruler. In Volney's description, he is similar to those other inhabitants of a sublime landscape – which also exerts an edifying influence on moral character – mountain farmers. This passage resonates with the idea of the Swiss model of pastoral republican virtue that is a motif of several eighteenth-century European texts. For instance Wordsworth's *Descriptive Sketches Taken During A Pedestrian Tour Among The Alps* (1793) depicts the 'pastoral Swiss' as 'Nature's child', a figure of 'native dignity' who will fight for 'Freedom' and is in close 'communion' with God (WPW, I, pp. 70-74, ll. 450-551). While this comparison may seem at odds with the desert life that Volney is describing, it should be remembered that Volney, like Southey a relativist, looked at social models in various cultures. He also shared a similar political pedigree to Southey's. A philosophe who went on to write the *Ruins of Empire* (1791, English translation, 1795) – a survey of ancient and modern civilizations – as a salutary warning of the dangers to civilization of man's ignorance and greed, Volney looked to nature and reason (from which he believed equality and justice originated) to provide a solution. Again like Southey, Volney's comments were intended for a European readership who would find improvement in having such comparisons made between their own society and other cultures. Southey also includes Volney's point that the Bedouin people live their lives as Homer had described them and as can be found in 'Genesis'. This gives the Bedouins a historical line that joins them to recognisable Christian and classical traditions for Southey's Western readers. It also relates to the work of Orientalists, and particularly – through Jones's scholarly investigation of Oriental languages, and his suggestion that the European, classical and Sanskrit languages came from an ancient Persian language – the idea that Greek and Roman civilization and even the Christian religion itself had Oriental origins.⁶⁰

Thalaba's Bedouin family live a simple pastoral life, dependent on their environment and therefore close to nature, after the example of the venerable and pious Moath of whom 'No hoarded gold disquieted his dreams' (*Thal*, I, p. 139). By choosing the Bedouins to focus on, and presenting their existence as lonely and isolated, Southey empties the Middle East of nearly all other forms of population, so that they become the central focus of his fiction, apart from the stereotypically villainous sorcerers. This has important consequences on his text as he portrays a manichean Orient divided absolutely between 'good' Bedouins and 'evil' sorcerers, potentates (and those they rule over), apart from the odd figure who strays into the text for exigencies of the plot. Large centres of population (as will be shown) feature as examples of the 'degraded' state of Islam or as ruined, empty cities.

Why Southey concentrated on his heroic Bedouins can be understood in John Barrell's terms of reference to 'this/that/ and the other' or Spivak's distinction, which Barrell draws on, of a 'self-consolidating other' and an 'absolute other', where the subject/writer constructs him/herself in terms of what is similar to him/her and what is different.⁶¹ That which is more nearly the same is identified with, whereas that which is unacceptably different is pushed further away. In Southey's text as in other Western constructions of Asia:

There is a 'this', and there is a something hostile to it, something which lies, almost invariably, to the east; but there is an East beyond that East, where something lurks which is equally threatening to both, and which enables or obliges them to reconcile their differences.⁶²

Therefore Southey endows his Bedouins with those qualities he admired, as a 'self-consolidating other', whereas his 'absolute other' is depicted at various times (as in other representations of 'Orientals') as passive, tyrannical, licentious and duplicitous. Southey had of course recently seen British monarchs in these terms, and he was

detaching himself from his radical youth, yet still employing the language of radicalism in order to posit a further, distant and therefore less dangerous other.

The division between a 'self-consolidating other' and an 'absolute other' also occurs in one of Southey's letters where he questions 'To what is the great superiority of Europeans over Orientalists attributable and the stationariness or even retrogression of the Orientalists?' (*NL*, I, p. 216). Southey's letter first focuses on 'Persia', in order to consider whether Oriental 'retrogression' is attributable to climate or religion. In the end he opts for polygamy as the cause of it:

Perhaps Polygamy is the radical evil. The degradation of females in consequence of it is obvious, and its perpetual excitement is probably the chief cause of the voluptuousness attributed to climate, hence premature debility, hence a brutalized nature, hence habits of domestic despotism, and the inference that what is best in a family, is best in a state.

In Arabia women are not slaves, and the Arabs are mostly monogamous. Here then are a people under a burning climate, unenslaved, by no means remarkable for voluptuousness, and among whom I have never heard of the crime, elsewhere universal in the East, which is probably another scion from the same root. (*NL*, I, p. 216)

Southey therefore makes a distinction between the moderate and monogamous Arabs, to which his Bedouin family belong and the 'voluptuousness' (of which he implies sodomy is a result) and 'brutalized nature' of the 'Persians'. In order to make sense of why the West is superior Southey divides his subject up into two distinct groups, one that is a model more nearly 'like' his own society and therefore presumably redeemable (but still 'other'), and one that is very different and because of its sexual practices is an 'absolute other', and therefore justifiably inferior.

4.8 'I must build a Saracenic mosque'

Southey's method of 'othering' is also applied to the way in which religious faith is presented in *Thalaba*. This is a more central theme in *Thalaba* than in any of

Southey's other poems and so it is an important text for assessing his beliefs. Southey describes the Bedouin family at prayer:

Before their tent the mat is spread;
The Old Man's Solemn voice
Intones the holy Book.
What if beneath no lamp-illuminated dome,
Its marble walls bedeck'd with flourish'd truth,
Azure and gold adornment? sinks the word
With deeper influence from the Imam's voice,
Where in the day of congregation, crowds
Perform the duty-task?
Their Father is their Priest,
The Stars of Heaven their point of prayer,
And the blue Firmament
The glorious Temple, where they feel
The present Deity.
(*Thal*, I, pp. 143-7)

This passage makes a direct contrast between the religious faith of the multitude of Islamic worshippers – the ‘crowds’ who ‘Perform the duty-task’ confined within the ‘marble walls’ of the ‘dome’ or mosque, with its ‘Azure and gold adornment’ – and the family’s simple act of prayer. Certain images in the description of conventional Islamic worship ring oddly. For instance the ‘Imam’s voice’ seeks to ‘influence’ the congregation – the word influence often has negative associations, in that one who influences can be perceived as persuading against the will of another. The idea of ‘flourish’d truth’ is also strange. It could mean that ‘truth’ thrives there, but it actually relates to the ornamentation of the walls of the mosque, which as we know Southey (and D’Herbelot) considered to be a ‘waste’. In the mosque the ‘truth’ adorning the walls is embellished (or exaggerated) not just the writing. Lastly this religious service is a ‘duty-task’ not offered freely in the way that the Bedouin family offer prayers under the ‘blue Firmament’, their ‘glorious Temple’. Consequently the latter ‘feel/The present Deity’, unlike the ‘crowds’ who only pay lip-service.

Moath, the 'Old Man' is a patriarchal figure – connected by a historical line to a pure source of faith – contrasting with the priestly figure of the 'Imam'. The centre of religious life for the family is not the Muslim mosque but the natural world around them. Southey's presentation of Islam in this passage has much to do with his belief that modern Islamic belief 'has been miserably perverted' (*SL*, I, p. 78). By providing evidence of Islamic public worship in his footnotes, but valuing a less orthodox private faith in his text, Southey has it both ways. In relying on the nomadic Bedouins for his construction of Arab life he can avoid dealing with the Muslim religion of the masses, which is dominated by the mosque. To Southey all structures of religious hierarchy were anathema; he abhorred Roman Catholicism 'because of its bloody and brutalising spirit' (*SL*, I, p. 106), but also because of what he saw as the tyranny of their system of priesthood – which he referred to as 'popery' – over its faithful. In a letter written in the same year *Thalaba* was published he said:

I cannot argue against toleration, yet is popery in its nature so very damnable and destructive a system, that I could not give a vote for its sufferance in England. I could no more permit the existence of a monastic establishment, than the human sacrifices of Mexican idolatry. (*SL*, I, pp. 145-6)

This was a very extreme reaction, and one that he felt bound to repeat in *Madoc* where he made many such comparisons between 'Mexican idolatry' and Catholicism. The relevance of this to the argument here is that Southey also equated aspects of Islamic practices to Catholicism, for instance the telling of beads,⁶³ and belief in the torments of the wicked after death by angels, of which he says 'Monkish ingenuity has invented something not unlike this Mohammedan article of faith' (*PW*, IV, p. 342).⁶⁴ In Southey's much later discussion of the *Travels of Ali Bey* (1816), where he takes Ali Bey – a Spaniard who put on the 'disguise' of a 'Mohammedan' in order to travel freely through the Middle East – to task for stating that Islam is free of 'priests', Southey makes this link much more explicit:

What then are the scheiks, the khatibs, and the imams? And what were the caliphs? The Ulemahs also are a religious body, for the civil and religious professions are united in Mahommedan countries, and the very title of Mufti, or *Sheikh Islam*, as he is also called, implies his religious character...But had he seen and reported things as they are, he would have acknowledged that Islam has been not less corrupted with monkery, and a monstrous apparatus of mythological fable, than the Christianity of Spain.⁶⁵

It would seem that the association Southey made between Islam, Catholicism and even 'Mexican idolatry' was their common reliance on a structure of belief that enabled the figure of the 'priest' to dominate the populace, holding them in thrall with 'a monstrous apparatus of mythological fable'. This links to Southey's abhorrence of tyranny of any kind, whether secular or religious, Oriental or Occidental.

In the 1790s Southey was searching for religious truth in many of the different faiths and defined his own beliefs by what he disliked in other religions. He was a lapsed Anglican non-conformist – who as Simmons suggests was opposed to the 'institution' rather than the doctrines of the established church.⁶⁶ Southey is often considered to be a Socinian at this stage but by 1809 he had certainly rejected Socinianism for 'its union with the degrading and deadening philosophy of materialism'.⁶⁷ And as Daniel E. White notes:

Like Coleridge, Southey in the 1790s stood in a peculiar relation to Dissent; heterodox in religion and radical in his politics, he nonetheless remained unassociated with any denomination and, indeed, opposed to the very idea of sects, to sectarianism.⁶⁸

As time went on Southey became more attracted to the Quaker faith because of its absence of dogma, although he did not accept some of their religious practices, and could never have committed himself fully to their beliefs.⁶⁹ However his comment on the religion he depicts in *Thalaba* is quite revealing – 'Simplicity would be out of character: I must build a Saracenic mosque, not a Quaker meeting house'.⁷⁰ Southey recognised that his text was going awry – 'simplicity' he felt was not an Islamic

quality (although that was what attracted him to the *Koran*) – and he is representing the precepts of Quakerism, not Islam, in his portrayal. Southey presents the religion of the Bedouins as a private and personal relationship with God that has no intercessors or intermediaries between individuals and their faith – that part of Quakerism that he was particularly drawn to. This private form of worship, guided by intuitive faith, has more to do with his own values, drawn from the syncretization of various religions, and much less to do with the Islamic religion, a system that governs the state – and its social, political, administrative and economic affairs – as well as spiritual belief.

In Southey's 'Preface' to the *Curse of Kehama*, published in his collection of *Poetical Works* (1837-8), Southey voices a contemporary criticism of *Thalaba*:

Mr. Wilberforce thought I had conveyed in it a very false impression of that religion, and that the moral sublimity which he admired in it was owing to this flattering misrepresentation. (*PW*, VIII, p. xiv)

For this well-known (evangelical) reader then, the aspects of the poem that he admires are those which do not represent the Islamic faith accurately. A later reader, the 'Tractarian' John Henry Newman, in 1850 (after he had converted to Roman Catholicism) also described *Thalaba* as 'morally sublime'.⁷¹ Southey was obviously in harmony with his readers, who preferred the 'moral sublimity' he offered, rather than a realistic account of Islam. Southey goes on to defend his representation:

But *Thalaba the Destroyer* was professedly an Arabian Tale. The design required that I should bring into view the best features of that system of belief and worship which had been developed under the Covenant with Ishmael, placing in the most favourable light the morality of the *Koran*, and what the least corrupted of the Mohammedans retain of the patriarchal faith. It would have been altogether incongruous to have touched upon the abominations engrafted upon it; first by the false Prophet himself, who appears to have been far more remarkable for audacious profligacy than for any intellectual endowments, and afterwards by the spirit of Oriental despotism which accompanied Mahomedanism wherever it was established. (*PW*, VIII, p. xiv)

Southey's reference to the 'Covenant with Ishmael' is the belief (from evidence in Genesis) that the twelve original Arabian tribes came from Ishmael, the son of the patriarch Abraham, whereas the Christian religion originates through the line of Abraham's other son, Isaac. This passage confirms that what Southey values in Islam are the ancient origins of that religion rather than the modern 'abominations engrafted upon it' by Mohammed. His portrayal of Islam in *Thalaba* therefore reflects that perspective and leads to the further dichotomy in his text between his fictional construction of the 'best features' of Islam – which even if accurate are frozen in an historical stasis – and evidence of its modern practices, which he feels obliged nevertheless to detail in his notes.

4.9 An 'earthly Eden'

As time passes in the desert and Thalaba and Oneiza grow to maturity, Southey's plot develops the relationship between the two into one of adult love, rather than familial affection. This suits his moral tale because as Thalaba grows up faithful, pious and courageous under the benign influence of Moath, Oneiza also grows up worthy to be his bride. In the evenings while Thalaba recites poetry, Oneiza watches him with 'an ardent gaze' (*Thal*, I, p. 162). The footnote to this passage relates to a quotation from William Jones's *Essay on the Poetry of the Eastern Nations* as well as a further comment from Volney on the Bedouin tradition of story-telling. Volney describes the usual pattern of a Bedouin love-story that depicts 'the adventures of some young Shaik and female Bedouin'.⁷² The male 'Shaik' pursues his female prize and the story inevitably ends, after the couple have dealt with various obstacles (including 'the invasions of the enemy' and 'the captivity of the two lovers'), with their being united

in the 'paternal tent'.⁷³ These romances rely on a convention that 'minutely describes the lovely fair, extols her black eyes, as large and soft as those of the gazelle...he forgets not ...her nails, tinged with the golden coloured henna, nor her breasts, resembling two pomegranates, nor her words, sweet as honey', using metaphors from the natural world.⁷⁴ There are many aspects of this pattern in Jones's translation of the Mu'allakhat – the poems often relating a seduction process depicted through sensual imagery – and in what he relates of Arabic poetry in his *Essay on the Poetry of the Eastern Nations*.

Southey was well aware of these models therefore and employed aspects of them in his own 'romance', while avoiding the sensuality of the Mu'allakhat, and the sexual charge of the sheikh's pursuit of his female quarry. But Southey's poem is innovative in providing a distinct corrective strand to Western Orientalism – even if that aspect of it was largely ignored by Byron and Thomas Moore in their own Oriental productions. Whereas the Onaiza of 'The Poem of Amriolkais' is shown to be modest but nevertheless responsive to the seduction of her suitor:

When the suckling behind her cried, she turned round to him with half her body; but half of it, pressed beneath my embrace, was not turned from me.⁷⁵

Thalaba and Oneiza in Southey's poem are chaste and virtuous, as might be expected, and Southey's story is constructed along European terms of a quest, in which love is deferred until Thalaba has reached his goal. Thalaba has to deserve Oneiza's love, who will only become his black-eyed houri when his mission is complete and they are in paradise together – a spiritual rather than a sexual fulfilment.

After falling in love with Oneiza therefore, romantic fulfilment for Thalaba is postponed by his being directed into the desert by natural agents of God (the locust and the eclipse of the sun) in order to continue his mission alone. However later on in

the poem, the faith of Thalaba (and Oneiza) is tested by their being reunited in a paradisaical garden. As Thalaba's quest continues over mountainous terrain, he discovers a glen containing a gate set in rock. On the other side he emerges into a garden containing 'palaces and groves', 'rich pavilions' and 'the joys of Paradise' (*Thal*, II, pp. 22-3), vividly described by Southey. This 'earthly Eden' (II, p. 21) is based on an account of the garden of Aloadin from Samuel Purchas's *Purchas His Pilgrimage* (1613), extracted as a footnote to the text:

In the N.E. parts of Persia there was an old man named Aloadin, a Mahometan, which had inclosed a goodly valley, situate between two hilles, and furnished it with all variety which Nature and Art could yield, as fruits, pictures, rilles of milk, wine, honey, water, pallaces, and beautifull damosells, richly attired and called it Paradise. (II, p. 69)

Another influence is John Mandeville's description of such a garden in his *Travels* (which first appeared in the fourteenth century). The fact that Southey adopted the story of this 'undaunted liar', and the account of the unreliable Purchas, shows that veracity was not important to him (II, pp. 73-7). He says 'The story is told by many writers, but with such difference of time and place, as wholly to invalidate its truth, even were the circumstances more probable' (II, p. 70). Southey recognises that such constructions are probably works of fantasy, promoted in Western literature because they conform to prescribed pre-conceptions of Oriental luxury and magnificence. This trope certainly gives Southey an excuse to describe a scene of exotic opulence that appeals to all the senses, as Thalaba tired and hungry finds a 'banquet room':

Here cased in ice, the apricot,
A topaz, crystal-set:
Here on a plate of snow
The sunny orange rests,
And still the aloes and the sandal-wood
From golden censers o'er the banquet room
Diffuse their dying sweets.
Anon a troop of females formed the dance

faith but it is also a way of Southey promoting his own moral values through the example of Thalaba rejecting sexual temptation for the monogamous love of Oneiza.

However there are further tests for Thalaba to go through. He runs from the 'tents of revelry' into 'forest solitude' away from 'unveiled' inveigling women to find one woman running, her 'veil all rent', from a 'ravisher' (*Thal*, II, p. 47). Thalaba kills the man with an arrow and discovers that he has saved 'His own Oneiza' who recounts the story of her abduction from her father's tent (II, p. 47). The two attempt to escape from the garden but the iron gates are impassable, as are the precipitous mountains on all sides. Thalaba and Oneiza then follow a river through the base of a mountain to make their escape. Though Southey does not refer to Samuel Johnson here, this episode is very similar to the way in which Rasselas attempts to escape from another artificial 'Oriental' paradise of the 'Happy Valley' in *The History of Rasselas* (1757).⁷⁸ However Thalaba and Oneiza are foiled in this plan too, and are forced to face their captor. Armed with club and bow respectively, they mingle with 'the blinded multitude' who 'Adored the Sorcerer' (whose creation this garden is) and supply him with assassins to do his will (II, p. 66). Thalaba kills him and Oneiza kills his protector, a 'monster Bird', at which 'the Paradise of Sin' is destroyed (II, p. 68). Thalaba and Oneiza are left alone and free to go from the vale. They encounter Aloadin's enemy, the 'Sultan of the Land' (II, p. 73) who rewards them for their actions against his foe, making a prince of Thalaba. Thalaba gives in to wordly ambition at this point, despite the examples of arrogant monarchical rule that have been paraded for his education, ranging from Shedad, to the powerful sorcerers, (Nimrod), Aloadin and now this Sultan who also shares 'the proud eye of sovereignty' (II, p. 78). Thalaba also succumbs to his desire for domestic happiness with Oneiza, who he marries in the flush of his success, despite her warnings that his quest is not



Figure 5. 'The Garden of Aloadin', from William Hawkes Smith, *Essays in Design Illustrative of the Poem of Thalaba the Destroyer* (Birmingham, 1818).

yet accomplished. On their wedding night, Azrael, the angel of death comes to take Oneiza, before their love can be fulfilled. It could be argued that Southey's depiction of his hero succumbing to temptation provides a more rounded figure than many of his heroes. He is shown to be fallible here, rather than unrealistically virtuous throughout. However Thalaba is finally tempted, not by sexual love, but by a desire for monogamous, conjugal love with a sister/wife, therefore conforming to the moral message of Southey's poem.

Oneiza who is consistently a figure of virtue and piety, setting an example even to Thalaba in his wavering moments, comes back to haunt him after her death as a vampire. Southey was fascinated by the subject as his copious footnotes reveal. His poem 'Donica' (composed 1796) also deals with the subject of a young girl who has died but whose body is reanimated by the possession of a demon. Southey was familiar too with Matthew Lewis's Gothic construction *The Monk* (1796) in which a similar incident occurs.⁷⁹ Thalaba meets his adopted father, Moath, again at the tomb where Oneiza haunts him, but the virtuous old man recognises that she is not his daughter but a 'Fiend' (II, p. 103). He strikes her and she flees, to be replaced by Oneiza's true spirit who urges Thalaba on to complete his quest after which they will be united – not sexually, in the 'paternal' tent of Volney's Bedouin love stories, but 'in the Bowers of Paradise' (II, p. 106). Oneiza is therefore as well as the object of Thalaba's desire, a chaste reminder of his immortal soul.

Southey's notes to *Thalaba* refer to a strand of Oriental love poetry that contrasts with Jones's less reserved examples from Arabian literature, in Charles Fox's publication of *A Series of Poems, Containing the Complaints, Consolations and Delights of Achmed Ardebeili, A Persian Exile* (1797).⁸⁰ Ardebeili's poems, 'To

'Selima' for instance, are decorous and conventional (in terms of a Western readership) and written in a courtly, sentimental style:

O Angel of delight! Of thee possest,
Not Paradise should bribe me from my love,
Ev'n the fond hope that animates my breast
Speaks the pure raptures of the blest above.⁸¹

In this poetry, as in *Thalaba*, sexual love is contained and deferred, with the narrator equating the 'pure raptures' of romantic love with spiritual fulfilment. Ardebeili published his poetry in England for a British readership – as he was a refugee from the violent politics of 'Persia' – and so wrote in a way that would be acceptable to his audience. Fox's introduction to the poems provides his readers with an insight into Ardebeili's personal history:

The Persians had been long an indolent and voluptuous people...Even the early habitudes, or the cultivated and reflecting mind of Achmed, seem to have afforded no insuperable barriers against the seductive pomp and luxury of the court, the banquet and the harem. But there was an unthought of remedy in the hand of Providence against the prevailing influence and evil tendency of these.⁸²

This 'remedy' was Ardebeili's removal from the 'seductive pomp and luxury' of the Orient to Britain. Fox does all he can to divorce the British perception of Ardebeili from conventional attitudes to Muslims and their beliefs. He is also keen to present his poetry as distinct from the free licence of much Oriental poetry – so he states that Ardebeili's poems 'contain more than the wild sportings of oriental fancy'.⁸³

Ardebeili's 'Selima' is presented within the context of British sentimental poetry as a chaste, unattainable, ideal of perfection. Ardebeile adopts the moral values of his new homeland, placing the woman he loves on a pedestal, where she curbs his desire while stimulating it. Ardebeili learnt from the same poetic school as Southey to produce a

corrective form of Oriental poetry that restrains sexual licence rather than giving it free rein, and so provided a fitting example for Southey's *Thalaba*.

In *Thalaba* any hint of sexuality is similarly constrained and the fulfilment of Thalaba's and Oneiza's love manifests itself as an ethereal, heavenly reward. Southey uses the attractive theme of the Bedouin love story – in which a young sheik undergoes trials that test his strength, in order to be rewarded by the object of his love – but in his rendition of the story the ending provides a moral conclusion in heaven rather than a Bedouin tent. Southey therefore imposes his own moral code on the genre of Oriental poetry. While Beckford, Moore and Byron used this genre to provide an imaginative area – away from the constraints of domestic poetic settings – in which to explore sexual love, Southey domesticated Oriental poetry by imposing a 'British' moral code (of sensibility) on it.

4.10 'Thou too art fallen, Bagdad!'

Thalaba travels through the desert alone during much of the poem, and Southey places much emphasis on 'the silence and the solitude' of Thalaba's situation (*Thal*, I, p. 191). Thus, as I have argued in his depiction of the Bedouins, Southey provides a depopulated 'moral' landscape for his hero. While this might have been due to problems Southey had in portraying Arabian society, it suited his representation of a spiritual mission (as it would Shelley in 'Alastor'). The isolation of the hero's situation emphasises the spiritual purity of his quest, uncontaminated by contact with other humans, and untainted by worldly concerns such as human love. Given Southey's own ambitions for his poetry to be morally useful – and 'strengthen those feelings & excite those reflections in others, from whence virtue must spring' (*RSJM*, p. 27) – and his adoption of the Western critical trope of the 'noble savage', it would

not be implausible to see him commenting on his own society in *Thalaba*. But if *Thalaba* can be considered as a social and moral allegory of Southey's own culture, as much of Southey's poetry to this date was (for instance *Wat Tyler* and *Joan of Arc*) why does Southey depopulate his landscape in this way? We can see parallels in Southey's own earlier position, on the fringes of society himself, a radical hero uncompromisingly pitted against 'tyranny', though isolated from support. Perhaps also as Southey's political perspective was changing, it was harder to find a social model that complemented his vision of Britain. After 1803 (and admittedly this had much to do with his daughter, Margaret, dying) Southey could be said to have withdrawn from society, to a life of quiet literary retirement, rather than pursuing a career in either of the two cities he was familiar with, Bristol and London.

But in fact the absence of society in the desert is contrasted with the immoral example of large centres of population that Southey also provides in *Thalaba*. Southey continually makes a contrast between the private, moral lives of desert dwellers and large 'degraded' centres of population, where the inhabitants are shown as degenerate, invidious, worshippers of superstition and tyranny. *Thalaba*'s travels eventually take him to 'Bagdad'. Because *Thalaba* is set in the past (in the time of Harun-al-Rashid) the city is described as prosperous and attractive:

Its thousand dwellings o'er whose level roofs
Fair cupolas appeared, and high-domed mosques
And pointed minarets, and cypress groves
Every where scattered in unwithering green
(*Thal*, I, p. 261)

Southey constructs this vision of the Persian capital from various disparate accounts of Eastern cities, including Alexandria, because in the modern world, he laments:

Thou too art fallen, Bagdad! City of Peace
Thou too hast had thy day!
And loathsome Ignorance and brute Servitude
Pollute thy dwellings now,
(I, pp. 262-3)

The modern city is compared to the ancient one so that Southey can show how the Islamic religion has been perverted. In the same letter of July 1799 that Southey discusses his reactions to Sale's *Koran* (above), and written six months before the fifth book from which this passage comes had been completed,⁸⁴ Southey revealed his responses to modern Islam:

Bagdad and Cordova had their period of munificence and literature; all else in the history of the religion is brutal ignorance and ferocity. It is now a system of degradation and depopulation, whose overthrow is to be desired as one great step to general amelioration. (*SL*, I, p. 78)

The letter illumines Southey's representation of Baghdad in *Thalaba*. It gave him the opportunity to show that his story was set safely in the past at a time when the Islamic religion was not 'degraded', as since then 'all else in the history of the religion is brutal ignorance and ferocity'. Baghdad's degeneration is conflated with what Southey saw as the degeneration of Islam, motivating him to detach his ancient story from a modern 'system of degradation'. One hope remains for Baghdad:

So one day may the Crescent from thy Mosques
Be plucked by Wisdom, when the enlightened arm
Of Europe conquers to redeem the East.
(*Thal*, I, p. 267)

This relates to the same sentiments as Southey's letter (above) where he sees the 'overthrow' of that 'religion' or 'system' as something 'to be desired as one great step to general amelioration'. The image of 'the Crescent' being 'plucked' from the mosques by 'Wisdom' subscribes to this argument, as does the idea of an

'enlightened' conquering of the East by Europe. The term 'redeem' has been interpreted as a desire to reinvigorate the East to its past glory by Sharafuddin, but if this passage is read in the light of Southey's letter, it can be understood in the Christian sense of redemption, as deliverance from sin.⁸⁵ Southey argues for a justified 'enlightened' form of Western imperialism that is very different from the aggressive political machinations of the Oriental despots he portrays.

4.11 Sorcerers and Sultans

Thalaba often undergoes trials of temptation by the powerful sorcerers he encounters, who attempt to inveigle him into accepting the benefits of black magic. The poem is deliberately constructed so that faith confronts superstition and magic. As much as Southey's Bedouin characters delineate his moral values therefore, the sorcerers and sultans that he parades for his readers embody all those aspects of society that Southey opposes. They represent superstitious belief and the abuse of power, the two particular targets that Southey aims his invective at in much of his fiction – but in this instance the representation is complicated by its Oriental setting. In this section I will investigate what new pressures Southey puts on these familiar enemies of his domestic poetry by Orientalising them.

Much of the sorcerers' evil power is symbolised by the magical ring they have forged and which Thalaba possesses for much of the poem. He uses it at various points to protect himself, until he is brought to recognise that 'The talisman is faith' (*Thal*, I, p. 314), not a magic ring. At one point the 'dark Magician', Lobaba tries to reconcile Thalaba to the use of magic saying, 'nothing in itself is good or evil,/But only in its use' (I, p. 211), which cleverly repeats the argument that Thalaba has already used himself to justify keeping the ring:

In God's name, and the Prophet's! be its power
Good, let it serve the righteous; if for evil,
God, and my trust in Him, shall hallow it.
(I, pp. 116-7)

However Lobaba's metaphysical reasoning leaves God out of the equation. Thalaba realises that what may seem like free will to do good or evil has been removed by his submission to God's will – something that Lobaba cannot understand – and an important factor in Southey's Islamic tale.

Lobaba leads Thalaba astray in the desert where suffering from acute thirst after three days wandering, the travellers see a vision of a meadow:

Of England, when amid the growing grass
The blue-bell bends, the golden king-cup shines,
In the merry month of May!
(I, p. 227)

This is an example of how Southey intersperses the information from his Western authorities into his text without giving much thought to the consequences. This moment of 'short-lived joy' (I, p. 228) from James Bruce's *Travels to Discover the Source of the Nile* (1790) is out of place as a Bedouin mirage in a desert landscape. Inspired by Bruce's vision of 'green grass and yellow daisies' (I, p. 228), a vision of England that a Western traveller may have, Southey elides any difference of knowledge systems by overlaying his own (and his readers') Western consciousness and familiarity with English natural history onto his Middle Eastern characters. The plants that grow there in fact turn out to be not beneficent English ones but part of this fiercer climate – uneatable 'bitter leaves' from Oriental plants (I, p. 228). Again Southey has drawn on his source material to produce this mirage in his text. However this episode, with its example of visual deception, underlines the principle that Thalaba defends in his debate with Lobaba – 'good' and 'evil', do exist as separate

entities – despite Lobaba's attempt to trick Thalaba. The two may be superimposed on each other briefly, by an illusion, but faith endows Thalaba with true insight to perceive the difference. In this case 'good' resides in the benign, domestic familiarity of an English meadow, whereas 'evil' is a constant potential in an alien landscape, dominated by superstition and magic. The dualistic world of *Thalaba* is employed to promote Southey's colonial politics.

Lobaba tries to trick Thalaba into using the magical ring but he will not 'distrust the providence of God' (I, p. 241), even when a large red column of sand is seen in the distance moving quickly towards them. Again rather than imprecate God's works as magic, Southey uses a natural force that has the power necessary to work a miracle for his readers – 'Driven by the breath of God/A column of the Desert' kills Lobaba (I, p. 253). But as one source of wickedness is defeated, another rises up to depict the magnitude of evil that individual faith has to surmount. In the manuscript of *Thalaba*, Southey's hero encounters another temptation in the spirit of Nimrod. He argues that God is not in control of the world, but that the fight for supremacy between two powerful forces, Satan (or Eblis) and God is in the balance, reinforcing the poem's dualism but complicating Thalaba's deterministic belief that God's power will prevail. When challenged by Nimrod to detail 'the duties thy prophet has enjoined thee?', Thalaba says:

Fasting, prayer,
Ablutions; to acknowledge God but one,
Mohammed as his prophet. to abstain
From wine, to do no wrong & with the lot
That Allah hath assigned to be content.⁸⁶

All these recognisable elements of Islam have been pared down to the barest essentials for Western readers. In contrast to Southey's ascetic vision of the abstention

and resignation of 'Allah', Nimrod offers Thalaba the conventionally tempting 'joys, riches & rule'. Nimrod is portrayed by Southey as 'the first who made the multitude/Bow to the throne of power', setting the standards for secular tyranny.⁸⁷

Later revisions of *Thalaba*, made by Southey, avoid these explicit manifestos of Islamic belief, and references to the Koran, so that his text is less underpinned by what is perceived to be its tenets. For instance another passage in the manuscript is expunged towards the end of the poem, when Thalaba is in the Domdaniel caverns and explicitly uses the book of the Koran itself, as a 'buckler' against poisonous liquid exuding from the roof of the caverns.⁸⁸ In fact the largest change that Southey made to *Thalaba*, from manuscript to the last edition that he oversaw – his collection of *Poetical Works* in 1837-8 – was (apart from presentational emendations) in excising the overtly Islamic aspects of his text.

To reinforce the evil that Thalaba has to overcome, the ninth book describes the entrance of yet another despotic, cruel Sultan who controls his followers:

On either hand the thick-wedged crowd
Fall from the royal path.
Recumbent in the palanquin he casts
On the wide tumult of the waving throng
A proud and idle eye.
Now in his tent alighted, he receives
Homage and worship, the slave multitude
With shouts of blasphemy adore
Him, father of his people! Him their Lord!
Great King, all-wise, all-mighty, and all-good!
Whose smile was happiness, whose frown was death,
Their present Deity!
(*Thal*, II, p. 190)

Again the worshipping crowd are inculcated in the crime of tyranny by replacing God with this 'present Deity'. The Eastern city – depicted as a place of slavish sycophancy and corruption – turns out its people to observe the execution of a

'Christian captive' (II, p. 192). The sultan, fanned by slaves and inhaling 'rich odours', 'sits to watch the agony' and 'hear the groan of death' (II, p. 191). The Christian is brought out to be beaten to death, as part of a ritual that will endow the sorcerers with more magical power by extracting 'the foam that in his agony,/Last from his lips shall fall' (II, pp. 192-3). The 'Priests begin their song, the song of praise,/The hymn of glory to their Devil-God' (II, p. 192). These people are followers of the sorcerers' cult of magic and:

They clap their hands for joy
And lift their children up
To see the Christian die.
(II, pp. 198-9)

Thalaba's personal (even hermeneutical) relationship with God contrasts even more vividly with the superstitious priestly hermeticism of the magicians. Southey could be intending to depict the latter as a facet of Islam, further bifurcating that religion into two distinct parts: the faith of Thalaba linked to the ancient 'Covenant with Ishmael', and the sorcerers' priestly cult – allegorising what Southey saw as modern 'abominations engrafted upon it' (*PW*, VIII, p. xiv). Secular and priestly tyranny are still very much linked in Southey's mind as iniquities of human society. However now he is displacing these evils to a convenient Oriental distance where he can examine them without criticism.

4.12 The 'race of Hell'

After further trials against Oriental magic and tyranny, Thalaba once more sets out on his journey to the Domdaniel caverns to confront the 'race of Hell' (*Thal*, II, p. 303), including Okba, the most powerful sorcerer who is responsible for the deaths of his family. This journey takes Thalaba to another enchanted garden – where again a potential source of human comfort (in the form of Laila, a 'damsel' who inhabits the

garden) is withheld from him by her death – on a long sledge ride, and a further journey in a boat to ‘the wide Ocean’ (II, p. 293). Thalaba voyages across the sea until it reaches land and ‘The shelves and shadows of the cliff’ (II, p. 295). Thalaba looks out from the shore towards the sea, and Southey describes the tide coming in on the shore:

Meantime with fuller reach and stronger swell,
Wave after wave advanced;
Each following billow lifted the last foam
That trembled on the sand with rainbow hues;
The living flower that, rooted to the rock,
Late from the thinner element
Shrunk down within its purple stem to sleep,
Now feels the water, and again
Awakening, blossoms out
All its green anther-necks.
(II, p. 301)

This description Southey tells us comes from his observations of the sea at Falmouth while he was waiting to catch a ship to Portugal. Southey says in his ‘Preface’ to the 1837 edition, ‘I walked on the beach, caught soldier-crabs, admired the sea-anemonies in their ever-varying shapes of beauty, read Gebir, and wrote half a book of Thalaba’. He goes on to say ‘the sea-anemonies (which I have never had any other opportunity of observing) were introduced in Thalaba soon afterwards’ (*PW*, IV, p. xii). The detailed description of the sea anemones has an immediacy and vividness that we find in several descriptive passages of *Thalaba* and which Southey seems to achieve in his poetry for the first time. These passages reveal the influence that Southey considered Landor to have had on his writing. The effect of *Gebir* was that, ‘I learnt ever to have my eye awake – to bring images to sight, and to convey a picture in a word’ (*NL*, I, p. 476). This form of descriptive, close-up observation – especially of scenes of nature – lyrically conveyed, is Southey at his best and contrasts vividly with the magical ‘machinery’ of the rest of the poem.

As Thalaba moves nearer to the conclusion of his quest, the boat he is carried in is steered into a cave where Thalaba alights. An old man opens 'adamantine gates' (II, p. 306) and the boat's pilot (another 'Damsel') remains behind while Thalaba goes through into a rocky passage which leads downwards towards a black pit as dark as 'utter Night' (II, p. 309). There a winged car waits for Thalaba. He sees also 'a living man', who fettered to the rock 'tormented lay' (II, p. 310). He is Othatha, the last 'Champion of the Lord' (II, p. 303) who is punished for neglecting his duty to God for love of the damsel of the boat – a reminder to Thalaba of his moral mission. Thalaba gets into the car and is transported down into the abyss. Landing he kills an Afreet (a powerful evil demon) that guards the doors in front of him, with one of his arrows. The doors open 'in the name of God' (II, p. 316) and inside Thalaba finds two of the sorcerers, Khawla and Mohareb. Seeing the sword of his father, Hodeirah, in the fire, Thalaba goes to grasp it, killing Khawla who tries to stop him. The 'Living Image' of Eblis strikes 'the Round Altar' at which all the 'Sorcerer brood' are compelled to come to the summons (II, p. 318). Thalaba fights with Mohareb who with the rest of the sorcerers take refuge at the feet of Eblis. Okba, 'the childless Sorcerer' (II, p. 322), whose daughter Thalaba has accidentally killed, is the only one who stands up to fight Thalaba, and he pardons the murderer of his family for the sake of his daughter. Okba's heart is 'softened' and then 'The all-beholding Prophet's awful voice' is heard (II, p. 325), praising Thalaba for his work and offering him his reward. Thalaba asks that Okba be forgiven for his sins and his soul be saved from 'utter death' (II, p. 326) in a scene that is redolent with Christian redemption, rather than 'Islamic' retribution. Hodeirah's spirit then appears to 'see/His vengeance' be done (II, p. 326). Thalaba drives his sword into the heart of the 'Living Image' and:

The Ocean-Vault fell in, and all were crushed.
In the same moment at the gate
Of Paradise, Oneiza's Houri-form
Welcomed her Husband to eternal bliss.
(II, p. 327)

This summary of the plot's resolution shows how it hurtles to a conclusion, with event rapidly following on event, much of it taking place in the dark world of the Domdaniel caverns. The last two books of *Thalaba* in manuscript are yet more complicated with more emphasis on magical 'machinery' and many extra characters – for instance Khawla plays a larger role, there are many more demons, five boatmen (rather than one girl who steers the boat), a giant tyrant named Leoline and his mother 'a hag', as well as the appearance of the 'immortal Ali's sword'. Even from this short list it is possible to see how much more complicated the original plot was and that it has been improved by being made simpler. Southey obviously realised that there was far too much 'machinery' in his story and did not want *Thalaba* to contain the deliberate obfuscation and confusion of Beckford's Oriental world, or to become simply another implausible Oriental 'fairytale' such as the *Arabian Nights* or the *Arabian Tales*. However there are many similarities still between this ending and the story of Maugraby's downfall in the *Arabian Tales*. Much space is given in that text to describing the magician's evil deeds in the human world, but eventually a Syrian prince, over whom Maugraby has attempted to exert his evil influence, rebels against him and enters the 'Dom-Daniel'. Here he finds a 'golden colossus' who wears a powerful ring, which he removes, and striking the statue with the hand on which he has placed the ring, the statue is destroyed.⁸⁹ Though the cavern does not fall in and has to be destroyed by another champion, the Syrian prince emerges from the cavern and eventually marries a lovely Princess of Egypt who was seduced by Maugraby, but had helped the prince defeat him. The parallels to *Thalaba* are obvious, but Southey,

by adopting – like the *Arabian Tales* – a statue or a ‘Living Image’ as the centre of the world’s evil, takes some of the power out of his story. Thalaba never has to confront what Southey sees as the real source of evil (as Nimrod delineates) Satan, or the authentic form of Eblis, in his battle. Therefore Southey’s story becomes not the sublime battle that he may have intended between good and evil but a fantastical Oriental ‘fairytale’, like his source.

4.13 Conclusion

Southey’s story may have ‘morally sublime’ moments, but in the end it conforms to a stereotypical portrayal of the supremacy of spiritual faith over evil worldly forces (with little osmosis between the characters on either side) that has no psychological depth (unlike *Paradise Lost*) and is conventionally handled, with a predictable ending. The best aspects of the poem are the detailed descriptive passages already referred to. Where Southey is at his worst is when his own voice intrudes into the text. Unlike Byron’s presence as poet/narrator in *Don Juan*, which amuses the reader as he undercuts his text, Southey’s voice is often moralising in tone, didactic and preachy, or overly sentimental. Southey writes for an audience that he assumes shares a common currency of morals, politics and feelings. Another weakness in the poem is Southey’s predilection for describing things that are horrific and unnatural, based on his knowledge of, and propensity for, folk-tales, ghost stories and superstitions.

The Arabia of *Thalaba* is presented as a deserted, sublime, moral landscape (unlike Byron’s or Moore’s Oriental settings), as William Taylor pointed out in his review of *Thalaba* for the *Critical Review* (1803) – an article that Southey judged a fair evaluation of his poem. Taylor said of *Thalaba*:

It is a gallery of successive pictures. Each is strikingly descriptive: the circumstances strongly delineated, and well selected; but the personages, like

the figures of landscape-painters, are often almost lost in the scene: they appear as the episodic or accessory objects.⁹⁰

It seems that Southey deliberately empties his landscape of 'figures', because he has given up on social remedies or 'man-mending' as he called it. More and more

Southey was coming to believe that:

The ablest physician can do little in the great lazaret-house of society. It is a pest-house that infects all within its atmosphere; he acts the wisest part who retires from the contagion; nor is that part either a selfish or a cowardly one, it is ascending the Ark like Noah to preserve a remnant which may become the whole. (*RSJM*, p. 25)

Even more revealing are Southey's notes for *Thalaba* in his commonplace book, 'Cannot the Dom Danael be made to allegorize those systems that make the misery of mankind?' and 'Can the evils of established systems be well allegorized?'.⁹¹ Southey uses the word 'systems' in a Blakean sense to mean the structures of society, i.e. church and state, that govern it and for Southey therefore perpetuate 'the misery of mankind'. In a letter dated 3rd February 1800, contemporaneous with his writing of *Thalaba*, Southey speaks of his conviction 'that every fact may be warped to suit a system, and that every system must be erroneous' (*SL*, I, p. 91).

Thalaba's title of 'Destroyer', and his act in obliterating the Domdaniel caverns and its 'Living Image', which Southey implies may have a detrimental effect on the world above – as the 'Idol' had control over the earth from its 'Round Altar' (*Thal*, II, pp. 320-1) – would seem to have wider social consequences than the narrow resolution of *Thalaba*'s union with Oneiza. But *Thalaba*'s quest is a personal one, despite being sanctioned by God as necessary to defeat evil in the world. *Thalaba* is a 'destroyer' of powerful, manipulative autocratic 'systems' without instituting anything in its place, except perhaps the only reward he has desired throughout his mission, that of domestic love. Bernhard-Kabisch says of *Thalaba*:

At once merely personal and vaguely metaphysical, daemonic and domestic, Thalaba's quest wholly lacks a political middle ground: his victory, while purporting to be an act of universal redemption, produces no visible practical good other than his own promotion to beatitude.⁹²

He adds that 'the poem represents, in fact, a complete political disengagement'.⁹³ But it is unlikely that Southey, given his radical background, and what we know of his later conservative sympathies advocates such a 'disengagement'. It is simply that Southey puts more emphasis on the values of self-reliance and intuitive faith, emphasised by Thalaba's quest, in his representation. In fact Southey can be seen as being at his most political in taking this critical stance of the 'systems' that govern human society – whether by taking that position he is denouncing the rational scepticism of Lobaba, or the 'priestly' structures of organised religion. Certainly Southey's first edition was considered to be radical in choice of form, style and language – in fact an indication of a growing, modern 'sect of poets' who were 'dissenters from the established systems in poetry and criticism', as Francis Jeffrey termed Southey, Coleridge, Wordsworth and Lamb, in his article for the *Edinburgh Review*.⁹⁴ Southey is in some respects like his hero, still the 'revolutionary' of his youth, 'destroying' what he sees as the old perverted regime, but what has changed now is that he does not explicitly advocate another 'system' in its place. His withdrawal merely gives him a stronger position from which to attack 'the great lazarus-house of society', and increasingly he does so by relocating his radicalism in the Orient. *Thalaba* can in some ways be seen as a transitional text in this process, with Southey employing many of the same tropes in *The Curse of Kehama* (1810), where his bid for a national (but yet Southeyan) code of values, would also be set in the East.

Notes

¹ See *LC*, III, p. 351; *SL*, I, p. 163; *NL*, I, p. 476. Marilyn Butler states that *Madoc* is the first poem in Southey's plan to write a narrative poem on all the world's mythologies, Marilyn Butler, 'Orientalism' in *The Penguin History of Literature: The Romantic Period*, ed., David Pirie (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1994), pp. 395-447 (p. 413). However *Madoc* does not easily fit into the class of a single world mythology, dealing as it does at different times with Celtic, Catholic, Aztec and native American belief systems. *Madoc* may be added retrospectively to Southey's plan for convenience, but the absence of Southey's stated intention that it is one of his 'mythologies' and its overt colonial subject-matter, suggest that Southey wrote *Madoc* with a different agenda in mind. Southey says in the 'Preface' to *The Curse of Kehama* that the 'religion of the New World' is not 'the foundation' of *Madoc*, but 'only incidentally connected with it', *PW*, VIII, p. xv.

² Quoted in Mark Storey, *Robert Southey: A Life* (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), p. 136. Though after *Thalaba* was completed Southey had one last attempt at a different career when he accepted a short-lived post as secretary to Isaac Corry, the Irish Chancellor of the Exchequer.

³ Ernest Bernhardt-Kabisch, *Robert Southey* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1977), pp. 81-5.

⁴ Professor William Haller includes a most comprehensive list of the sources of information that Southey used in writing *Thalaba*, in *The Early Life of Robert Southey, 1774-1803* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1917), pp. 254-63 and Appendix B.

⁵ Bernhardt-Kabisch, *Robert Southey*, p. 17.

⁶ An edition that never existed according to Haller, this being the third edition that Southey saw through the press. Haller, *The Early Life of Robert Southey*, p. 267.

⁷ Dom Chavis and M. Cazotte, *Arabian Tales: or A Continuation of the Arabian Nights Entertainments*, translated by Robert Heron, 4 vols. (Dublin: R. Cross etc., 1792), IV, p. 308.

⁸ *A Memoir of the Life and Writings of the late William Taylor of Norwich*, ed., J. W. Robberds, 2 vols. (London: John Murray, 1843) I, p. 371.

⁹ Robert Southey, 'Gebir; a Poem', *Critical Review*, 27 (September 1799), 29-39.

¹⁰ Walter Savage Landor, *Gebir; A Poem* (London: Rivingtons, 1798), p. 3.

¹¹ Landor, *Gebir*, pp. 4-6.

¹² Landor, *Gebir*, p. 32.

¹³ Butler, 'Orientalism', p. 411.

¹⁴ Landor, *Gebir*, p. 60.

¹⁵ Mohammed Sharafuddin, *Islam and Romantic Orientalism: Literary Encounters with the Orient* (London, New York: I. B. Tauris, 1996), p. 3.

¹⁶ Landor, *Gebir*, p. 18.

¹⁷ George Sale, *The Koran commonly called The Alcoran of Mohammed, Translated into English immediately from the Original Arabic; with Explanatory NOTES, taken from the most approved COMMENTATORS. To which is Prefixed A Preliminary Discourse* (London: J. Wilcox, 1734).

¹⁸ 'Mohammed' was published posthumously in *Oliver Newman: A New-England Tale (Unfinished): With Other Poetical Remains*, ed. H. Hill (London: Longman,

Brown, Green & Longmans, 1845), pp. 113-6. 'Mahomet' was first published in 1834.

¹⁹ This was what he termed it in a letter to John May, 19th July 1799, *RSJM*, p. 46.

²⁰ Though Southey's knowledge of the Koran also came from Maracci's *Refutation of the Koran* as his letter to Coleridge, dated 3rd January 1800, shows: 'Maracci's Refutation of the Koran, or rather his preliminaries to it, have afforded me much amusement, and much matter', *LC*, II, p. 41.

²¹ Sale, *Koran*, third page of 'Dedication' (unnumbered).

²² Sale, *Koran*, third page of 'Dedication' (unnumbered).

²³ Sharafuddin, *Islam and Romantic Orientalism*, p. xxix.

²⁴ Sale, 'A Preliminary Discourse', p. 61.

²⁵ Sale, *Koran*, second page of 'Dedication' (unnumbered); Sale, 'A Preliminary Discourse', pp. 62-3.

²⁶ Edward W. Said, *Orientalism: Western Conceptions of the Orient* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1995), p. 60.

²⁷ Sale, *Koran*, second page of 'Dedication' (unnumbered).

²⁸ Sale, *Koran*, second page of 'Dedication' (unnumbered).

²⁹ Sale, *Koran*, second page of 'Dedication' (unnumbered).

³⁰ Sharafuddin, *Islam and Romantic Orientalism*, p. xxix.

³¹ Sale, 'A Preliminary Discourse', p. 40.

³² Southey said in a letter to William Taylor, 'Whether Mohammed be a hero likely to blast a poem in a Christian country is doubtful, my Mohammed will be, what I believe the Arabian was in the beginning of his career, sincere in enthusiasm'. Letter to William Taylor, 3rd February 1800, *A Memoir*, I, p. 325.

³³ Bernhardt-Kabisch, *Southey*, p. 84.

³⁴ *Vathek* could be said to have had two authors as well, Beckford writing the French text, while Henley translated it and provided the notes. See Roger Lonsdale's account of the publication in William Beckford, *Vathek*, ed. Roger Lonsdale (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), pp. xiv-xviii.

³⁵ Interestingly the subsequent editions of *Gebir* did supply notes to the text – perhaps on Southey's advice. Sharafuddin says 'Landor was responsive to the criticism, particularly from his most favourable reader, Southey, that the first edition of the poem was unnecessarily obscure. Accordingly he provided explanatory summaries and notes, and certain amplifications to the text'. Sharafuddin, *Islam and Romantic Orientalism*, p. 37.

³⁶ H. N. Fairchild, *The Noble Savage: A Study in Romantic Naturalism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1928), p. 205.

³⁷ *Robert Southey: The Critical Heritage*, ed. Lionel Madden (London and Boston: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1972), pp. 68-90 (pp. 83-4).

³⁸ Haller, *The Early Life of Robert Southey*, p. 258.

³⁹ Nigel Leask, 'Wandering through Eblis'; absorption and containment in Romantic exoticism', in *Romanticism and Colonialism: Writing and Empire 1780-1830*, eds. Tim Fulford and Peter J. Kitson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp. 164-188 (p. 168).

⁴⁰ These definitions come respectively from David Norcliffe, 'Islam', in *World Religions*, eds. Jeaneane Fowler, Merv Fowler, David Norcliffe, Nora Hill and David Watkins (Brighton and Portland, Oregon: Sussex Academic Press, 1999), p. 130, and

The Penguin Dictionary of Religions, ed. John R. Hinnells (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1997), p. 238.

⁴¹ I am presuming that this was the edition used by Southey as it was listed in the sale catalogue, when his library was sold in 1844. For this useful list of Southey's collection of books, see *Catalogues of Libraries of Eminent Persons*, vol. IX, *Poets and Men of Letters*, ed. Roy Park (London: Mansell, 1974) pp. 75-288.

⁴² Percy Bysshe Shelley, 'Ozymandias' (1818), *Romanticism: An Anthology*, ed. Duncan Wu (Oxford and Malden, Ma.: Blackwell, 1998), p. 849.

⁴³ Sharafuddin, *Islam and Romantic Orientalism*, p. 69

⁴⁴ *Collins English Dictionary* (Glasgow: Harper Collins Publishers, 1998), p. 827.

⁴⁵ '..Worse and worse, young Orphane, be thy payne,
If thou due vengeance doe forbeare,
Till guiltie blood her guerdon do obtayne.'

Southey's reference to this passage is 'Faery Queen, B.2. Can. I.', *PW*, IV, p. 1.

⁴⁶ 'Donica' and 'Rudiger' included in *Poems* (Bristol: Joseph Cottle, London: G. G. and J. Robinson, 1797), pp. 173-200. 'Bishop Bruno', 'Lord William' and 'St. Patrick's Purgatory' originally published in the *Morning Post* in 1798, see *The Contributions of Robert Southey to the Morning Post*, ed. Kenneth Curry (Alabama: The University of Alabama Press, 1984), pp. 13-4, p. 19.

⁴⁷ Carsten Niebuhr, *Travels Through Arabia*, translated by Robert Heron, 2 vols (Dublin: Gilbert, Moore, Archer and Jones, 1792), II, p. 318; *Thal*, I, p. 100.

⁴⁸ Constantin Francois de Chasseboeuf, Comte de Volney, *Travels Through Syria and Egypt*, 2 vols. (London: G. G. J. & J. Robinson, 1788), I, p. 63; *Thal*, I, p. 103.

⁴⁹ Robert Southey, *Thalaba the Destroyer* (1799-1800), British Library, London, Add MS 47884, ff. 64-5.

⁵⁰ *Southey's Commonplace Book*, 4th series, vol. IV, ed. J. W. Warter (London: Longman, Brown, Green and Longmans, 1851), p. 184.

⁵¹ Jones had already published several works on the subject including *A Grammar of the Persian language* (London: W. & J. Richardson, 1771) and *Poems, consisting chiefly of translations from the Asiatick languages* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1772).

⁵² *Sir William Jones: Selected poetical and prose works*, ed. Michael J. Franklin (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1995), pp. 319-36 (p. 322).

⁵³ *Sir William Jones*, ed. Franklin, pp. 193-4, 211. *Southey's Commonplace Book*, IV, pp. 106-7, *Thal*, I, pp. 164, 185, 202, 237; II, p. 265.

⁵⁴ *Sir William Jones*, ed. Franklin, pp. 193-211.

⁵⁵ *Sir William Jones*, ed. Franklin, p. 189.

⁵⁶ Volney, *Travels Through Syria and Egypt*, I, pp. 388, 409.

⁵⁷ Volney, *Travels Through Syria and Egypt*, I, pp. 413-4.

⁵⁸ *Middle East*, ed. Tilar J. Mazzeo, vol. 4 of *Travels, Explorations and Empires: Writings from the era of imperial expansion 1770-1835*, eds. Tim Fulford and Peter J. Kitson, 8 vols (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2001), pp. ix-x.

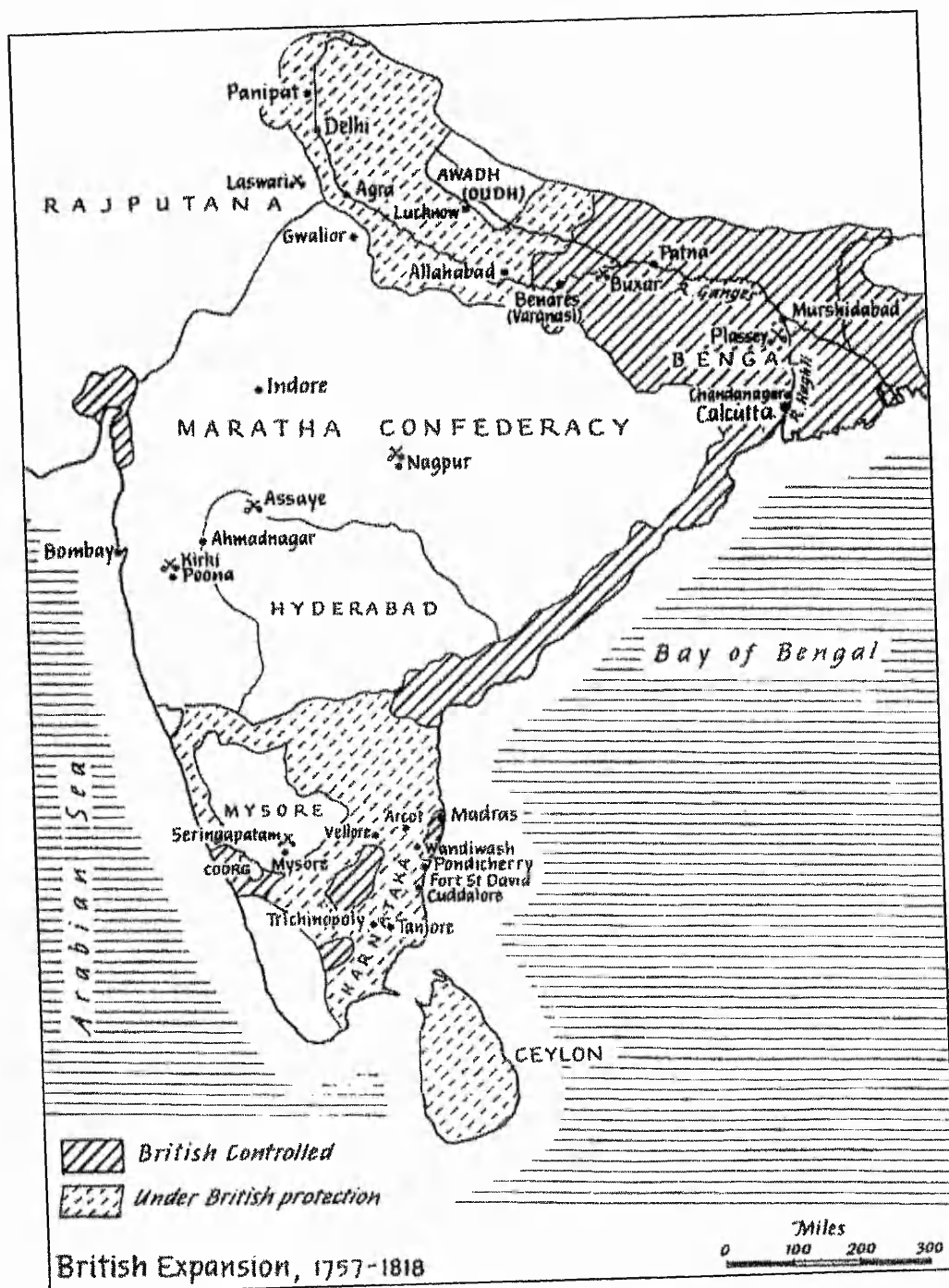
⁵⁹ Volney, *Travels Through Syria and Egypt*, I, pp. 404-5; *Thal*, I, p. 138.

⁶⁰ *Sir William Jones*, ed. Franklin, pp. xxii-xxiii.

⁶¹ John Barrell, *The Infection of Thomas De Quincey: A Psychopathology of Imperialism* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1991), p. 10.

⁶² Barrell, *The Infection of Thomas De Quincey*, pp. 10-11.

- ⁶³ Southey makes a convenient link between the Islamic *subha* (or as he terms it 'Tusbah'), and the Catholic rosary, *Thal*, I, pp. 293-5.
- ⁶⁴ This note was added to editions of *Thalaba* after 1801.
- ⁶⁵ Robert Southey, 'Travels of Ali Bey', *Quarterly Review*, 15, no. 30 (July, 1816), 299-345 (p. 310).
- ⁶⁶ Jack Simmons *Southey* (London: Collins, 1945) p.36.
- ⁶⁷ Robert Southey, 'Account of the Baptist Missionary Society', *Quarterly Review*, 1, no. 1 (Feb., 1809), 193-226 (p. 222).
- ⁶⁸ Daniel E. White "A Saracenic mosque, not a Quaker meeting-house": Southey's *Thalaba* and Religious Dissent', in *Early Romanticism and Religious Dissent: Under the Eye of the Public* (unpublished manuscript), pp. 205-49 (p. 206). I am grateful to Daniel White for sharing this chapter while still in manuscript.
- ⁶⁹ Southey describes the Quakers as 'a body of Christians from whom, in all important points, I feel little or no difference in my own state of mind', *SL*, I, p. 426.
- ⁷⁰ *A Memoir*, I, p. 272.
- ⁷¹ Quoted by Bernhardt-Kabisch, *Southey*, p. 84.
- ⁷² Volney, *Travels Through Syria and Egypt*, I, pp. 407-9, *Thal*, I, p. 160.
- ⁷³ Volney, *Travels Through Syria and Egypt*, I, pp. 407-9, *Thal*, I, p. 160.
- ⁷⁴ Volney, *Travels Through Syria and Egypt*, I, pp. 407-9, *Thal*, I, p. 160.
- ⁷⁵ *Sir William Jones*, ed. Franklin, pp. 194-5.
- ⁷⁶ *Essay on the Poetry of the Eastern Nations* (1772), in *Sir William Jones*, ed. Franklin, p. 324.
- ⁷⁷ *Southey's Common-Place Book*, IV, p.186.
- ⁷⁸ *Samuel Johnson*, ed. Donald Greene (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 1984), pp. 335-418 (pp. 342-3).
- ⁷⁹ Southey referred to him in a letter to William Taylor, 30th May 1799 as 'Lewis – the Monk-man', *A Memoir*, I, p. 281.
- ⁸⁰ Achmed Ardebeili, *A Series of Poems, Containing the Complaints, Consolations and Delights of Achmed Ardebeili, A Persian Exile*, ed. Charles Fox (London: J. Cottle, G. C. & J. Robinson, 1797). Southey and Coleridge were among several other notable Bristol residents on the subscription list. Southey does not refer to this text in the 1801 edition, but a note on it was added in later editions, see *PW*, IV, pp. 415-6.
- ⁸¹ Ardebeili, *A Series of Poems*, ed. Fox, p. 18.
- ⁸² Ardebeili, *A Series of Poems*, ed. Fox, p. vii.
- ⁸³ Ardebeili, *A Series of Poems*, ed. Fox, p. vii.
- ⁸⁴ According to Southey's note on the manuscript of *Thalaba*, it was finished on 21st December 1799, Southey, *Thalaba the Destroyer* (1799-1800), Add MS 47884, f. 119.
- ⁸⁵ Sharafuddin, *Islam and Romantic Orientalism*, p. 66.
- ⁸⁶ Southey, *Thalaba the Destroyer* (1799-1800), Add MS 47884, f. 102.
- ⁸⁷ Southey, *Thalaba the Destroyer* (1799-1800), Add MS 47884, f. 103.
- ⁸⁸ Southey, *Thalaba the Destroyer* (1799-1800), Add MS 47884, f. 263.
- ⁸⁹ Chavis and Cazotte, *Arabian Tales*, IV, p. 328.
- ⁹⁰ *Robert Southey: The Critical Heritage*, pp. 91-5 (p. 91).
- ⁹¹ *Southey's Common-Place Book*, IV, p. 182
- ⁹² Bernhardt-Kabisch, *Southey*, p. 94.
- ⁹³ Bernhardt-Kabisch, *Southey*, p. 94.
- ⁹⁴ *Robert Southey: The Critical Heritage*, pp. 68-90 (p. 68).



Map 3. British Expansion in India, 1757 – 1818.

Chapter Five

The Curse of Kehama: Missionaries, 'mythology' and empire

5.1 Introduction

In the rush of excitement that Southey felt in writing *Thalaba the Destroyer* – and thereby achieving the first step in his 'design of rendering every mythology...the basis of a narrative poem' (*LC*, III, p. 351) – he was already planning other subjects for inclusion in the scheme. In a letter to his close friend Charles Wynn from Portugal in July 1800, he spoke of 'manufacturing a Hindoo romance, wild as *Thalaba*' as a further part of the project (*LC*, II, p. 97). As with many of Southey's ideas, he discussed this one in letters with his friends, making it possible to trace its organic development through his correspondence. In March 1801 Southey wrote to Coleridge too, telling him, 'I have planned a Hindoo romance of original extravagance, and have christened it 'The Curse of Keradon' (*LC*, II, p. 136). Even from these two minor comments it is possible to form an idea of the relationship Southey had with his Hindu source material, and his intentions of creating a 'wild' and extravagant, exotic fiction. Southey discussed the writing of his 'Hindoo romance' most thoroughly with William Taylor, regularly exposing the project to his friend's critical 'dissecting table'.¹ Taylor's initial reasons for advising Southey to proceed with his Indian fiction were not only literary, but also political: 'Take the Hindoo superstition for your machinery, and your country here and your readers there have both an interest in its celebrity, which must grow with the national power and extend with the national empire'.²

Southey's 'romance' evolved over a ten-year period, from this early germ of an idea into the published text of *The Curse of Kehama* (1810). During these years

Southey came to share Taylor's ambitions for Britain's 'national empire'. His growing commitment to British colonial expansion was motivated by a desire to extend the benefits of Christianity and British civilisation (i.e. British education, administration, jurisprudence, technical knowledge and even British dress and language) to other countries. Such expansion would therefore benefit both the colonies, and the parent country, because 'being English by language and by religion, their convenience and their interest would always attach them to England'³. This chapter therefore examines how the political ambivalence that Southey felt in writing *Thalaba* began to resolve itself into support for his own country, and antipathy towards that previously admired repository of republican ideals, Napoleonic France. It also considers how Southey's colonial ambitions manifested themselves in *Kehama*, as well as his letters and other writings – particularly his articles on the Indian missions for the *Annual Review* and the *Quarterly Review* – in order to provide a political and social context for the poem's representation of India.

During the period over which *Kehama* was being composed, Southey was writing for the *Annual Review*, under the editorship of Arthur Aikin. From this point until almost the end of Southey's life, a large part of his work and much of his income came from writing reviews – for the *Annual* from 1802 until its demise in 1809, and then for the *Quarterly Review* from its inception in 1809 until 1839. Southey's reviewing career was particularly important in developing his political opinions, and his articles are fundamental to understanding his views on colonial matters. As well as engaging with literary texts, Southey developed a specialism with the *Annual* (and which he transferred to the *Quarterly*) for reviewing travel writings, missionary texts and other works on colonial affairs (such as the debate over the African slave trade). Southey's reviewing work was also very important to the writing of his narrative

poetry – a relationship that has been largely overlooked – not only in providing factual materials from travel accounts, but in developing his opinions on their subject-matter. As I have pointed out with regard to *Thalaba*, there is a distance or silence, perhaps it could even be called a ‘fracture’, between Southey’s poem and his annotation. The reader often feels confused at the dislocation between the text and the notes to it and so is unable to decide on the required response. Southey’s reviews provide insight into his opinions that help to close this gap. As I will show, some of the substance for the notes of *Kehama*, as well as an insight into Southey’s views on British India can be found in his articles for the *Annual Review* and the *Quarterly*.

In order to set the scene for *Kehama* it is worth noting at this point that the British ‘empire’ in India during the Romantic and the Victorian periods were very different constructs. Marilyn Butler describes these territories in the 1780s:

British India consisted at this time of three unequal tracts of land. The largest, Bengal, was administered from the important trading post of Calcutta. The two other ports in British hands, Madras and Bombay, had smaller hinterlands. The East India Company, which owned the monopoly of trade with India, was governed in London by a Court of Proprietors, or shareholders, and a smaller, elective Court of Directors. The latter, the executive body, transmitted decisions on policy to a Governor (later Governor-General) in Bengal, who in turn headed a company administration which in 1800 employed approximately 4,500 soldiers and civilians in India.⁴

Britain’s role in India was, from the beginning, commercial, rather than colonial. In order to protect its mercantile interests, the East India Company did not allow colonization of its territories by British subjects. This led to a different relationship between Britain and Bengal – as well as a unique form of government – from that of Britain and her ‘settler’ colonies. Discussions of British India during the period were therefore very much concerned with examining the practices of the East India Company and its officials, although these matters would increasingly become an

extension of government policy. At the time Southey was writing about India, the East India Company, under the aegis of the British government, was employing an expansionist policy in order to maintain stability in the regions surrounding the British territories. As P. J. Marshall states:

By 1815 the British position in India had been totally transformed by a series of conquests that had brought the whole of eastern India, most of the peninsula, and a large part of the Ganges valley under direct British rule, still administered through the East India Company. A contemporary estimate was that 40 million Indian people were by then living under the Company's rule.⁵

During the Romantic period, Britain's growing Indian possessions were a great source of wealth, but as more territories were acquired questions of how they should be governed became of increasing concern to the British people. In the 1780s particularly, many feared that the East India Company's growing power over its native employees was becoming cruel and despotic, and this became as significant a matter for parliamentary debate, as the treatment of African slaves. Edmund Burke's famous impeachment of the Governor-General of Bengal, Warren Hastings, on charges of corruption – which led to a lengthy trial (1788-1795) – combined with humanitarian concerns to present India 'as an ancient civilization that must be protected from the barbarism of the East India Company.'⁶ By the time Southey's *Kehama* was written the East India Company's power had been curtailed, with the ending of its commercial monopoly in 1813.⁷ Nevertheless the increasing awareness of Britain's responsibilities towards its Indian subjects was manifested by a growing evangelical movement to bring Christianity to India, as well as by controversy over the best form of government for the British territories.

Such concerns became a significant theme of *Kehama*, where Southey combined Oriental 'extravagance' with imperial politics, as I will demonstrate. The

examples that Southey saw of native Indian politics, as well as the machinations of the East India Company, combine in an enduring stereotype of Oriental despotism. The poem portrays the ambitious actions of a fictitious Indian ruler, Kehama, in his attempt to gain dominion over, not only the world, but heaven and hell too. The effects of his actions are traced on the lives of two ordinary people (Ladurlad and his daughter, Kailyal) who resist his tyranny with the assistance of the gods of the Hindu religion. The oppressive nature of Kehama's reign is enacted in his son's arrogant attempt to rape Kailyal, so that Ladurlad is forced to kill Arvalan, setting in motion the narrative chain of events. The Hindu gods eventually bring about the downfall of the Oriental despot, and the central characters, persecuted throughout by Kehama and Arvalan (as an evil spirit), are rewarded for their virtuous resistance in the afterlife. It can be seen from this brief plot resume that Southey (despite no longer actively embracing radical politics) was repeating a familiar theme that forms the organising structure of all his long narrative poems, from *Joan of Arc* and *Wat Tyler*, to *Thalaba* and *Madoc*. This is the idea of virtuous, decent individuals (often from the peasant or labouring classes) opposing royal or imperial oppression. In this particular version of the motif, Southey chose India and the Hindu religion as a setting for his conventional, idealised denouement of the downfall of tyranny, relocating the theme of his Western radical politics in the East. Southey's abiding concern was to delineate the correct principles of government, but he did this by providing a prescriptive, negative image of imperial rule as Oriental tyranny, rather than by the depiction of a positive role-model. This is because as Southey became increasingly conservative he 'exported' his previously radical concerns about personal liberty to India. This was a method by which he could remain true to his formative politics, as well as

highlighting foreign tyranny, and yet portray the British government as a responsible, benevolent polity.

So there are several reasons why Southey focused on India and the Hindu religion in his poem. One of these obviously was that the subject-matter appealed to him as an attractive setting for his story, but it also related directly to political debate over the future of British India. Several Romantic critics, including Javed Majeed and Saree Makdisi have shown that during this period attitudes to India were becoming increasingly riven by a political 'fault-line', dividing the conservative and 'romantic' view of India – which valued Indian culture and its traditions, disseminated by Sir William Jones and Warren Hastings – and the utilitarian and evangelical view, that India should be governed by English law and administrative systems.⁸ While both attitudes posited India's future as an imperial outpost, the former (and earlier) view advocated that 'the languages and laws of Muslim and Hindu India should not be ignored or supplanted, but utilized and preserved, as foundations of the traditional social order' and so implemented as instruments for governing the empire.⁹ This attitude was gradually eroded by the changing demands of Britain's relationship with India. For instance the Hastings trial increasingly became a metaphor for the defence of conservative attitudes to India (often by those actually in India) against the 'Anglicist' demands of those at the metropolitan centre. Makdisi puts Southey strictly in the latter camp, and in his reviews (and the preface to *Kehama*) Southey does seem to be firmly aligning himself with the ambitions for India of James Mill, as Majeed has also shown.¹⁰ But we have to take into account the large role that the research of Sir William Jones and his fellow members of the Asiatic Society of Bengal, in Calcutta, played in the construction of *Kehama*. Southey's text incorporated both viewpoints on the future government and stability of the empire, and this chapter will

elaborate on this political division between the 'Orientalists' and the 'Anglicists' while relating his poem to the debate.

In *Kehama*, the Hindu religion is presented as a 'foreign' curiosity for Southey's British readers, creating an opportunity to negatively contrast Hindu beliefs and practices with the teachings and morality of British Christianity. There are ambiguities in Southey's representation of the Hindu religion however. *Kehama*'s absolute rule is underpinned by an alliance with the Hindu priestly 'Bramins', suggesting that the Indian religion is no more than an instrument of Oriental tyranny. But by placing the priests in a position of conflict with their gods, and basing his depiction of the deities on Hindu scriptures, Southey suggests (as with his own religion) that intuitive belief needs to be detached from the invidious sphere of priestly influence. Southey therefore criticises the Brahmins for their role in oppressing the lower castes of India, and this relates to his general disapprobation of the clerical hierarchy of all religions. By separating the ancient history of the gods from the practices of contemporary Hindus, Southey felt free to criticise such customs as ritual sacrifice and infanticide without denigrating his source material. Nevertheless this did not work in practice and the religious rituals of *Kehama* dominate the text, as they do in Southey's reviews of the Indian missions, where he supports the missionary project to abolish the demands of a 'most burthensome and inhuman superstition'.¹¹

As is so often the case in Southey's poetry, his representation of foreign lands reflects contexts much closer to home. There are two other themes I wish to consider that influenced his portrayal of India. Southey brought his own personal knowledge of an 'alien' culture and religion – from his two sojourns in Portugal (in 1796 and 1800-1) – into his poem. *Kehama* was begun while Southey was living in Portugal and his first encounter with a foreign culture – that was actual rather than textual – certainly

made a profound impression on him that can be traced in his writing. The process of 'othering' that is an integral part of Orientalism allows the boundary between Occident and Orient to shift subjectively for each commentator. In order to define other cultures against British moral values, it was not implausible, in Southey's eyes, to see parallels between Portuguese and Indian life.

A further domestic preoccupation for Southey that can be traced in *Kehama* as well as his letters, was the more immediate sphere of European politics, with Britain and France at war. Southey increasingly made the connection between Kehama, his Eastern potentate, and the imperial aggression of Napoleon, as I will show. The embattled territories of the Napoleonic wars were of course in the East as well as the West and Napoleon's Oriental ambitions – which had not abated, despite abandoning his Egyptian campaign in 1800 – could well have had repercussions for the British in India. As Lawrence James shows, the French had already formed alliances in India with anti-British princes in the past – such as that made with Haidar Ali, ruler of Mysore, in 1780. Haidar Ali was the father of Tipu Sultan ('the tiger prince') who was to become a yet more dangerous adversary for the British in India.¹² The British territories, surrounded by ambitious, martial Indian principalities, were susceptible not only to Indian aggression, but also to hostile Western imperial projects.

This chapter will therefore examine the text of *The Curse of Kehama*, in the light of each of the above-mentioned themes in order to show that Southey's poem reflected his increasing conservatism with regard to British politics and religion, as he felt he had to defend both models from European and Oriental influences. Discussion of the themes also highlights the dichotomy Southey faced between representing an image of India that conformed to 'Orientalist' respect for the customs and beliefs of the Hindu religion, and imagining a future for the Indian empire, ruled by a

paternalistic government and underpinned by British education and morality. Part of Southey's response to that dilemma was to attempt to domesticate the Orient in his text, depicting his 'Hindu' heroine as a model of British female virtue. The *Edinburgh Review* (1811) castigated Southey for what it called his '*Childishness*' in trying to combine 'the Arabian Nights' Entertainments', from which his 'variety and novelty of wonders' falls short, with overly moral infantile characters who 'lisp like sucklings'.¹³ *Kehama* presents a domesticated, Western vision of India, enveloped by Hindu 'mythology', where Southey endeavoured to control those 'foreign' aspects of it that he considered 'monstrous'. Revelling in the splendour of Oriental 'fable', Southey constantly undercut it and modified it in his prefaces and his annotation, overlaying its 'extravagance' with Christian morality. While Southey made the link between the 'Trimourtee' and the Trinity, and between Christ and the Hindu avatars (the bodily manifestations of the gods), he did not extend these connections.¹⁴ He preferred to relate Hinduism to other 'pagan mythologies' (such as Greek and Roman) as a background for his own christianized story. For Kailyal and Ladurlad are, no less than Thalaba, on a Christian mission through a world of superstition – dominated by gods and demons – on the path to heaven.

Southey believed that he could use any system of 'mythology' as a framework, as long as it was constructed so that a 'moral grandeur' (in keeping with Western standards) shone through – a conversion of the 'monstrous' into the moral.¹⁵ Southey's christianized version of Hinduism is very important for delineating his adoption of 'Anglicist' attitudes to India, and the conflict between the prefaces/reviews and Southey's poetic Hindu material again represents his division between two imperial ideologies. *Kehama* exists therefore on the cusp of Southey's changing views from 'Orientalist' to 'Anglicist' attitudes to India, and so manifests

what Tim Fulford and Peter Kitson describe in *Romanticism and Colonialism* (1998) as 'the instabilities, ambiguities and contradictions which Romantic-period texts reveal at the heart of colonialism's discourses'.¹⁶ That this division would be resolved by the passage of time can be seen in the contrast between Southey's ambitions in constructing *Kehama*, and his opinion much later, when he looked back at the poem and tried to make sense of its Orientalism. A letter of 1808 shows that Southey's plan had been to include those aspects that he considered constituted an Oriental poem:

There must be quicker, wilder movements; there must be a gorgeousness of ornament also, – eastern gem-work, and sometimes rhyme must be rattled upon rhyme, till the reader is half dizzy with the thundering echo. (*LC*, III, p. 145)

The much later preface to *Kehama*, for the 1837 edition, had a condemnatory, but also a defensive tone. Southey said of his poem there:

The spirit of the poem was Indian, but there was nothing Oriental in the style. I had learnt the language of poetry from our own great masters and the great poets of antiquity. (*PW*, VIII, p. xvii)

The Indian content of the poem was relegated to its 'spirit', because at this much later date, Southey wanted to claim it as more conventional than it had been perceived, and so fitting into the tradition of 'our own great masters'. *Kehama* therefore could not have been written at any later point in Southey's life, as his writing on India after its publication shows him rising to new levels of invective on the Hindu religion – 'the Brahminical system produces the utmost excesses of false humanity and of hideous cruelty'.¹⁷

5.2 Moral spectacle

The long period of time that Southey spent writing *The Curse of Kehama* reflected his discouragement over the slow sales of *Thalaba* and *Madoc*, as well as the problematic nature of constructing his vision of India. Southey's concern that his poem would

violate public taste, often led him to abandon it for other projects. The fact that it was published at all, Southey claimed, was due to Walter Savage Landor's encouragement. According to Southey's correspondence reporting his visit to Landor in 1808, the two men were very different in character, but shared many of the same beliefs, and Landor's faith in Southey's ability (even offering to pay for his poetry to be printed) spurred him on to finish the poem. Southey did not accept Landor's offer, but the confidence that his fellow writer exhibited in his skill enabled him to continue, as well as inspiring him to start a further poetic project; 'Pelayo', or as it was to become *Roderick the last of the Goths* (1814). On the subject of the visit, Southey said, 'I cared nothing for present popularity or present emolument, but would willingly cast my bread upon the waters, [this] has been the main, almost the only, motive, for my resuming an amusement which I had totally disused for the last three years' (*SL*, II, p. 69). As with all his long narrative poems, Southey felt that true recognition of their greatness would manifest itself after his death, when future generations would laud him for his efforts. The fact that Southey pinned his hopes like this on future popularity reveals how much he felt he was out of step with the present literary milieu.

Southey's fears that *Kehama* would be unpopular with the reading public can be related to the ideological schism that the poem contains. The largest source of imaginative material for his poem came from the Hindu scriptures based on Orientalist scholarship, but Southey also wanted to present a poem that conformed to British standards of morality for his readers. The moral message that Southey intended to promote was from the start, at odds with his 'monstrous' material. When he realised there was such a discrepancy between his intentions and his text, the prefaces were written in order to curb the material, as well as to mould his readers'

expectations. As Balachandra Rajan point outs, 'the stubborn enmity between *Kehama* and its prefaces' is due to the fact that Southey was trying to fulfil these two ideological parts of himself, the fictional writer and the imperial advocate:

Southey's project runs afoul of this difficulty so that the relationships between the two transactions, between the literary and the political, between the Indian other and the English self, and even between resistance and domination are written inescapably into the engagement between the delinquent poem and the disciplinary behavior of its prefaces.¹⁸

Southey was always very aware of the moral responsibility of literature, and quite willing to condemn contemporary immorality, labelling the poetry of Byron and Thomas Moore as a 'Satanic school' (*PW*, X, p. 206). The reluctance Southey felt to write *Kehama* became a physical repugnance for the project. Among the early letters, where he proudly proclaims his plans for his poem, he also says:

I have just and barely begun the 'Curse of Keradon', which literally is stopped from some scruples of conscience in matters of taste. It is begun in rhymes, as irregular in length, cadence, and disposition as the lines of 'Thalaba'. I write them with equal rapidity, so that, on the score of time and trouble, there is neither loss nor gain. But it is so abominable a sin against what I know to be right, that my stomach turns at it. It is to the utmost of my power vitiating, or rather continuing the corruption of public taste...My inducements are to avoid any sameness of expression, any mannerism, and to make as huge an innovation in rhyme as 'Thalaba' will do in blank verse. (*SL*, I, pp. 155-6)

Though Southey's comments are slightly ambiguous, he seems to be referring to the form rather than the content of the poem. But as in the 'Triads' or rules for poetry that he laid down in *Madoc*, form and content were inextricably linked in his moral code for poetry, which should incorporate 'simplicity of invention' as well as 'pure truth, pure language and pure manners'.¹⁹ Southey's 'innovation in rhyme', which would become *Kehama*, contributed to the 'extravagance' he felt the poem had, but here concerned him that it would cause a 'corruption of public taste'. As the poem was about to go to the press, Southey said of it 'you will see that I shall be paid for it with

plenty of abuse, and less money than will be got by others for abusing it' (SL, II, p. 174).

Despite Southey's fears, *Kehama* was more successful than he assumed it would be (going through four editions in eight years). He reported in July 1811 that it 'succeeds better than any of my former books...Nobody can be so much surprised at the comparative success of the poem as I am myself' (SL, II, pp. 228-9). Perhaps this success was due to the subject material, which fed what Madame De Stael identified, and Byron reported (May, 1813) as, the 'orientalizing' trend of readers, during this period.²⁰ However the most revealing comment that Southey made about the poem was after a preview of Scott's review for the *Quarterly* where he asked Bedford (who had connections with that journal) to insert some paragraphs that would:

point out the moral grandeur of the fable, and how it becomes of universal interest and application, founded as it is upon a particular superstition – and also to show the value of works of high imagination, in taking us out of ourselves, and busying the mind about something which is not connected with the ordinary passions and pursuits of life. Sharon Turner's wife said of *Kehama* that she 'felt it elevate her conceptions, and occasion an excitement of mind which made her feel superior to herself.' This is precisely what it ought to do. Insert something to this purport and rescue me from the imputation of having written a poem of 5000 lines for the purpose of teaching Hindoo mythology. (NL, II, p. 1)

Southey therefore intended to write a moral poem but also an exciting one, a work of 'high imagination' that would make readers 'feel superior' to themselves. He aimed at a moral sublimity that would instruct while also providing excitement, and this relates to the role of 'spectacle' in the poem, as I will show. Southey claimed that extravagant, unfamiliar, even horrific sights, while being imaginatively stimulating, could also teach the truth transcending 'the ordinary passions and pursuits of life' in order to learn something edifying about ourselves, or the world around us.

The initial overwhelming effect of the first book of *Kehama* is the idea of the Orient as 'spectacle', and Southey certainly intended his text to be awe-inspiring in this way. A letter he wrote just after *Kehama* was completed says, 'It will not surprise me if you rather wonder at the work than like it, for if half a dozen persons in the world should enjoy it, it will be more than I expect. This feeling should have prevented me from beginning it. It had the effect of making it lie unfinished for seven years' (*NL*, I, p. 545). Not expecting many readers to like the poem, Southey was content that its effect would be to cause 'wonder':

MIDNIGHT, and yet no eye
Through all the Imperial City clos'd in sleep!
Behold her streets a-blaze
With light that seems to kindle the red sky,
Her myriads swarming thro' the crowded ways!
Master and slave, old age and infancy,
All, all abroad to gaze;
House-top and balcony
Clustered with women, who throw back their veils,
With unimpeded and insatiate sight
To view the funeral pomp which passes by,
As if the mournful rite
Were but to them a scene of joyance and delight.
(*CK*, pp. 1-2)

The strongest impression of this opening stanza is the crowded humanity it describes. In Southey's descriptions of Portuguese processions this was also a notable factor. Of one such procession he said in 1800 'I never saw aught finer than this, nor, indeed, to be compared with it – the crowd closed behind, the music, the blaze of the dresses, the long street thronged, flooded with people' (*SL*, I, p. 106). His letter qualifies the excitement he felt at the scene by saying the procession could have been better managed and that 'it ought to be seen with Catholic eyes' for him to really appreciate it – thereby detaching himself from the Portuguese crowd. While Southey was attracted to Portugal – even planning to live there among a growing British expatriate

'colony' – he was also repelled by certain aspects of Portuguese life. His correspondence – as well as the reports of his first visit to Portugal, contained in his *Letters Written During a Short Residence in Spain and Portugal* (1797) – were particularly condemnatory of the Portuguese capital, Lisbon. His criticism ranged from minor annoyances such as dirt and fleas, to irate condemnation of the Roman Catholic Church, which he felt detrimentally dominated the lives of the people. But above all what emanates from Southey's letters is the idea of 'spectacle', a word he often used to refer to the public events he witnessed, such as religious and royal processions and bullfights. The descriptions of parades, public religious festivals, and the crowds of followers attendant on these events, are depicted in his letters – as they are in *Kehama* – as overwhelmingly alien sights. In Portugal these events were, by their foreignness, a way in which he could define his own Englishness – by being a spectator who witnessed the action, rather than one who took part. Describing one such 'procession of the Body of God', he said 'I hate this idolatry as much as I despise it; for I know the bloody and brutalising spirit of popery' (*SL*, I, p. 106). Such events only confirmed for him the difference between a 'Romish' culture and his own. And in *Kehama* too, the narrator's voice intrudes between the sight and his readers to separate 'us' from the foreignness of the spectacle and the culture that approves it. Despite having inveighed so stridently against the English system of religion and society in his youth, Southey's visit to Portugal made him increasingly disposed to defend his own country for being free of the 'brutalising spirit' he found abroad.

The curiosity that Southey felt towards public national and religious events in Portugal was central to his depiction of such events in *Kehama* with its spectacular parades and processions for the reader's wonder. In *Thalaba*, crowd scenes were invoked to show the detrimental effects of religious enthusiasm when contrasted with

the merits of private individual faith. By the time *Kehama* was written, the 'myriads swarming through the crowded ways' have become a trope for an Oriental form of fanaticism that threatens to get out of control. In the passage above Southey magnifies the size of the crowd by including all of humanity between the extreme categories of 'Master and slave, old age and infancy'. The impression is thereby given of a densely populated Eastern city, where a frightening horde of un-individualised people are 'clustered', feeding on the scene with 'insatiate sight' and threatening to swamp it with their multitude. As John Barrell comments – on the presence of 'the enormous population of Asia' in De Quincey's terrifying opium dreams – most Europeans 'conceived of Asia beyond the Tigris as a place where people seemed to run into each other, to replicate each other, to compose one mass without divisions or features.'²¹

In the second stanza Southey concentrates on the bright spectacle of the scene, framed by the night sky, rather than the watching crowd:

Vainly, ye blessed twinklers of the night,
 Your feeble beams ye shed,
 Quench'd in the unnatural light which might out-stare
 Even the broad eye of day;
 And thou from thy celestial way
 Pourest, O Moon, an ineffectual ray!
 For lo! ten thousand torches flame and flare
 Upon the midnight air,
 Blotting the lights of heaven
 With one portentous glare.
 Behold the fragrant smoke in many a fold,
 Ascending, floats along the fiery sky,
 And hangeth visible on high,
 A dark and waving canopy.
 (CK, p. 2)

Here a contrast is made between the artificial and therefore 'unnatural' blazing light of the funeral procession, and the dimmer natural 'lights of heaven', the stars. The religious ceremony, with the bright artificiality of superstitious mythology is 'Blotting the lights of heaven/With one portentous glare'. This form of worship, rather than

endowing man with divine enlightenment, divides humanity from knowledge of heaven by the smoke of its torches that form a 'dark...canopy', shrouding earth from heaven's light.

The opening stanzas of the poem are dramatic and absorbing as well as thrilling in the spectacle of so many of ‘them’, these nameless, unknown people, delighting in the funeral scene. However Southey is also subtly promulgating the message that this ceremony is unnatural and dangerous, as the third stanza builds up the tension of the scene. Having described the sight of the spectacle, Southey adds the overwhelming noise of the scene to his vision:

Hark! 'tis the funeral trumpet's breath!
'Tis the dirge of death
At once ten thousand drums begin,
With one long thunder-peal the ear assailing;
Ten thousand voices then join in,
And with one deep and general din
Pour their wild wailing.
The song of praise is drown'd
Amid the deafening sound;
You hear no more the trumpet's tone,
You hear no more the mourner's moan,
Though the trumpet's breath, and the dirge of death,
Swell with commingled force the funeral yell.
But rising over all in one acclaim
Is heard the echoed and re-echoed name,
From all that countless rout;
Arvalan! Arvalan!
Arvalan! Arvalan!
Ten times ten thousand voices in one shout
Call Arvalan! The overpowering sound,
From house to house repeated rings about,
From tower to tower rolls round.

(CK, pp. 2-3)

Southey cleverly uses the description of the sound that so many people could make so as to increase the scale of their presence. The whole stanza concentrates on the intimidating noise of the multitude who 'Swell with commingled force the funeral yell'. The repeated cry of 'Arvalan', made by humans chanting together, is also an

aggressively artificial, rather than a natural sound, as he depicts their frenzied submission to the cult of despot worship. Though in this instance the crowd that Southey depicts is an Eastern one, he also used the image of the 'mob' in letters displaying his fears of domestic civil insurrection, describing the gathering of protestors as a cataclysmic event. For instance in describing the much later Bristol riots (1833) he spoke of the people demanding reform as an unstoppable force – a 'brutalized populace [that] is ready to break in upon us'. In the Portuguese parade, the crowd threaten to become a 'flood' and in *Kehama* they are 'swarming'. The force of so much humanity in one place (and here combined in a common goal) is described as a powerful freak of nature, which on this scale is now *unnatural*. So too, in *The Prelude* (1805), Wordsworth spoke of the London city crowds as a 'roar', a 'tide', an immense force that threatened to overwhelm him.²² However Wordsworth, as Makdisi shows, was trying to gain control over the situation, by picking individual human characteristics out of the crowd and dividing and categorising them:

Wordsworth's ongoing effort to distinguish individual faces in the crowd is an attempt to keep the crowd from working any sudden (and not quite understood) transformation into a mob – as though to reassure himself, as he wanders through the streets of London, that what he sees is still 'only' a crowd, and not yet the mob of his nightmares.²³

Southey does not try to control his crowd in *Kehama*. He deliberately describes the gathering as huge, overflowing and powerfully intimidating, employing the 'nightmares' of Wordsworth to add to the horror of the scene.

Southey tells us in the fourth stanza that those leading the 'death procession' are 'Bramins', and that the body of Arvalan is carried in state, followed by his father Kehama, the 'mighty Rajah' (p. 5). There are other members of the funeral procession who will play an active part:

O sight of grief! the wives of Arvalan,
 Young Azla, young Nealliny, are seen!
 Their widow-robcs of white,
 With gold and jewels bright,
 Each like an Eastern queen.
 Woe! Woe! around their palankeen,
 As on a bridal day,
 With symphony, and dance, and song,
 Their kindred and their friends come on.
 The dance of sacrifice! the funeral song!
 And next the victim slaves in long array
 Richly bedight to grace the fatal day,
 Move onward to their death
 (CK, p. 5)

This funeral therefore is not just an occasion for mourning the death of the 'Rajah's' son but is also a day of general grief and death, in which his wives and many 'victim slaves' are destined also to die. The funeral procession is again compared to the sight and sound of a raging torrent of water – 'Incessant as the roar/Of streams which down the wintry mountain pour' (p. 7). It stops at the 'funeral pile' and Arvalan's wife, Azla, climbs on meekly to meet her fate. His other widow, Nealliny, is also prepared for her death, but she is distressed, 'in her face you see/The supplication and the agony' (p. 9). Her cries are drowned by the 'wild dissonance' of the people and she struggles 'Towards the crowd in vain for pity' as 'They force her on, they bind her to the dead' (p. 9). The two different responses of the women reflect those in the notes on 'suttee' (particularly from Francois Bernier and Pietro Della Valle) that Southey incorporated to verify his fictional construction. These include reports of submissive, devout widows as well as horrifying depictions of women forced to their death – either response seems equally gruesome. The first book concludes with Kehama and the 'Bramins' setting fire to the funeral pyre and the 'victim band' of slaves dancing around it, throwing themselves into the fire, or falling into it in their frenzy:

While round and round, in giddy wheel,
Intoxicate they roll and reel,
Till one by one whirl'd in they fall,
And the devouring flames have swallowed all.
(p. 10)

Southey's reviews and his notes to *Kehama*, show him to have been morally opposed to the Hindu practice of 'suttee', so why did he include this depiction in *Kehama*? And why did he construct it as a thrilling spectacle in this way, drawing the eye on while also repelling it? Southey's letters from Portugal again throw light on his motivations. In one of these letters, Southey repeats a conversation that he had with a lady in Lisbon, who told him that the English residents used to enjoy such a 'fine sight' as an auto-da-fe (the ceremonial burning of heretics by the Inquisition) as much as the Portuguese people (*SL*, I, p. 107). This now-discontinued practice is described as a regular occurrence in Lisbon in Voltaire's *Candide* (1759), and Southey makes reference to that text as if it is a factual account of the level of incidence. For Southey these religious burnings are a mark of the barbarous nature of the Portuguese and so he is disgusted by the revelation, saying 'No English eye ought to have seen so cursed a spectacle' (*SL*, I, p. 107). Southey is also vociferous on the subject of bullfights and their cruelty:

I cannot understand the pleasure excited by a bull-fight. It is honourable to the English character that none of our nation frequent these spectacles. *I am not quite sure that my curiosity in once going was perfectly justifiable; but the pain inflicted by the sight was expiation enough.* (*SL*, I, p. 116)

As an alien spectator Southey found such sights curious, but he detached himself from them by reminding himself of the values he held dear and which he expected his countrymen to also share. So he used these 'spectacles' to define the national characteristics of himself and his fellow Englishmen, against those of the Portuguese. While such events allowed him to make general comments on the 'English character',

they also enabled him to discuss his own individual response to witnessing such an event. The 'sight' of the bull fight impressed itself so strongly on Southey that it gave him 'pain'. This was the effect that he intended to replicate in the first book of *Kehama* – as well as in various incidents in *Thalaba* and *Madoc*, which also have gruesomely horrific moments, attributed to alien cultural practices. Southey therefore described the sati ceremony in *Kehama* closely and deliberately in order to also inflict 'pain' on his readers. His moral reaction to the sight of the bull fight was never to tolerate watching another and this same reaction is what he wanted to engender in his European reader of *Kehama*, who is 'watching' the sati scene – in order to stop this practice. Whereas the women in *Kehama* 'throw back their veils/With unimpeded and insatiate sight' (CK, pp. 1-2) exhibiting an unpleasant fascination for the scene, such sights when observed by an English spectator should effect a moral reaction. There was, therefore, such a thing as a moral spectacle for Southey, against which his reader could define his or her 'English character'. No English person would think of taking part in such a cruel or violent act, but the prurient act of watching (or reading) could be excused because it defined the difference between 'us', the English writer and his Western reader, and the inhumane actions of 'them', another race who carry out these atrocities and also enjoy watching them.

5.3 'This Eastern Bonaparte'

As the plot of *The Curse of Kehama* progresses from the funeral scene, the 'mournful Spirit' of Kehama's son appears to the grieving 'Rajah' (CK, p. 11). Arvalan taunts Kehama into retribution against his murderer saying 'Art thou not powerful,...even like a God?' (p. 12) reiterating the idea that Southey developed in *Thalaba* of secular kings (and particularly Oriental despots) abrogating God's power. Southey's treatment of this theme in *Kehama* is based on a more familiar, Western model of

tyranny and aggression – that provided by Napolon Bonaparte, proclaimed Emperor of France in 1804. This connection between the French ruler and Southey's fiction was one that he was keen to make, facetiously suggesting in the year after his poem's publication that 'If Canning would but compare Bonaparte to Kehama in the House of Commons, I might get half as much by my next poem' (*LC*, III, 303). In order to understand this conflation of Napoleon into Southey's fictional 'King of the world' (p. 5), it is necessary to consider Southey's developing response to the republican leader that he had once so much admired.

The period over which Southey was writing *Kehama* shows a resolution of his political beliefs, and a patriotism emerging for his own country at war with France, which was integral to his depiction of imperial tyranny. Southey's youthful resentment of the British government's hostility towards the nascent French republic, and his hatred of William Pitt – who he considered the oppressor of liberty for declaring war on France in 1793 – had blinded him to the political realities of Napoleon's increasingly autonomous actions. When Napoleon seized control of France in November 1799 Southey was shocked, reflecting sadly that 'The cause of republicanism is over and *it* is now only a struggle for dominion' (*NL*, I, p. 211). Southey was forced to face reality in the same way that Coleridge had been in April 1798, when France had invaded that other republican symbol of liberty for British radicals, the Swiss Cantons. In his 'Recantation', or as it was later named 'France. An Ode', Coleridge had already realised that France's actions could only 'insult the shrine of Liberty' (*CPW*, I, p. 246, l. 83) and prove that there was no place for such ideals in human society or political systems. Southey had been slower to recognise the danger, but in a letter written to his friend Mary Barker, towards the end of 1801, he detailed the changes taking place in his opinions towards both England and France:

France has played the traitor with liberty. Mary Barker, it is not I who have turned round. I stand where I stood, looking at the rising sun – and now the sun has set behind me! (*SL*, I, p. 180)

Southey's defence against charges of apostasy was often that he had not changed in his opinions and values, but that the world had changed around him.²⁴ He goes on to say:

England has mended – is mending – will mend. I have still faith enough in God, and hope enough of man, but not of France! Freedom cannot grow up in that hot-bed of immorality; that oak must root in hardier soil – England or Germany. A military despotism! popery reestablished! the negroes again to be enslaved! Why had not the man perished before the walls of Acre in his greatness and his glory? (*SL*, I, p. 180)

Southey's outrage displays his acute disappointment that Bonaparte, whom he had defended and compared to the heroic Alexander (even after the 1799 coup d'état) was not proving worthy of his admiration. In Coleridge's words Napoleon had brought himself and his country so low, as 'To mix with Kings in the low lust of sway' (*CPW*, I, p. 246, l. 81).

Nevertheless Southey was relieved when the Addington administration brought about the Treaty of Amiens in March 1802 and the long-desired end of war with France. Looking back on that time in later life he said of its effect on him:

No act of amnesty ever produced such conciliatory consequences as that Peace. It restored in me the English feeling which had been deadened; it placed me in sympathy with my country, bringing me thus into that natural and healthy state of mind upon, which time and knowledge, and reflection, was sure to produce their proper and salutary effect. (*SL*, III, p. 320)

However the disastrous consequences of that treaty meant that Britain was left with no territories in the Mediterranean from which to protect its overland trade routes to India, via the Levant, Egypt and the Black Sea. One of the terms of the treaty was that

Malta – which had been recently occupied by Britain (after a two year siege) as a defensive measure to protect British interests in the East – was to be handed back to its original rulers, the knights of the Order of St. John. Britain was obviously reluctant to give Malta up and war broke out between Britain and France again over this issue in May 1803.²⁵ This battle for control of the Orient shows just how fundamental to the European balance of power territories in the East were, even at this stage in history. This time when war broke out Southey could once again feel ‘in sympathy with my country’ saying ‘the conduct of France quite vexes and irritates me...France must suffer by war, or she will war on to all eternity’ (*NL*, I, p. 313). According to William Haller, Southey felt that the two countries had changed roles as ‘tyranny infinitely monstrous was embodied in France’ while ‘England was fighting for liberty and natural goodness’.²⁶ This was quite a change of direction for Southey and it can hardly be incidental that while these events were occurring – and having a huge influence on his opinions, as his letters reveal – Southey was writing *Kehama*, and depicting his overweening ‘Rajah’ as a tyrannical ruler who was also a slave to ambition and pride, aspiring to conquer all the territories of the universe to create his empire. In a letter written in the same month that war broke out again with France, Southey said of *Kehama*; ‘[it] gives a good sketch of the general state of the Universe in consequence of this Eastern Bonaparte’s proceedings’²⁷ showing how much he considered the actions of the ‘Almighty Man’ (*CK*, p. 18) of his fiction to reflect Napoleon’s conduct.

Increasingly Southey saw the French Emperor’s policy as that of a dictator, and began to separate the abhorrence he felt for Napoleon himself, from the French people – who he considered were in thrall to him as much as *Kehama*’s subjects. Southey’s letters reveal his desolation in 1805 at Napoleon’s victory at Austerlitz and

the death of Nelson at the Battle of Trafalgar in the same year. These events only made Southey more convinced that Britain was at war with Napoleon personally and he never lost any opportunity of publicising this opinion – especially after Napoleon's troops invaded Portugal in 1807 and then Spain in 1808, instituting his brother, Joseph, as King of Spain. Writing of his political commentary for the *Edinburgh Annual Register* in 1809, Southey said 'I have laid down therein my principles about tyrannicide, and the necessity of carrying on the war personally against Bonaparte; that is to say, proclaiming that we are at any time ready to make peace with France, but never while he retains his power, nor, under any circumstances, with him' (*SL*, II, p.169).

The fact that Southey considered an Oriental 'Rajah' as the fictional embodiment of Napoleon, shows how 'alien' to Western models of polity – i.e. the British government (that Southey now endorsed), and the original democratic, republican ideals of the French Revolution – he felt the French emperor's actions to be. Napoleon's Orientalisation into the figure of Kehama pointed to another threat – his increasing domination of the Mediterranean and Asian arenas of Eastern politics. Napoleon's combative strategy to block the British trade routes to India – disrupting commerce and communications between the metropolis and British territories – was part of his plan for a French invasion of India. And as Michael Duffy claims, such Napoleonic aggression was a direct influence on British foreign policy in India:

Napoleon's eastern threat was used to justify the extension of British dominance over India by defeating its most dangerous native rivals, Mysore (1790-2, 1799) and the Marathas (1803-4) and building up an immense Indian army of 227,000 men (86 per cent native sepoys) by 1815 which gave it complete dominance of the shores of the Indian Ocean.²⁸

The defeat of the French at Waterloo confirmed Britain's naval supremacy and secured the Indian territories from a French sea-borne invasion. Therefore despite the connection Southey made between Bonaparte and Kehama, he felt there was a more dangerous threat to the security of the British empire in India, as an article for the *Quarterly Review* in 1809 makes clear:

India is perpetually in danger, – not from Buonaparte, – that would be the last object of his ambition, – he is not idiot enough to believe that England is to be conquered there, nor is it for Asia that Providence seems to have appointed him its executioner upon degraded nations. But no century has ever elapsed in which Asia has not produced some Buonaparte of its own, some villain, who setting equally at defiance the laws of God and man, collects the whole contemporary force of evil about him, and bears down everything in his way.²⁹

For Southey, a greater threat to the British empire was an 'Almighty Man' who was a product of Asia, not Europe, who was contemptuous of 'the laws of God and man' and employed the 'force of evil' to conquer all. In fact the French Emperor was a tame adversary compared to an Asian version of himself. In writing *Kehama* Southey was replicating his fear of such a 'villain', but in the grandest, mythological, even allegorical, proportions of power, to create a ruler who takes on the gods as well as humanity. Such a vision reflected not only Southey's fear of an unknown Oriental tyrant, who was even more to be dreaded than the familiar enemy, Bonaparte, but also the Western tradition of constructing such a figure in fiction. As we recognise now, it is a strand of Western paranoia about an unknown future relationship with alien Eastern territories that builds an evil of such huge proportions in its literature. Southey's article continues to disclose his fears that 'Some new Timur [Christopher Marlowe's *Tamburlaine*] or Khouli Khan [Coleridge's *Kubla Khan*] may rush down from Tartary like a hurricane ...and sweep us from the land'.³⁰ The fear of Western empire-builders generally is that a greater force than themselves will dispossess them.

In creating the character of Kehama (an even more fearful version of the Domdanielites in *Thalaba*), Southey was warning his readers of how challenges to Britain's imperial ambitions could escalate if those in government turned a blind eye to alternative mushrooming power bases – as the gods in *Kehama* do. But he also holds up his 'larger than life' figure of the Eastern dictator as a model of aberrant imperialism, an example of 'how not to' build an empire, by oppressing people to the point of rebellion. The character of Kehama should not be taken as evidence that Southey opposed imperial politics – his Eastern 'Rajah' was simply the obverse of the paternalistic Western empire-builder that he constructed in *Madoc*. Coming from a European philosophical background that valued the writings of Gibbon (*The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, 1776-1788) and Volney (*The Ruins of Empire*, 1791) Southey was well aware of how precarious imperial politics could be. His review goes on to argue the case of the Baptist missionaries in India, who he felt had an important role in reinforcing the English language and religion and would make it less likely that cataclysmic Asian forces would 'sweep us from the land'.

5.4 The 'fabric of human fraud'

The central characters, Kailyal and her father Ladurlad, are soon made to feel the force of Kehama's anger for their role in Arvalan's death. As the couple are dragged in front of Kehama to learn their punishment, Kailyal clings to the idol of the domestic goddess, Marriataly, that she worships. Kailyal is swept into a nearby river, where the 'image' buoys her up and carries her away to safety, demonstrating as a plot device what Southey had learnt about the importance of domestic gods to the ordinary people of India. Kehama meanwhile, turns his attention to Ladurlad, cursing him with a piece of simple, but powerful incantatory poetry:

I charm thy life
 From the weapons of strife,
 From stone and from wood,
 From fire and from flood,
 From the serpent's tooth,
 And the beasts of blood:
 From Sickness I charm thee,
 And Time shall not harm thee;
 But Earth which is mine,
 Its fruits shall deny thee;
 And Water shall hear me,
 And know thee and fly thee,
 And the Winds shall not touch thee
 When they pass by thee,
 And the Dews shall not wet thee,
 When they fall nigh thee:
 And thou shalt seek Death
 To release thee, in vain;
 Thou shalt live in thy pain,
 While Kehama shall reign,
 With a fire in thy heart,
 And a fire in thy brain;
 And Sleep shall obey me,
 And visit thee never,
 And the Curse shall be on thee
 For ever and ever.
 (CK, pp. 18-9)

Ladurlad's punishment – like the inhabitants of the halls of Eblis, in William Beckford's *Vathek* – is to live with a heart 'enveloped in flames'.³¹ He is marked out from others by his destiny and shunned like Beckford's sinners, because of his total preoccupation with his own suffering, as he stands with 'eyes of idiot wandering' (p. 19).

Kehama's curse relates to Southey's representation of the 'Bramins'. The evil emperor is very much in league with these 'priests' who maintain his pre-eminence over the people by their arcane knowledge of the Gods and their sacred position as presiding officials over sacrificial rites. They also have the power to make outcasts of those who defy the regulations that their religion demands. In the plans for Southey's poem in his commonplace book this is the structure that the curse was designed to

take; as a 'Braminical' banishment from caste. The original for Kehama, 'Keradon' was in Southey's plan, a 'Bramin', whereas 'Cartamen', the original of Ladurlad, was a 'Paria', or pariah – meaning either a member of a low Indian caste or a social exile, which of course he becomes.³² During the course of the very confused plot of the commonplace book, Cartamen is cursed by Keradon. This takes the form of being 'cast out':

May he be shunned by all his own cast, and be in the same abomination to them that they are to the rest of the world; the sun shine to scorch him; no wind cool him; no water wet his lips. He shall thirst, and the cool element fly from his touch; he shall hunger, and all earthly food refuse its aid.³³

In the final version of his poem Southey omitted the fact that Ladurlad was 'cast out' of Indian society by Kehama and his 'priests'. In the published text Ladurlad's punishment makes him an outcast from the natural world around him, as Kehama in his position as 'mighty Rajah' and 'Almighty Man' has dominion over all the earth. Ladurlad wanders alone, having left his daughter so that she will not be persecuted by her relationship with him, and having no community that he can find comfort in – an Ahasuerus of the Indian world. In *Kehama*, where like *Thalaba* there is little social community, it is the natural elements that are repelled by Ladurlad's touch rather than his family, or society. Southey, rather than relying on what he considered to be a shameful and specifically Indian act of religious tyranny, dealt with the issue of caste in a way that he thought would be more acceptable to his European readers. Therefore the curse is not rooted in local custom, but presented as a more appalling, awesome version of Hindu social law, that was better suited to poetry and had a wider universal application.

The connection between the curse and the Hindu religion was not simply a vehicle for Southey's poem. Such acts of 'oppression' were a subject of constant consternation for him as his reviews of the Baptist Missions in India reveal. Southey makes these comments on the natives of the Indian territories governed by the British:

That the people are happier under our government than they have ever been at any time within the reach of history, is beyond all doubt; yet the very circumstance which renders them so, does in some degree lessen our security. By taking the exercise of authority into our own hands, we preserve them from the cruel extortion and oppression to which they had always heretofore been exposed; and that whole class of men who would otherwise have thriven by oppressing them, are thereby made our enemies.³⁴

This 'class of men', Southey tells us, are the 'Bramins'. The object of Southey's article was to defend the Baptist Missions in India from accusations – in the *Edinburgh Review* particularly – that their proselytising in the East India Company territories would create dangerous tensions between the Europeans and their Indian employees. Southey saw the 'Bramins', rather than the missionaries, as a source of instability in the region, and they are the target for his invective throughout the article.

Jeaneane Fowler in her essay on 'Hinduism' in *World Religions*, states that the Brahmans (as they are more properly known) derive their name from 'Brahma', an important Hindu god, as well as from 'Brahman', the 'Ultimate Reality' or 'transcendent Absolute'.³⁵ In the simplest terms Brahman is 'the Source of all from inanimate matter to human beings and the vastness of the cosmos itself. Nothing, from the tiniest atom to the largest planet, sun or star, can exist independently of Brahman'.³⁶ As the most elevated of the Hindu social classes, the role of the Brahmans is the 'transmission of the Sanskritic sacred traditions (VEDA), and the performance of priestly sacrificial rituals'.³⁷ The Brahmans therefore have great prestige and have dominated Hindu society for many centuries. In Southey's eyes they

were an oppressive priestly regime who subjugated the populace with 'despicable mythology' in order to maintain their pre-eminence. Southey castigated the Brahmins for imposing the iniquitous caste system on the Hindus, as well as for presiding over the outlandish and barbaric religious sacrifices that they enforced on the people. However he was convinced that the spread of Christianity had the power to release the Indian people from their authority. By coming into conflict with monotheism, 'The religion of the Bramins must be given up the moment it is attacked; like the Paganism of the Greeks and Romans it has nothing which can be defended'.³⁸ Southey made the common assumption of the period that the Hindu religion was simply a polytheistic paganism, due to its representation by Western scholars. In fact Hinduism is a very complex religion and at its central core is a monotheistic belief in Brahman, which as well as being 'the Source and essence of all in the cosmos...is also manifest in a multiplicity of divine forms'.³⁹ Behind the belief in the various gods (or manifestations of Brahman) of the Hindu religion is the link to one 'Absolute'. Several Western commentators during the Romantic period did not know, or chose to ignore this important aspect of the Hindu teachings. It certainly suited Southey's argument to contrast this polytheistic version of Hinduism with the monotheism of Christianity (and even Islam – which he holds up in his article as less 'monstrous' than the Hindu religion).

Southey went on to argue in his review that unlike other religious groups (such as the Moslems and the Parsees for instance), 'the Hindoos have no prophet or teacher to refer to, no system wherewith to shelter themselves; for their mythological books consist of fables of which it is not possible to say whether they are most foolish, most beastly, or most extravagant'.⁴⁰ In fact the 'Bramins have no facts to which they can appeal in corroboration of these books, no history which is capable of demonstration

connected with them: by their internal evidence they must stand or fall, and their self-contradictions and absurdities may be made evident to the meanest capacity'.⁴¹ The burden of proof, under the rigour of Western epistemology, therefore lay with the Brahmins, and because they could not produce a 'history', scrutinised and verified by European scholars, Southey perceived their religion as no more than a system for maintaining their pre-eminence. We know how Southey felt about the clerical hierarchy of the Anglican Church and how he made a link between the 'priestly' figures of authority in all religions, including Islam, Roman Catholicism, and the Aztec religion. Again here he makes these links with regard to the Brahmins:

Except the system of Mexican priestcraft, no fabric of human fraud has ever been devised so deadly as the Braminical; and though the Mexican rites were bloodier, they were less heart-hardening, less injurious to society, less pernicious to the moral nature of man. There was a time when the custom of burning widows was disbelieved in Europe, as a fiction of lying travellers.⁴²

The practice of 'suttee' is just one of the Hindu rituals that is so incredible, rational Europeans cannot believe it. For the practices of the Brahmins to equate to those of 'Mexican priestcraft' means that they had plumbed the bottoms of Southey's scale of bloody rituals, that comprised his comparative study of world religions.

5.5 Asiatic Researches

In *Kehama*, as the curse takes effect, Ladurlad and his daughter embark on separate journeys to escape Kehama's influence. Kailyal is pursued by Arvalan's evil spirit, but escapes with the aid of Pollear (or Ganesh) one of the Hindu gods. She finds protection from a 'Glendoveer' (or angel) named Ereenia – one of 'The loveliest race of all of heavenly birth' (*CK*, p. 47). A line in the poem describing him, 'Of human form divine' (p. 59), replicates William Blake's preoccupation with the divine in the

human body, and vice versa. Southey describes Ereenia as a muscular powerful angel, a spiritual being, but also having a physical body and strong but beautiful wing-span:

Angelic power and dignity and grace
Were in his glorious pennons; from the neck
Down to the ankles reach'd their swelling web
(p. 60)

Ereenia, who falls in love with Kailyal, transports her to Swerga (heaven), in an aerial car, or 'Ship of Heaven', to protect her from the wrath of Kehama, and Arvalan's rapacious spirit. Ereenia is a virtuous, pious hero, and more successful in some ways than Southey's other heroes, simply because the reader accepts his angelic qualities, not expecting to find any psychological realism in his character. In Swerga the reader learns that 'The Almighty Tyrant' is preparing to take over heaven and that even the powerful gods Brama, Veeshnu, Indra and Seeva are fearful of the outcome. After Kehama (with the aid of the Brahmans) has conquered heaven his next imperial goal will be hell and there will be no place of retreat for them.

At this point the poem takes the reader more squarely into the realms of 'mythology' and the machinations of the Hindu gods. In this section I will examine the role of the Hindu scriptures, as represented by Western commentators, in *Kehama*. Southey's debt to Orientalist scholars for his material creates the interesting division between his moral condemnation of Brahman 'oppression' and his positive depiction of the deities, on which the Hindu religion is based. The main sources of Indian 'mythology' that Southey used for his poem were: Nathaniel Brassey Halhed's *Gentoo Code* (1776); Charles Wilkins's translation of the *Mahabharata*, containing the *Bhagavad-Gita* (1785); Sir William Jones's translations of *Sacotala* (1789) and the *Institutes of Hindu Law: or the ordinances of Menu* (1794); as well as the *Ramayan*. This latter text Southey describes in his notes to *Kehama* as 'one of the

most celebrated of the sacred books of the Bramins. This work the excellent and learned Baptist missionaries at Serampore are at this time employed in printing and translating' (CK, p. 316). He quotes extensively from the first volume which has recently 'arrived in Europe' and goes on to say of this text, 'The reader will be less disposed to condemn the fictions of Kehama as extravagant, when he compares them with this genuine specimen of Hindoo fable' (p. 316). Southey again anticipates the reaction of his (male) Western reader – as he did throughout *Kehama*'s pre-publication period – to be one that would consider his text 'extravagant', even though he himself revelled in the text's extravagance in his letters. However Southey implies that his reader should be comforted by knowing that he has filtered out some of the excessive material of the 'genuine specimen' in his own version. The implication is that the 'Hindoo fable' needs to be mediated by a Western writer and in fact Southey relied on such mediated texts himself in writing *Kehama*. He used Western translations of the Hindu epics (being unable to read Persian or Sanskrit) and depended even more heavily on the commentary of those scholars who had translated them, as well as the accounts of European travellers and residents in India.

The role that William Jones and other members of the Asiatic Society of Bengal played in the construction of *Kehama* was very important, both for supplying much of the material that Southey drew on, but also in terms of the value they placed on Indian literature. Southey's poetic descriptions of the Indian gods and their habitat are generally accompanied by notes containing extracts from essays published by the Asiatic Society in their *Asiatick Researches*. Southey was very familiar with these essays and reviewed new volumes for the *Annual Review* as they were published, until 1809. The annotations to *Kehama* contain quotations from essays by Jones as the society's President (until his death in 1794), as well as by Captain Francis Wilford,

Henry Thomas Colebrooke and others. In an 1807 review of the *Researches*, Southey called these essays the 'treasures of the East', which will 'outlive the ill constructed and baseless empire in which they have originated'.⁴³

Southey's poetic representation of Indra and his domain, Swerga, is underpinned by an excerpt from an essay, written by Sir William Jones – included in the first volume of the *Asiatic Researches* (first date of publication, 1788) – entitled 'On the Gods of Greece, Italy and India'.⁴⁴ This essay was, like much of Jones's writing as President, 'Pioneering in its attempt to discover universal connections between Oriental and Occidental religions and cultures' and was 'immediately and widely influential in its day' as Michael Franklin points out.⁴⁵ In the extract on Indra from Jones' essay (that Southey includes in his notes), Jones compares this Indian god, who is understood to be 'the King' or 'Lord of the Sky', to aspects of Greek and Roman mythology (CK, p. 288).⁴⁶ For instance Jones says 'He has the character of the Roman *Genius*, or chief of the Good Spirits'.⁴⁷ He lists the Hindu attributes of the God and then he says 'his Olympus is Meru'.⁴⁸ Several of the other notes to *Kehama* are from Jones's essay and make comparisons between the Indian gods and those of other 'pagan mythologies' as Southey labels them. A note to Book VII quotes from Jones: 'A very distinguished son of Brahma, named Nared, bears a strong resemblance to Hermes or Mercury'.⁴⁹ In Book X a connection is made between the twin sons of the 'Sun' god, Surya, and Castor and Pollux.⁵⁰ Jones's essay moves on from these examples to say more explicitly, 'We must not be surprised at finding all the pagan deities, male and female melt into each other and at least into one or two'.⁵¹ What Jones intended to prove by his research, and what Southey valued from his work, was this comparative study of mythological origins. Such connections to classical mythology justified Southey's use of material that might otherwise have

been considered abstruse and unnecessary, as well as extravagant, by the European reader he posited.

This preoccupation with finding a common link between mythological beliefs only reflects the greater programme of the *Asiatic Researches* generally. Jones and his fellow essayists had a polemical as well as a pedagogical agenda that attempted to make Indian culture and religion both accessible and acceptable to their European contemporaries. Even more ambitiously, as John Drew points out, 'From the outset of his career Jones had hoped that a study of Oriental cultures might help reinvigorate European culture'.⁵² In order to investigate a culture so vastly different from their own, the Asiatic Society members applied scholarly methods to their field of study, to make it more comprehensible to Western readers. Asia had historically been perceived by Westerners as an ancient, marvellous and immeasurable continent that remained unfathomable and Jones's memories of his first encounter with this land display this perspective:

When I was at sea, last August, on my voyage to this country, which I had long and ardently desired to visit, I found, one evening on inspecting the observations of the day, that *India* lay before us, and *Persia* on our left, whilst a breeze from *Arabia* blew nearly on our stern. A situation so pleasing in itself, and to me so new, could not fail to awaken a train of reflections in a mind, which had early been accustomed to contemplate with delight the eventful histories and agreeable fictions of this eastern world. It gave me inexpressible pleasure to find myself in the midst of so noble an amphitheatre, almost encircled by the vast regions of *Asia*, which has ever been esteemed the nurse of Sciences, the inventress of delightful and useful arts, the scene of glorious actions, fertile in the productions of human genius, abounding in natural wonders, and infinitely diversified in the forms of religion and government, in the law, manners, customs, and languages, as well as in the features and complexions, of men.⁵³

As Jones 'surveys' Asia, he is overwhelmed by its vastness and its infinite attributes. The excitement and passion he feels – revealed by his declaration that he 'ardently desired' to visit this unknown continent – have been inculcated by a textual

knowledge of its 'eventful histories' and 'agreeable fictions'. Edward Said identifies this literary preconception of Asia as one of the attributes that shaped European Orientalists.⁵⁴ Positioning himself in the middle of this ancient 'amphitheatre', Jones is surrounded and swamped by Asia – but to his delight, rather than the fear that De Quincey revealed in his own 'survey' of the 'vast empires' of Asia, that constitute his opium dreams.⁵⁵ Whereas others may feel intimidated by the vast repository of knowledge that Asia contains, Jones is inspired by the revelations it can provide, positing the Orient as a feminine and therefore yielding, 'fertile' resource for investigation by the energetic male scholar. In this discourse, which discusses the aims and ambitions of the newly formed Asiatic Society – and takes the form of an introductory essay in the first volume of *Asiatic Researches* – Jones sweeps acquisitively over all the territories of Asia. He sees the continent at once as one composite mass, comprising a treasure-chest of resources, but he also deconstructs it into separate parts – fabulous jewels to be taken out and admired individually in his lyrical descriptions – 'the ancient and wonderful empire of China', 'Japan, with the cluster of precious islands', the 'immeasurable deserts of Arabia'.⁵⁶

Jones insists in his 'Discourse on the Institution of a Society' that there will be no rules for the Asiatic Society, taking it for granted that the Western scholarly spirit of industry will be applied to the members' researches. However these guidelines are laid down:

you will investigate whatever is rare in the stupendous fabrick of nature, will correct the geography of *Asia* by new observations and discoveries; will trace the annals and even traditions, of these nations, who from time to time have peopled or desolated it; and will bring to light their various forms of government, with their institutions civil and religious.⁵⁷

The researchers are therefore expected to take an active, and even corrective role in their studies. This is because, as Jones states in his 'second anniversary discourse', they are endowed with 'the superiority of *European* talents'. He observes that 'reason and taste are the grand prerogatives of *European* minds, while the *Asiaticks* have soared to loftier heights in the sphere of imagination'.⁵⁸ Thereby Jones creates a distinction between the rational and scholarly essayists of the Asiatic Society and the imaginative writings of the '*Asiaticks*'. This division is a result of Jones's Enlightenment background that prioritises knowledge based on a philosophical, scientific and rational spirit of inquiry, but is also attracted to the inspirational poetry and 'mythology' of the Orient. It also points to the problems that Jones and his essayists would report, in using their academic methods to analyse Indian sacred texts.

The *Asiatic Researches* often construct an India, and indeed an Asia, that is ahistorical, lacking any approved scientific method of chronology. The version of Europeans in India that Jones et al presented to the public (no doubt unconsciously) is very illuminating, particularly for the tone of scholarly bemusement it employs in trying to construct a logical system of knowledge from what are considered to be very interesting, but exasperatingly vague, Oriental apochryphal fables. There are several reasons that Jones gave for a structured investigation of Asian history. One of these was that it would facilitate British rule in India:

The civil history of their vast empires, and of India in particular, must be highly interesting to our common country: but we have a still nearer interest in knowing all former modes of ruling these inestimable provinces, on the prosperity of which so much of our national welfare and individual benefit, seems to depend.⁵⁹

Another reason is because Jones believed that despite the 'degenerate and abased' state of the present Hindus:

in some early age they were splendid in arts and arms, happy in government, wise in legislation, and eminent in various knowledge: but since their civil history beyond the middle of the *nineteenth century* from the present time is involved in a cloud of fables, we seem to possess only *four* general media of satisfying our curiosity concerning it; namely, first, their *Languages* and *Letters*; secondly their *Philosophy* and *Religion*; thirdly, the actual remains of their old *Sculpture* and *Architecture*; and fourthly, the written memorials of their *Sciences* and *Arts*.⁶⁰

So Jones tried to discover more about India's glorious past that contrasted so tellingly with the modern Hindus he saw. Frustrated by finding this period enveloped 'in a cloud of fables', Jones was forced to investigate other, more obscure sources. As well as being confounded in his attempts to unravel the 'civil history' of the Hindus, Jones was faced with untangling their other 'sciences':

Geography, astronomy, and chronology have in this part of *Asia*, shared the fate of authentic history; and like that, have been so masked and bedecked in the fantastic robes of mythology and metaphor, that the real system of *Indian* philosophers and mathematicians can scarce be distinguished.⁶¹

With regard to chronology, Jones' colleague Francis Wilford – who also expressed bewilderment in the face of the Hindu's 'monstrous system' – stated that he had 'rejected [it] as absolutely repugnant to the course of nature, and human reason'.⁶² Jones' attempts to rationalise the Hindu chronology by his 'scholarly' methods, caused him to draw erroneous conclusions, as S. N. Mukherjee points out: 'Jones used so-called etymology and astronomy in reconstructing the chronology... This led him to fix the dates with unreliable calculations and identify names on their superficial resemblance' because 'he believed in Genesis blindly' and 'ignored the Vedas completely'.⁶³

What Southey took from the *Asiatick Researches* as much as anything else, was this bafflement in the face of a 'cloud of fables', where 'fiction and history are so blended "as to be scarce distinguishable"'.⁶⁴ In *Kehama* Southey constructed a loose

free-floating version of India that is timeless, unanchored in any secure historical fact, and as obscure and recondite as the beliefs he recounts. Even the annotation that Southey's 'mythology' is embedded in is anachronically unreliable itself, ranging as it does from ancient Indian epics, through to Francois Bernier's *The History of the Late Revolution of the Empire of the Great Mogol* (English translation, 1671-2), and to the more recent accounts by travellers such as Pierre Sonnerat in his *A Voyage to the East Indies and China* (1788) or Michael Symes's *An Account of an embassy to the kingdom of Ava* (1800) and the *Periodical Accounts relative to the Baptist Missionary Society* (1800-19).

As well as creating an ahistorical version of India, in *Kehama* Southey presents the subcontinent as a vague, unmapped region. In fact more emphasis is placed on mythological sites, with the 'real' Indian landscape remaining unidentified, as well as unlocated in any precise geographical area. Many of the notes to *Kehama* come from Francis Wilford's essays, and the exasperated tone that he employs – when faced with what he considered to be historical imprecision – was one that he also brought to Indian geographical knowledge. Wilford states that 'Indeed their systems of geography, chronology, and history, are all equally monstrous and absurd'.⁶⁵ Because 'the *Hindus* have no regular work on the subject of geography' Wilford found himself 'under a necessity of extracting my materials from their historical poems, or, as they may be called more properly, their legendary tales; and in them I could not expect to meet with requisite data for ascertaining the relative situations of places'. He was therefore obliged to 'follow the track, real or imaginary, of their deities and heroes'.⁶⁶ This proto-scientific method which attempts to make sense of 'mythology' was adopted by Southey in *Kehama* where he mixes fictional 'geography' with factual in a strange depiction that replicates the tone of Wilford's

Despite using Western scholars to filter out the 'extravagant' element of 'Hindoo fable' Southey ended in constructing one of his own from his sources. Though the Asiatic researchers applied scientific methods to their field of study, at one and the same time they reported the limitations of applying such methods to the Asiatic 'sphere of imagination'. The mixture of Indian 'mythology' and European method created mystery while trying to solve it, and the effects of the essayists' comments, as well as Southey's poem, adds to the romantic misconception of Asia as a mysterious, timeless, unmappable continent – an idea that has percolated into the modern period contemporaneously with the image of Africa's 'heart of darkness'. While Jones, as Michael Franklin has shown, did make his reading public more aware of the Hindu religion as a system of belief, I would still argue that by valuing Indian literature as part of a golden age of culture he added to 'the identification of the Orient as static and fixed in a timeless past'.⁶⁷ Jones' respect for India originated in an *idea* of its past, rather than in its 'degenerate' present. It is hardly surprising that this Asian fantasy, rather than the political realities of contemporary India, was such a source of inspiration to Western poets during this period. Only in such a land of imaginative potential could Kubla Khan create a 'miracle of rare device', where the oppositional elements of fire and ice co-exist in harmony (*CPW*, I, p. 297, l. 35). And as in Coleridge's Oriental poem, Southey built his own 'pleasure-dome' in a 'Palace' of 'the Elements' for Indra:

On that ethereal lake, whose waters lie
 Blue and transpicuous, like another sky,
 The Elements had rear'd their King's abode
 A strong controuling power their strife suspended
 And there their hostile essences they blended,
 To form a Palace worthy of the God.
 Built on the Lake the waters were its floor;
 And here its walls were water arch'd with fire,
 And here were fire with water vaulted o'er;
 And spires and pinnacles of fire

Round watery cupolas aspire,
 And domes of rainbow rest on fiery towers;
 And roofs of flame are turreted around
 With cloud, and shafts of cloud with flame are bound.
 (CK, pp. 65-66)

The unlikely combination of the 'hostile essences' of fire and water echo Coleridge's poem, but possibly the constructions of both poets found their pre-cursor in Jones' own fabulous 'Palace of Fortune' (1769):

A spacious lake its clear expanse display'd;
 In mazy curls the flowing jasper wav'd
 O'er its smooth bed with polish'd agate pav'd;
 And on a rock of ice by magick rais'd
 High in the midst a gorgeous palace blaz'd
 The sunbeams on the gilded portals glanc'd,
 Play'd on the spires, and on the turrets danc'd,⁶⁸

Other elements in *Kehama* that are similar to Jones' poem point to it being a source for Southey (and Shelley's *Queen Mab*, 1813) as John Drew has shown in *India and the Romantic Imagination* (1987).⁶⁹ In 'The Palace of Fortune' the heroine is transported through the air in a 'golden car' to a paradisiacal garden in the same way that Kailyal is taken to Swerga in *Kehama*. Jones' fabulous, romantic version of India is what appealed to Southey and this was what he replicated in *Kehama*, claiming Asia as a region where poetic inventiveness is uncircumscribed. As Said states, the Orient is created in such texts as an unrestricted, imaginative 'other' for rational Europe.⁷⁰

5.6 Domesticating India

As Swerga falls to the conquering Kehama, Ladurlad and Kailyal are reunited on earth and travel through an ostensibly realistic Indian landscape, until they find a place of rest from their persecutors. Southey's descriptions of Indian scenery are underpinned by extracts from various travel accounts, as well as from texts by

employees of the East India Company. One of these sources, describing and depicting the landscape, was William Hodges's *Travels in India* (1793). Hodges's artistic talent, as well as his career as an explorer, was enhanced by his role as a draughtsman on Captain Cook's second voyage to the Pacific (1772-5). As Indira Ghose states, Hodges's text describing his travels through Bengal, shows India 'as a land straight out of a picture of the Orient, vividly described as an aesthetic tableau consisting of a wealth of colourful impressions'.⁷¹ So too, in Southey's poem, we have a series of tableaux creating frames for his characters' adventures that are drawn with a painterly/poetic eye, rather than employing realism. The fact that Nigel Leask describes this quality in *Kehama* as 'a picturesque template for figuring subcontinental realities' suggests that Southey was fulfilling a polemical initiative to construct the Indian landscape as orderly and controllable.⁷² Those, like Southey, who surveyed India from the metropolis, constructed a vision of India that conformed to European aesthetics, another method of imposing control over 'monstrous' material.

Captain Thomas Williamson's *Oriental Field Sports* (1807) was a frequent source of information for Southey's depictions of Indian plants and animals.⁷³ The graphic descriptions and finely drawn, yet intensely colourful plates (by Samuel Howett) that dominate Williamson's text, were another precedent for the painterly style of *Kehama*. *Oriental Field Sports* provides a Eurocentric view of India, with hunting scenes dominated by a few Europeans mounted on horses or elephants, attended by large groups of native employees. The plates portray the drama of the hunt, showing the capture, and often the killing of their quarry (buffaloes, tigers, warthogs, bears etc.). However the scenery framing the action is not specifically 'Indian' – it is depicted in the generalised conventional neoclassical style that Bernard Smith shows predominated in European painters' first encounters with foreign

landscapes, whether in India or the South Pacific.⁷⁴ The version of India produced is therefore not that of an alien, tropical landscape - apart from one or two buildings – but a tame background against which the potentially fierce wildlife is easily vanquished by superior human hunters.

Southey adopted this moderated version of India in *Kehama*, while adapting it for his own purposes. The natural world of his poem (apart from a poisonous ‘manchineil’ tree) is tame and even beneficent, providing a protective Banian tree to shelter Kailyal and Ladurlad:

’Twas a fair scene wherein they stood,
A green and sunny glade amid the wood,
And in the midst an aged Banian grew.
It was a goodly sight to see
That venerable tree,
For o’er the lawn, irregularly spread,
Fifty straight columns propt its lofty head;

...

Beneath was smooth and fair to sight,
Nor weeds nor briars deform’d the natural floor,
And through the leafy cope which bower’d it o’er
Came gleams of chequer’d light.
So like a temple did it seem, that there
A pious heart’s first impulse would be prayer.

(CK, pp. 133-4)

This passage – inspired by a description of the giant tree in *Oriental Field Sports* – was, as has been pointed out before, considered ‘sublime’ by Mary Russell Mitford in her responses to the poem (C, p. 201). Mitford, like Southey, was influenced by the neoclassical plates of Cook’s voyages (as well as *Kehama*), to make a beneficent safe Polynesian environment for her characters. The contribution of the supporting and protecting temple-like Banian tree to the moral landscape, and message of the poem, is obvious. In the jungle even the fiercest animals do not harm the saintly father and daughter – and in any case, in Southey’s text the growl of a prowling tiger is not as frightening as the ‘human’ evil of the spirit of Arvalan. As the animals of *Oriental*

Field Sports are shown to be ultimately controllable, Kailyal, in the peaceful interlude of life in the 'glade', subdues the jungle animals around her. She does this, not through the violent methods of the chase – here they are tamed ('like another Sakuntala', as Berbhardt-Kabisch points out⁷⁵) by her saintly presence:

A charm was on the leopard when he came
Within the circle of that mystic glade;
Submit he crouch'd before the heavenly Maid,
And offered to her touch his speckled side
(CK, p. 138)

Southey domesticated India in this way in his text, presenting the landscape as aesthetically pleasing (by Western standards), and nature as submissive. Southey's agenda here was similar to that in *Madoc*, where the success of Madoc's American colony is judged by the fact that 'every beast of rapine, had retired/From man's asserted empire' (*Madoc*, pp. 191-2). Southey repeated this trope throughout his narrative poetry, showing 'nature' to be imbued with an integrity that recognises a superior moral code. Scott pointed out in his review of *Kehama* that Kailyal's 'moral character' is throughout the poem completely opposed to the 'omnipotent wickedness of the Rajah'.⁷⁶ While Southey's idea of an Oriental dictator reaches its apogee in *Kehama*, and his example of male virtuosity (Ereenia) is now all-angel, Kailyal is the ultimate example of female purity and probity in the dualistic world that Southey's characters inhabit. All Southey's previous texts – which like *Kehama*, omit any attempt to depict three-dimensional characters – seem to have been working towards this extreme dichotomy of good and evil. The role of Kailyal's 'moral character' in this episode is to demonstrate the efficacy of moral (Western) virtue on a potentially hostile land, over which *Kehama* holds dominion. In *Kehama*, no less than *Madoc*, Southey endeavoured to show the benefits of the civilising mission on British territories abroad. The literary project of *Kehama* therefore complies here with

Southey's imperial ambitions for India that we find in his letters and reviews. India is either depicted as nothing more than jungle in which wild animals roam – so demanding the benefits of cultivation and civilisation – or as a crowded Eastern street scene where 'strong error' predominates (CK, p. 222). In either case the civilising project of the Indian missions – for which the episode with the 'heavenly maid' is a figurative image – will bring the 'peace of Heaven' to India (p. 138).

Kailyal's rejection of the attributes of Indian culture is a further example of her representation of 'Western' moral virtue:

Well might they thus adore that heavenly Maid!
 For never Nymph of Mountain,
 Or Grove, or Lake, or Fountain,
 With a diviner presence fill'd the shade.
 No idle ornaments deface
 Her natural grace,
 Musk spot, nor sandal-streak, nor scarlet stain,
 Ear-drop nor chain, nor arm nor ankle-ring,
 Nor trinketry on front, or neck, or breast,
 Marring the perfect form: she seem'd a thing
 Of Heavens's prime uncorrupted work, a child
 Of early nature undefil'd,
 A daughter of the years of innocence.
 And therefore all things lov'd her.
 (pp. 140-1)

In constructing his virtuous heroine, Southey compares her 'natural grace' and 'innocence' (as he did with Oneiza in *Thalaba*) to the cultural practices of women within the society she is supposed to inhabit, in order to create a contrast. Those decorations that are intended to endow beauty on Indian women – the 'scarlet stain', 'Ear-drop' and 'ankle-ring' – are shown as gaudy and artificial cultural impositions. Kailyal's virtues have an ancient but everlasting value that dates back to 'early nature', before the accretions of Indian society were imposed on its people. Whereas in his youth Southey used the image of a 'Golden Age' as a nobler time in human

history to oppose British society and politics, now he presents Kailyal as 'A daughter of the years of innocence', to expose what he considers to be aberrant in Indian society.

Kailyal's brief respite from oppression is soon over, as the virtuous passive victim of all corrupted forms of tyranny and religion has further ordeals to go through. Endowed with 'heavenly grace' after her visit to Swerga, she is recognised as a 'maid divine' by a group of marauding 'Yogues' and so abducted as a fitting bride for their god 'Jaga-Naut' (CK, p. 143). Kailyal is placed in a 'Bridal Car' and taken into their temple, crushing many 'self-devoted bodies' en route (p. 147). Inside the temple she is left alone on the bridal bed, and is soon at the mercy of 'The Bramin of the fane' who 'came to seize the prey' (CK, p. 151). In the 1809 manuscript of *Kehama* this passage is longer and drawn in more depth, as the third-person narrator berates the 'lustful Bramin' and his fellow 'juggling clan' for abusing their position of power.⁷⁷ The Brahmins' domination of the people is here extended to a physical and sexual oppression, in order to depict the true horror of their tyranny. However the rapacious 'Bramin' is killed by the spirit of Arvalan who has recruited the magical powers of a witch, Lorrinite, to aid him in his evil plan. Bizarrely the evil spirit of Arvalan reanimates the dead body of the 'Bramin' so that he can ravish Kailyal. In order to escape from Arvalan, Kailyal sets fire to the bridal bed in an ironic parody of sati-like self-immolation:

Yamen, receive me undefil'd! she said,
And seiz'd a torch, and fir'd the bridal bed.
Up ran the rapid flames; on every side
They find their fuel wheresoe'er they spread,

Thin hangings, fragrant gums, and odorous wood,
That pil'd like sacrificial altars stood.
Around they run, and upward they aspire,
And, lo! the huge Pagoda lin'd with fire.
(CK, pp. 153-4)

The fact that Southey positioned this event here as a self-sacrificing act by his heroine suggests that while he may have been repelled by the practice of sati, he also saw it as an act of female virtue. Southey therefore intended to have it both ways in his poem. His representation of sati draws on an alien moral code, that Southey felt to be reprehensible - as his depiction in Book I shows - but he included this scene at this point because it conformed to his ideals of feminine virtue. This creates an interesting ambiguity in the poem because Kailyal, as I have shown, is portrayed as resistant to Indian cultural practices in her embodiment of the civilising project. But here Southey sacrifices colonial politics to gender politics. As in his discussions of Polynesia, Southey's concern was to use foreign models - and with regard to the South Pacific they were usually aberrant types - of female behaviour in order to uphold a paragon of feminine virtue to British women. Here Kailyal is a victim of a 'double colonisation' (as Kirsten Holst Petersen and Anna Rutherford refer to it) by being made to conform to a colonialist representation, as well as a patriarchal one that demands her life rather than sacrifice her virginity.⁷⁸ Southey's ambivalent representation of sati conforms to the time in which it was written. As Ghose says, 'During the Romantic period, sensationalised and eroticised images of widow-burning were circulated, where voyeuristic horror was juxtaposed with admiration for a symbol of womanly chastity and faith'.⁷⁹ This representation of feminine purity under the exigencies of Hindu abuse would be employed during the Victorian period by

evangelical missionaries, in order to popularise the image of 'the downtrodden Indian woman, victimised by her own society and in need of the strong British arm to save her'.⁸⁰

5.7 Indian missions

Kailyal is saved by her father who is, ironically, able to walk into the flames and rescue her, because of the special powers the curse gives him. This magical immunity also allows Ladurlad to effect the release of Ereenia, from the 'Ancient Sepulchres' of the submarine city of Baly (*CK*, p. 153), where he has been imprisoned by Lorrinite. This interpretive reversal of fortune with regard to the terms of the curse, suggests Kehama's demise is in sight, fulfilling the prophecy of Southey's motto 'Curses are like young chicken, they always come home to roost' (*CK*, title-page) – with its comforting sub-text; that acts of tyranny will cause reprisals at their source. As Southey's story nears its conclusion, Ladurlad and Kailyal, guided by Ereenia, embark on a ship at the command of an 'aweful voice' (*CK*, p. 218). The ship is sailed by an invisible crew in a passage reminiscent of the 'Ancient Mariner':

Self-hoisted then, behold the sail
Expands itself before the gale;
Hands which they cannot see, let slip
The cable of that fated ship
(p. 218)

The 'travellers' are transported across the ocean towards the 'penal colony' (p. 218) that is Padalon, or hell, for the final confrontation with Kehama. On the 'icy belt' at 'The world's end' are souls in purgatory (pp. 219-20). As well as the souls of those 'Foul with habitual crimes, a hideous crew', are also those who have been the victims of this 'race of rapine and of blood' (p. 221), the women and children who are at the mercy of Hindu doctrine:

Widows whom, to their husbands funeral fire,
 Force or strong error led, to share the pyre,
 As to their everlasting marriage-bed:
 And babes, by sin unstain'd,
 Whom erring parents vow'd
 To Ganges, and the holy stream profaned
 With that strange sacrifice, rite unordain'd
 By Law, by sacred Nature unallow'd:
 Others more hapless in their destiny,
 Scarce having first inhaled their vital breath,
 Whose cradles from some tree
 Unnatural hands suspended,
 Then left, till gentle Death,
 Coming like Sleep, their feeble moanings ended
 (p. 222)

Having suffered through 'strong error' – underlined by notes from the Baptist
 Missionary *Accounts*, recounting how babies are left to die in baskets in trees – these
 souls will eventually find rest in 'Indra's happy spheres' (p. 223).

This passage relates to the whole debate over the role of the missionaries in
 India, a cause that Southey embraced in his reviews, as I will show. My discussion of
 Southey's reviews also takes into account an article in the *Edinburgh Review* that
 opposed his evangelical ambitions for India, in order to show how the debate over
 Britain's territories was brought back to the British reading public. This difference
 between Southey and Sidney Smith, who wrote the article for the *Edinburgh*,
 highlights the division that existed in Britain over colonial politics. The first article
 that Southey wrote for the *Annual Review* was on the *Periodical Accounts relative to*
the Baptist Missionary Society, for propagating the Gospel among the Heathen
 (1802).⁸¹ This review was very sympathetic to the missionary project, despite
 Southey's own reservations about the Christian teachings generally and this
 evangelical sect in particular. Southey's opening comments advocate the propagation
 of Christianity for several reasons:

Because the moral institutes of Christianity are calculated to produce the greatest possible good, individual and general; because it would root out polygamy with its whole train of evils; because it would abolish human sacrifices, infanticide, and practices of self-torture; because it is a system best adapted for our happiness here as well as hereafter.⁸²

Southey is lukewarmly utilitarian in his advocacy of the Christian church, it is 'a system' which is 'calculated to produce the greatest possible good' rather than an instrument of divine revelation. The feelings of animosity towards the Christian church that Southey felt in his youth have been put aside now because the Christian religion can play a part in colonial affairs, and even the Baptist missionaries can be seen as a lesser evil when compared to the Indian practices that he lists. As such, Christianity in any form is a moral tool against foreign evil.

Southey gives the history of this 'sect of dissenters' who have 'undertaken to preach the gospel in Hindostan, a duty shamefully neglected by the church of England'.⁸³ He is particularly impressed with their leader, William Carey, who had been a 'shoemaker' but educated himself, becoming fluent in many languages and has since 'translated the Bible into the Bengalee dialect, and printed it himself', a work of 'magnitude' and 'importance'.⁸⁴ However he has his doubts about the Baptist interpretation of Christianity saying:

This is, indeed, a religion for which bedlams, as well as meeting-houses, should be erected. If the mission to Hindostan were connected with nothing but the propagation of such a faith, we should hope the natives would continue to worship Veeshnoo and Seeva, rather than the demon whom Calvin has set up!⁸⁵

For Southey then it is almost immaterial what gods the people of India worship, far more important for him are the moral teachings which the English missionaries are well placed to promulgate. The 'English' he argues – even the merchants – in India 'have yet some character, and some honour, and some decency to support'.⁸⁶ These

English qualities can be imparted to the Indian natives. Southey's article replicates sections of the tracts that deal with the erroneous fatalism of the natives in believing that any crimes they carry out are pre-destined by God, as well as details of 'religious self-torture', infanticide and 'suttee' (with his morbid fascination for these subjects).⁸⁷ He says after describing these practices:

These are evils which the English government might and ought to check which can only be destroyed by the destruction of the cursed superstition which recommends them as duties. But these are trifling evils, compared to the system of casts...In what manner force and fraud established so detestable and ruinous a system, is, and perhaps will be for ever unknown: but this system it is which, for so many centuries, has prevented all possibility of improvement in Hindostan; for this Christianity is the certain and effectual and only remedy.⁸⁸

Southey shared the preoccupation of many Western commentators on India with the Hindu caste system (Varnadharma) – the imposition of which he here lays at the door of the Brahmans as in *Kehama* – and failing to appreciate the subtleties and gradations of profession and class that Hindu apologists argue creates a less fixed system than perceived by Westerners.⁸⁹ Southey observed India in European terms and in the same way he perceived Britain in his Jacobin days, as a system of inequality and injustice that oppressed the lower classes and was supported by the established religion. Now he is advocating Christianity as a way to release 'Hindostan' from these problems. His article concludes by recommending the 'church of England to exert itself and send labourers into the vineyard' in order to reap the harvest begun by the Baptists.⁹⁰

Southey went on to review the *Transactions* of the London Missionary Society in Polynesia and to report on Dr. Vanderkemp's Dutch mission in South Africa.⁹¹ In these reviews he defends the attempts of the missionaries and despite often detailing their failures is confident that in the end the civilization they bring will prevail, 'This

is the order of nature: beasts give place to man; savages to civilized man'.⁹² In 1808 when the *Edinburgh Review* published Sidney Smith's article attacking the Baptist Missions in India, Southey's first article for the *Quarterly Review* (1809) gave him the enjoyable opportunity of taking the *Edinburgh* to task for its opinions, which as usual were so different from his own.

Smith's review opens with a dramatic description of a murderous attack by Indian soldiers ('two battalions of Sepoys') in the service of the East India Company on their European officers.⁹³ He then considers various recent texts on events in India (mostly by those with an interest in the East India Company), as well as the *Transactions of the Missionary Society*, to make an explicit link between this mutiny at Vellore in 1806, and the preaching of missionaries in the district. Smith argues that the missionaries are jeopardising the empire in India by their actions and to no very useful end because the Hindu religion 'extends its empire over the minutest actions of life' and therefore Christianity is unlikely to succeed.⁹⁴ While the 'Hindoos have some very savage customs, which it would be desirable to abolish', Smith questions whether this justifies sending out 'little detachments of maniacs' to spread 'the most unjust and contemptible opinion of the gospel'.⁹⁵

Smith reveals how precarious metropolitan observers considered the empire in India to be – an insecurity that would dominate the governance of this territory of the British empire throughout the nineteenth century:

Upon the whole, it appears to us hardly possible to push the business of proselytism in India to any length, without incurring the utmost risk of losing our empire. The danger is more tremendous, because it may be so sudden; religious fears are a very probable cause of disaffection in the troops; if the troops are generally disaffected, our Indian empire may be lost to us as suddenly as a frigate or a fort; and that empire is governed by men who, we are very much afraid, would feel proud to lose it in such a cause.⁹⁶

The object of the article is of course political in the end. Smith claims that the 'fanaticism' of the missions abroad only reflects the 'fanaticism' of 'the government at home'.⁹⁷ Because the Hindus are 'already highly civilized' they should be left to their own beliefs,⁹⁸ and British officials in India should be free to govern these territories as they see fit, conforming to the laissez-faire liberalism of his periodical.

Southey's reply to this article defends 'This mission, which is represented by its enemies as so dangerous to the British empire in India'.⁹⁹ Southey refutes the link between missionaries and mutiny, stating that there were no missionaries near Vellore at the time, and that they are being used as 'scape-goats'.¹⁰⁰ In fact he concludes that it was probably the imposition of government regulations on the 'Seapoys' dress code (i.e. replacing turbans with helmets, and forbidding the wearing of forehead caste marks) that caused the insurrection. Despite the 'outcry [that] has been raised in England' against the missionaries¹⁰¹ – presumably by those with links to the East India Company – Southey was prepared to upset public opinion to state his views, in the same way that he was willing to upset public taste by publishing *Kehama*.

Southey's opinion of the *Edinburgh Review*'s position on the Indian missions was given in a letter to William Taylor, at the time that Southey was writing his article in defence of them. In this extract it is possible to see how he reinforces the division between Smith and himself over colonial policy:

What a precious article is that in defence of polygamy!... I am writing a view and vindication of the existing Protestant Missions for an unborn Review, which has never yet been heard of, and has neither name nor existence, but will hoist the bloody flag, run alongside the *Edinburgh*, and engage her yard-arm and yard-arm. What wretched work has Sidney Smith made of this subject of the missions! It were better to be a fanatic than such a buffoon as this, for fanaticism implies some feeling, some sincerity, some heart of flesh and blood!¹⁰²

Southey's strong invective and choice of terminology from naval engagements, shows how much he felt he was at 'war' with Smith over this issue. Discussion of the future of India, important as Southey felt that was, would also have the added benefit of attacking those who would settle for peace with Bonaparte, and allow the Catholics a stronger presence in Britain. The difference of opinion between Southey and the *Edinburgh Review* over the missions is portrayed as not simply one of colonial politics, but also morality. Southey converts Smith's attack on the missionaries into a defence of Indian social practices, including polygamy, so questioning the moral ethics of that journal. Smith's liberal political position is presented as a threat to British security (in advocating peace with Napoleon), as well as religion (allowing a Catholic presence) and morality (preventing the missions from outlawing Hindu customs, such as polygamy). Southey was not averse to waging war on anybody that he felt was opposed to the reinforcement of 'British' values at home and abroad.

Southey's defence of the missionaries clearly aligned him with the growing evangelical movement in Britain and the arguments contained in these articles were not limited to a dispute between the *Edinburgh* and the *Quarterly*. William Carey and his Baptist missionaries in India had been forced to settle in Serampore, a Danish territory, because they were refused permission to establish a mission in lands belonging to the East India Company. The fact that the Company obstructed Christian missionaries in its territories – because it saw their attempts at conversion as a threat to their government and commerce – became a contentious issue at their board meetings as well as in parliament. Support for the missionaries in Britain led to William Wilberforce successfully supporting a clause in the India Bill of 1813, which allowed 'missionaries of all denominations' to be 'free to trawl for converts throughout the Company's territories so long as they possessed an official licence'.¹⁰³

The fact that the legislation had been supported by many of the British public – ‘Between April and June 1813 some 500,000 people signed nearly 900 petitions’¹⁰⁴ – shows how seriously the subject of ‘civilising’ the subcontinent was considered. The India Bill had important connotations because in limiting the East India Company’s power, it also gave a clear indication that the British government saw India’s future as its responsibility.

British views on the future of India during this period did not always divide into ‘Whig’ and ‘Tory’ perspectives – despite the differences between Southey and Smith – as imperial ideology somewhat blurred the distinction between them. A. J. Stockwell says, of the more distinct party political division of the Victorian period:

The main British political parties had different interpretations of empire. Conservatives stood for empire as authority, order and good government; Liberals looked beyond the provision of good government for its own sake to the evolution of colonies into self-governing societies and of the empire into a Commonwealth of Nations.¹⁰⁵

But in Southey’s period these divisions were less obvious and he embraced aspects of both views in advocating Britain’s paternalistic relationship with her colonies:

Imagine these countries, as they would be a few centuries hence, and must be, if some strange mispolicy does not avert this proper and natural course of things; the people enjoying that happiness and those domestic morals, which seem to proceed from no other root than the laws and institutions with which Providence has favoured us above all others: imagine these wide regions in the yet uncultivated parts of the earth flourishing like our own, and possessed by people enjoying our institutions and speaking our language. Whether they should be held in colonial dependence, or become separate states, or when they may have ceased to depend upon the parent country, connected with her by the union of reverential attachment on one side, and common interests on both, is of little import upon this wide view of things.¹⁰⁶

Whatever level of future control Britain was to have over the colonies, the role of the ‘parent country’ was to inculcate British values, ‘institutions’ and ‘language’ into

those indigenous occupants 'held in colonial dependence', thereby creating feelings of 'reverential attachment' for Britain.

Southey anticipated some of the ideas of the next generation of politicians, as can be seen in the words of Lord Macaulay, President of the Council on Education in India, in his 'Minute' of 1835:

It is impossible for us, with our limited means, to attempt to educate the body of the people. We must at present do our best to form a class who may be interpreters between us and the millions whom we govern; a class of persons, Indian in blood and colour, but English in taste, in opinions, in morals, and in intellect. To that class we may leave it to refine the vernacular dialects of the country, to enrich those dialects with terms of science borrowed from Western nomenclature, and to render them by degrees fit vehicles for conveying knowledge to the great mass of the population.¹⁰⁷

As well as dominating India with English 'taste' and 'morals' Macaulay suggests an educational system that encourages Indians to employ 'terms of science borrowed from Western nomenclature'. Here can be seen the culmination of Jones' attempts to apply Western scholarly method to India. But unlike Jones' approach that sought to engage with the Indian language (as well as Hindu texts), this academic imperialism attempts to control 'dialects' and 'render them by degrees fit vehicles for conveying knowledge', a further step in domesticating India.

5.8 'perfect discipline'

That Southey and many of his contemporaries outside (as well as inside) the legislature therefore saw themselves as responsible for India has been shown. And Macaulay's 'Minute' reveals how this idea of responsibility would manifest itself in strategies for social control in India – as the imperial project sought to supervise and govern those in its dominions. In *Kehama*'s conclusion it is possible to see Southey imposing further structures of control on his own textual version of India, particularly

in the use he makes of Jeremy Bentham's plans to build a 'Panopticon'. As I will argue, Southey employs this as a metaphor for the way in which the rulers of his Oriental hell impose control on their inmates.

Southey's heroes continue on their journey towards hell, or 'Padalon', following the route of those evil souls that are banished to the 'Realm of Woe' (*CK*, p. 227). Here they are incarcerated in 'penal dens':

Over these dens of punishment, the host
Of Padalon maintain eternal guard,
Keeping upon the walls their vigilant ward.
At every angle stood
A watch-tower, the decurion Demon's post,
Where rais'd on high, he view'd with sleepless eye
His trust, that all was well. And over these,
Such was the perfect discipline of Hell,
Captains of fifties and of hundreds held
Authority, each in his loftier tower;
And chiefs of legions over them had power;
And thus all Hell with towers was girt around.
Aloft the brazen turrets shone
In the red light of Padalon,
And on the walls between,
Dark moving, the infernal Guards were seen
(*CK*, pp. 244-5)

This is the domain of Yamen, the 'Death-God' (*CK*, p. 13), and his responsibility is to keep those who have committed crimes on earth, imprisoned here in the underworld. He has to be particularly vigilant at this time, as his prisoners are becoming rebellious in anticipation of Kehama's plans to release them. The constant surveillance and observation that takes place in Southey's description of hell, suggests that he was influenced by Jeremy Bentham's ideas for a 'penitentiary inspection-house'.¹⁰⁸ Southey was very interested in prison reform during this period, recommending in his political commentary for the *Edinburgh Annual Register*, that prisons should be 'placed under the superintendence of the Quakers' (*SL*, III, p. 120) – an aspiration that

would be partially fulfilled through the work of Elizabeth Fry. In a letter to John Rickman dated May 1805, Southey added a postscript saying, 'Can you send me an old report about a whimsical prison which Jeremy Bentham obtained an act of Parliament to erect. It was called a Panopticon – or some such heathenish name' (*NL*, I, p. 386). Southey was therefore aware of the issues of surveillance that Bentham's plans delineated and in *Kehama* he produced a sublime version of Bentham's 'whimsical prison' for his Oriental hell.

In Southey's poem the 'watch-tower' raised on high compares to Bentham's proposed 'inspection tower'. Each 'decurion Demon' in each of these buildings can observe below, but those incarcerated in their cells cannot see them. The inmates are therefore governed by an 'all-seeing gaze', an imperative principle if Bentham's Panopticon was to operate effectively.¹⁰⁹ The idea of each 'loftier tower' one above the other linking back to Yamen's central throne of power in the 'Diamond City' (another Oriental architectural miracle) means that Yamen maintains control but is also veiled from the prisoners' view, maintaining his sublimity and omniscience. However I am not suggesting that Southey's hell is a realistic representation of Bentham's plans, but simply that Southey used the ideas behind the designs for the Panopticon, in order to subdue the inmates of his fiction. Miran Bozozovic, using extracts from letters written by Bentham in Russia in 1787 and sent 'to a friend in England' describes the panopticon as:

nothing more than a 'simple idea in architecture', never realized, describing 'a new mode of obtaining power of mind over mind, in a quantity hitherto without example' – the possessor of this power is 'the inspector' with his invisible omnipresence, 'an utterly dark spot' in the all-transparent, light-flooded universe of the panopticon.¹¹⁰

Certain aspects of this passage resonate with Southey's description (of which only an extract from *Kehama* is given above). Yamen, the god of hell, can be seen as 'the inspector' who maintains his pre-eminence or 'omnipresence' over the inmates. In a prison permanently lit by the garish light of the molten floor of hell, he is the 'black spot', the 'King of Terrors, black of aspect' (*CK*, p. 250) who inculcates their fear, so that he has 'power of mind over mind'.

Southey's Oriental underworld is also however a very conventional depiction of the Christian hell, with Yamen as a universal Satan/'Death-God'/Eblis from all the religious traditions with which Southey was familiar. Nowhere in fact does Southey extend his representation of the Hindu religion to the belief in re-incarnation, preferring the eschatological system of Christianity. And in Southey's conventional hell he seems to be representing a domestic issue as well as an Oriental one, the issue that concerned him of maintaining social control. As Anne McClintock says:

In 1787, Jeremy Bentham proposed the Panopticon as the model for an architectural solution to social discipline. The organising principle of the Panopticon was simple. Factories, prisons, workhouses and schools would be constructed with an observation tower as the center. Unable to see inside the inspection tower, the inhabitants would presume they were under perpetual surveillance. Daily routine would be conducted in a state of permanent visibility.¹¹¹

The Panopticon therefore need not only be seen as an instrument of penal reform, it can be related back to Southey's fears of the mob, shown earlier – a way of imposing social discipline on large groups of people (the 'crowd', whether Oriental or British) that he depicts as potentially fanatical or unmanageable. Although Southey was steering on a course towards conservatism in his politics as well as his fictions, he discovered here some common ground with Bentham and Mill (proponents of

utilitarian philosophy) in his adoption of the panopticon trope for social control as well as in his vision of imperial rule.

The desire of those invested with political power to keep others in a state of 'permanent visibility', has much to do with British aspirations for the government of India as well as Britain. It also relates to issues of perception and the way in which people are viewed by those in power. For instance Southey and the missionaries, Mill and Macaulay, all desire that Indians, who have very different cultural and religious values, conform to their controlling 'gaze'. By imposing the English language, and British systems of government and education on India, they intend to remake it in their own British image. As Mary Louise Pratt shows in *Imperial Eyes*, even from their first encounters the controlling vision is an integral process of British travellers/writers engaging with alien territories or cultures. For instance Pratt discusses the Victorian explorer, Richard Burton, adopting the position of 'monarch-of-all-I-survey' in his representation of Africa.¹¹² The traveller, facing new scenes, institutes a 'rhetoric of presence', colonising them aesthetically and ideologically through his terms of description.¹¹³ It is the 'seer' who has control over the scene 'remaking' what he or she sees, to conform to Western preconceptions – consider Jones's description on his arrival in Asia for instance, or William Hodges and Thomas Williamson's own 'rhetoric of presence'. This controlling impulse was one that Southey absorbed from the travel accounts he read and one that he imposed on his fiction with his metropolitan observations on India. In *Kehama* Southey created 'Indian' characters that conformed to his values – as well as a 'moral' landscape that underlined his message – while portraying those in opposition to his ideas being defeated in an emphatic 'childish' dualism that cannot be misconstrued.

This is no less true of the conventional ending of Southey's poem, where Kehama's 'chickens' at last 'come home to roost'. For Southey's British readers, undoubtedly appalled at the triumphant career of Napoleon (who by 1810 seemed invincible), there was consolation in seeing imperial tyranny overturned. Kehama is tricked, by his own ambition and pride, into drinking from the 'Amreeta cup' to attain eternal life (*CK*, p. 259). This comes not in the form of imperial immortality, but in the role of the previously missing, fourth statue supporting Yamen's throne. Ladurlad's reward is to be reunited with his dead wife in the 'Bower of Bliss'. Kailyal's fate is also to drink from the 'Amreeta cup', but because of her virtue she is rewarded by eternal life in heaven, and she and Ereenia are united in angelic conjugal love. The downfall of Southey's Oriental tyrant hails the dominance of rational Christian morality on the Indian world of *Kehama*. Southey's vision therefore parallels the controlling ideal of the 'Anglicist' lobby, which also sought to impose a template of British morality, education and religion on Indian territories.

Sir William Jones was aware of the different ways of 'seeing' that Europeans at home and those residing in India employed. He said in a letter from India in 1787: 'in Europe you see India through a glass darkly: here, we are in a strong light; and a thousand little *nuances* are perceptible to us, which are not visible through your best telescopes, and which could not be explained without writing volumes'.¹¹⁴ In this passage Jones resists the compulsion of those in Europe who 'see' India in a certain way. The important 'little *nuances*' of Indian culture and society are lost through distance and cannot be traced by observing India from abroad as Southey attempted to do. The duality of vision that Jones identifies, is a metaphor for the difference between India and Britain, which even the process of writing, as a method of reporting, is incapable of explaining. Despite the opinions of those like Jones who felt

they saw India by a 'strong light', the controlling vision of those propounding 'Anglicist' policy, such as Southey, would dominate.

5.9 Conclusion

It is worth looking at one further passage from a review by Southey in order to conclude. Southey's 1807 article for the *Annual Review* (on the newly published eighth volume of *Asiatic Researches*) reviewed an essay by Francis Wilford in some depth. In this essay Wilford revealed that previous assertions he had made (in the third volume of *Asiatic Researches*) connecting elements from the Hindu sacred texts to a geographical construction of Egypt, were less reliable than he had first thought. Wilford's essay relates a tale, concerning an Indian 'pandit' that he had employed, to assist him in his researches. On checking through the materials he had collated, Wilford found that his (unnamed) assistant had forged some of the 'vouchers'. These forgeries sometimes appeared as altered words, but there were also larger amendments, made to cover the tracks of his inventions. After discovering these forgeries, Wilford found that his assistant had also embezzled the research funds set aside to pay other Indian scholars for their labours. As might be expected Southey's review takes the form of outraged condemnation for the actions of the 'pandit', and he quotes the whole episode verbatim from Wilford's essay, adding:

This sort of deception is nothing new, but there is something shocking in the conduct of the Pandit when he was discovered. He flew into the most violent paroxysms of rage...and he brought ten Bramins to swear by what is most sacred in their religion to the genuineness of these extracts.¹¹⁵

Oriental literature, 'mythology', history and geography are not just harmlessly fantastical anymore for Southey, but are founded on a totally unreliable and even deceitful base. The fact that 'ten Bramins' will perjure themselves and their religion,

illustrates for him how reprehensible the Hindus, in thrall to the 'Bramins' are. In contrast he describes Wilford's conduct since the episode:

Capt Wilford proceeds to point out what passages in his published works have been founded on these fabrications...The manner in which this is done, and the perfect candour and sincerity which he manifests are such as must interest every reader in his favour...entitled to high respect for his industry and erudition, his love of antiquity, and his love of truth.¹¹⁶

Southey deliberately makes a striking comparison between the scholarly, sincere, truthful Wilford, the result of a British education, and the forging, deceitful, 'pandit', the result of a religion and culture dominated by the Brahmins. Southey's responses to this episode exemplify the reasons why he came to embrace the 'Anglicist' views of James Mill, and the later rulers of India through the Victorian period, such as Thomas Babington Macaulay. He felt that the unreliability and 'error' of Hinduism needed to be replaced by a solid bedrock of corrective English education and government.

Jones' (and Southey's) earlier romantic views of Asia are in fact likely to have contributed to the 'Anglicist' case for imposing the British systems of education and government on the Indian territories. Certainly Jones and his researchers may have created the reasons for their own demise, because the practical question that their approach begs is: how can Britain govern a country that is portrayed as sublimely unknowable and unassimilable? Such a picture of India resists any form of external control. For those faced with governing India there was only one answer and 'James Mill's *The History of British India* (1817) was an attempt to define an idiom for the British empire as a whole which would replace the dominant conservative one' as Majeed states.¹¹⁷ So Southey's *Curse of Kehama* contributes to the 'Anglicist' argument in two ways, one intentionally by denigrating his material, and secondly

(and perhaps unconsciously) by presenting an image of India that many of his readers in Britain would find frightening by its sheer ungovernability.

The trajectory of Southey's plot however does show the tyrannical and irreligious 'mighty Rajah' (representing India) being brought to his knees by a heroine (such as Spenser's Britomart) who is chaste, restrained and pious. Though simplistic, the dualism that Southey employed in his poem posits Kailyal as a representative of British values, and therefore unrealistic as that might be, Southey holds up these qualities as a role model for Britons who attempt to govern India. Finally what was important to Southey was not his vision of India per se – or only in terms of how it related to Britain – but his desire to provide a code of British values for his readers. Britain's relationship with India was important to Southey because he could envision this code being introduced into British colonies abroad by his country's responsible, paternalistic interest in those territories. In *Kehama* more than any other of his texts – though Southey was developing this political theme in *Thalaba* – Southey expounds a new found nationalism, in which he uses other polities, religions and societies – for instance in India, Portugal and France – against which to project an ideal image of Britain. The strong opinions and radical values of Southey's youth had undergone a transition, impacted upon by his emerging conservatism, to form the nationalistic project that we see developing in *Kehama*.

Notes

¹ *A Memoir of the Life and Writings of the late William Taylor of Norwich*, ed. J. W. Robberds, 2 vols. (London: John Murray, 1843), I, p. 386.

² *A Memoir*, I, p. 375.

³ Robert Southey, 'Reports of the African Institution', *Annual Review* for 1808, 7 (1809), chap. 5, no. 9, 149-52 (p. 152).

⁴ Marilyn Butler, *The Penguin History of Literature: The Romantic Period*, ed. David Pirie (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1994), pp. 395-447 (p. 401).

⁵ *The Eighteenth Century*, ed. P. J. Marshall, vol. II of *The Oxford History of the British Empire*, ed. Wm. Roger Louis, 5 vols. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), p. 4.

⁶ P. J. Marshall, 'Britain Without America – A Second Empire?', *The Eighteenth Century*, ed. Marshall, pp. 576-95 (p. 582).

⁷ As Saree Makdisi shows, this movement towards tighter imperial control was paralleled by economic change, in the form of the gradual replacement of mercantile colonial capitalism by industrial capitalism, controlled by the metropolis. Saree Makdisi, *Romantic Imperialism: Universal Empire and the Culture of Modernity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp. 108-10.

⁸ See Makdisi, *Romantic Imperialism*; Javed Majeed, *Ungoverned Imaginings: James Mill's 'History of British India' and Orientalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992).

⁹ A. L. Macfie, *Orientalism* (London: Longman, 2002), p. 3.

¹⁰ Javed Majeed, *Ungoverned Imaginings*, pp. 47-86.

¹¹ Robert Southey, 'Account of the Baptist Missionary Society', *Quarterly Review*, 1, no. 1 (Feb., 1809), 193-226 (p. 217).

¹² Lawrence James, *Raj: The Making and Unmaking of British India* (London: Little, Brown, 1997), pp. 67-8.

¹³ 'Southey's Curse of Kehama', *Edinburgh Review*, 17, no. 34 (Feb., 1811), 429-65 (pp. 433, 452). This method of attack continues throughout the review in its accusation that *Kehama* employs 'babyisms' and is 'infantine'. The review, despite its criticism, is very lengthy, providing many extracts from the poem. It concludes by attributing Southey with genius, despite his 'childish taste'.

¹⁴ For instance see 'the brief explanation of mythological names prefixed to the Poem', where Southey compares the 'Trimourtee' to the Trinity, *PW*, VIII, pp. xxiv-xxv.

¹⁵ The epithets 'monstrous' and 'mythology' are from Southey's prefaces to *The Curse of Kehama*, *PW*, VIII, pp. xvi, xxiii. The term 'moral grandeur' comes from a letter to Charles Grosvenor Bedford, 1st January 1811, *NL*, II, p. 1.

¹⁶ Tim Fulford and Peter J. Kitson, eds. *Romanticism and Colonialism: Writing and Empire 1780-1830* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p. 11.

¹⁷ Robert Southey, 'A review of James Forbes' *Oriental Memoirs*', *Quarterly Review*, 12, no. 23 (Oct., 1814), 180-227 (p. 220).

¹⁸ Balachandra Rajan, *Under Western Eyes: India from Milton to Macaulay* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1999), p. 143.

¹⁹ *PW*, V, unnumbered page after 'Preface to the First Edition'.

²⁰ Philip Martin, *Byron: A Poet Before his Public* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), p. 43.

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- ²¹ John Barrell, *The Infection of Thomas De Quincey: A Psychopathology of Imperialism* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1991), p. 5.
- ²² William Wordsworth, *The Prelude, or Growth of a Poet's Mind* (1805-6), ed. Ernest de Selincourt, revised by Helen Darbishire (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1959), p. 231, ll. 168, 190.
- ²³ Makdisi, *Romantic Imperialism*, p. 29.
- ²⁴ For instance see Southey's letter to Nicholas Lightfoot, 8th February 1806, 'It is the world that has changed, not I. I took the same way in the afternoon that I did in the morning, but sunset and sunrise make a different scene', *LC*, III, p. 22. Also a letter to Grosvenor Charles Bedford, 11th November 1808, 'At present I am swimming with the stream, but it is the stream that has turned, not I', *NL*, I, p. 492.
- ²⁵ *Middle East*, ed. Tilar J. Mazzeo, vol. IV of *Travels, Explorations and Empires: Writings from the era of imperial expansion, 1770-1835*, eds. Tim Fulford and Peter J. Kitson, 8 vols. (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2001), pp. xii-xv.
- ²⁶ William Haller, *The Early Life of Robert Southey, 1774-1803* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1917), p. 302.
- ²⁷ Quoted from manuscript letter to Grosvenor Charles Bedford, 20 May 1803, by Mark Storey, *Robert Southey: A Life* (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), p. 159.
- ²⁸ Michael Duffy 'Contested empires, 1756-1815', in *The Eighteenth Century*, ed. Paul Langford (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), pp. 213-42 (p. 241).
- ²⁹ Southey, 'Account of the Baptist Missionary Society', p. 210.
- ³⁰ Southey, 'Account of the Baptist Missionary Society', p. 210.
- ³¹ William Beckford, *Vathek*, ed. Roger Lonsdale (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), p. 114.
- ³² *Southey's Commonplace Book*, 4th series, vol. IV, ed. J. W. Warter (London: Longman, Brown, Green and Longmans, 1851), p. 12.
- ³³ *Southey's Commonplace Book*, IV, p. 13.
- ³⁴ Southey, 'Account of the Baptist Missionary Society', p. 211.
- ³⁵ Jeaneane Fowler, 'Hinduism', in *World Religions*, eds. Jeaneane Fowler, Merv Fowler, David Norcliffe, Nora Hill and David Watkins (Brighton and Portland, Oregon: Sussex Academic Press, 1999), pp. 180-249 (p. 182).
- ³⁶ Fowler, 'Hinduism', p. 183.
- ³⁷ *The Penguin Dictionary of Religions*, ed. John R. Hinnells (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1997), p. 80.
- ³⁸ Southey, 'Account of the Baptist Missionary Society', p. 213.
- ³⁹ Fowler, 'Hinduism', p. 185.
- ⁴⁰ Southey, 'Account of the Baptist Missionary Society', p. 213.
- ⁴¹ Southey, 'Account of the Baptist Missionary Society', p. 213.
- ⁴² Southey, 'Account of the Baptist Missionary Society', p. 217.
- ⁴³ Robert Southey, 'Asiatic Researches', *Annual Review* for 1807, 6 (1808), chap. 10, no. 18, 643-54 (p. 643).
- ⁴⁴ Sir William Jones, 'On the Gods of Greece, Italy and India', in *Asiatick Researches; or Transactions of the Society Instituted in Bengal, for inquiring into the History and Antiquities, the Arts, Sciences and Literature of Asia*, 20 vols. (London: J. Sewell [etc.], 1799-1839), I, pp. 221-75.
- ⁴⁵ *Sir William Jones: Selected poetical and prose works*, ed. Michael J. Franklin, (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1995), p. 348.

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- ⁴⁶ Jones 'On the Gods of Greece, Italy and India', p. 241; *CK*, p. 288.
- ⁴⁷ Jones 'On the Gods of Greece, Italy and India', p. 241; *CK*, p. 288.
- ⁴⁸ Jones 'On the Gods of Greece, Italy and India', p. 241; *CK*, p. 289.
- ⁴⁹ Jones, 'On the Gods of Greece, Italy and India', pp. 264-5; *CK*, p. 304.
- ⁵⁰ Jones, 'On the Gods of Greece, Italy and India', pp. 262-3; *CK*, p. 331.
- ⁵¹ Jones, 'On the Gods of Greece, Italy and India', p. 267.
- ⁵² John Drew, *India and the Romantic Imagination* (Delhi and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), p. 49.
- ⁵³ Sir William Jones, 'A Discourse on the Institution of a Society, for inquiring into the History, Civil and National, the antiquities, arts, sciences and literature of Asia', *Asiatick Researches*, I, pp. ix-xvi, (pp. ix-x).
- ⁵⁴ Edward W. Said, *Orientalism: Western Conceptions of the Orient* (London: Penguin, 1995), pp. 92-6.
- ⁵⁵ Thomas De Quincey, 'Confessions of an English Opium-eater' (1821), in *Confessions of an English Opium Eater and Other Writings*, ed. Grevel Lindop (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), pp. 72-4.
- ⁵⁶ Jones, 'A Discourse on the Institution of a Society', pp. xi-xii.
- ⁵⁷ Jones, 'A Discourse on the Institution of a Society', p. xiii.
- ⁵⁸ Sir William Jones, 'The Second Anniversary Discourse', *Asiatic Researches*, I, pp. 405-14 (p. 407).
- ⁵⁹ Jones, 'The Second Anniversary Discourse', p. 407.
- ⁶⁰ Sir William Jones, 'On the Hindus', *Asiatic Researches*, I, pp. 414-32 (p. 421).
- ⁶¹ Sir William Jones, 'On Asiatic History, civil and natural', *Asiatic Researches*, IV, pp. 1-17 (p. 9).
- ⁶² Francis Wilford, 'On the chronology of the Hindus', *Asiatic Researches*, V, pp. 241-95 (p. 241). These comments conform surprisingly to James Mill's opinion in *The History of British India* (1836), where he says: 'To the monstrous period of years which the legends of the Hindus involve, they ascribe events the most extravagant and unnatural: events not even connected in chronological series; a number of independent and incredible fictions. This people, indeed, are perfectly destitute of historical records'. Quoted by Makdisi, *Romantic Imperialism*, p. 1.
- ⁶³ S. N. Mukherjee, *Sir William Jones: A Study in Eighteenth-century British attitudes to India* (London: Sangam, 1987), p. 96.
- ⁶⁴ Quoted by Mukherjee, *Sir William Jones*, p. 98. This comment comes from Jones, 'On Asiatic history, civil and natural', p. 7.
- ⁶⁵ Wilford, 'On the chronology of the Hindus', p. 241.
- ⁶⁶ Francis Wilford, 'On Egypt and other countries adjacent to the Ca'li' River, or Nile of Ethiopia. From the ancient books of the Hindus', *Asiatic Researches*, III, pp. 295-462 (p. 295).
- ⁶⁷ *India*, ed. Indira Ghose, vol. VI of *Travels, Explorations and Empires: Writings from the era of imperial expansion*, eds. Tim Fulford and Peter J. Kitson, 8 vols. (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2001), p. xi.
- ⁶⁸ Sir William Jones, 'The Palace of Fortune, An Indian Tale', originally published in *Poems consisting chiefly of translations from the Asiatick languages* (1772). The text referred to is from *Sir William Jones*, ed. Franklin, p. 40.
- ⁶⁹ Drew, *India and the Romantic Imagination*, p. 233. See also Warren U. Ober, 'Southey, Coleridge, and "Kubla-Khan"', *Journal of English and Germanic Philology*, 58 (1959), 414-22.

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- ⁷⁰ Said, *Orientalism*, pp. 94, 167.
- ⁷¹ *India*, ed. Ghose, p. 131.
- ⁷² Nigel Leask, *Curiosity and the Aesthetics of Travel Writing, 1770-1840* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), p. 190.
- ⁷³ Captain Thomas Williamson, *Oriental Field Sports* (London: Edward Orme, 1807).
- ⁷⁴ Bernard Smith, *European Vision and the South Pacific 1768-1850* (London, Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 1960), pp. 23, 52.
- ⁷⁵ Ernest Bernhardt-Kabisch, *Robert Southey* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1977), p. 101.
- ⁷⁶ 'Southey's Curse of Kehama', *Quarterly Review*, 5, no. 9 (Feb., 1811), 40-61 (p. 56).
- ⁷⁷ Robert Southey, *The Curse of Kehama* (1809), British Library, London, Add MS 36485, ff. 181-2.
- ⁷⁸ *A Double Colonization: Colonial and Post-Colonial Women's Writing*, eds. Kirsten Holst Petersen and Anna Rutherford (Oxford: Dangaroo Press, 1986).
- ⁷⁹ *India*, ed. Ghose, p. xii.
- ⁸⁰ *India*, ed. Ghose, p. xii.
- ⁸¹ Robert Southey, 'Account of the Baptist Mission' *Annual Review* for 1802, 1 (1803), chap. 2, no. 71, 207-18.
- ⁸² Southey, 'Account of the Baptist Mission', p. 207.
- ⁸³ Southey, 'Account of the Baptist Mission', p. 208.
- ⁸⁴ Southey, 'Account of the Baptist Mission', p. 208.
- ⁸⁵ Southey, 'Account of the Baptist Mission', pp. 216-7.
- ⁸⁶ Southey, 'Account of the Baptist Mission', p. 215.
- ⁸⁷ Southey, 'Account of the Baptist Mission', pp. 217-8.
- ⁸⁸ Southey, 'Account of the Baptist Mission', p. 218.
- ⁸⁹ Fowler, 'Hinduism', pp. 216-20.
- ⁹⁰ Southey, 'Account of the Baptist Mission', p. 218.
- ⁹¹ Robert Southey, 'Transactions of the Missionary Society', *Annual Review* for 1803, 2 (1804), chap. 2, no. 62, 189-201; Robert Southey, 'Transactions of the Missionary Society', *Annual Review* for 1804, 3 (1805), chap. 12, no. 2, 621-34.
- ⁹² Southey, 'Transactions of the Missionary Society', *Annual Review* for 1804, p. 623.
- ⁹³ Sidney Smith, 'Indian Missions', *Edinburgh Review*, 12, no. 23 (April, 1808), 151-181 (p. 151).
- ⁹⁴ Smith, 'Indian Missions', p. 174.
- ⁹⁵ Smith, 'Indian Missions', p. 179.
- ⁹⁶ Smith, 'Indian Missions', p. 173.
- ⁹⁷ Smith, 'Indian Missions', p. 172.
- ⁹⁸ Smith, 'Indian Missions', p. 180.
- ⁹⁹ Southey, 'Account of the Baptist Missionary Society', p. 196.
- ¹⁰⁰ Southey, 'Account of the Baptist Missionary Society', p. 206.
- ¹⁰¹ Southey, 'Account of the Baptist Missionary Society', p. 204.
- ¹⁰² *A Memoir*, II, p. 231.
- ¹⁰³ James, *Raj*, p. 224.
- ¹⁰⁴ Marshall, 'Britain Without America – A Second Empire?', p. 584.
- ¹⁰⁵ A. J. Stockwell, 'Power, Authority, and Freedom', in *The Cambridge Illustrated History of the British Empire*, ed. P. J. Marshall (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. 147-84 (p. 173).

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- ¹⁰⁶ Robert Southey, 'Inquiry into the Poor Laws, &c.', *Quarterly Review*, 8, no. 16 (Dec., 1812), 319-56 (p. 355).
- ¹⁰⁷ *The Post-Colonial Studies Reader*, eds. Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin (London: Routledge, 1995), p. 430.
- ¹⁰⁸ Jeremy Bentham, *The Panopticon Writings*, ed. Miran Bozovic (London and New York: Verso, 1995), p. 35.
- ¹⁰⁹ Bentham, *The Panopticon Writings*, ed. Bozovic. Bozovic's introduction to this text explores ideas of god, omniscience and 'the gaze' in relation to Bentham's Panopticon, pp. 1-27.
- ¹¹⁰ Bentham, *The Panopticon Writings*, ed. Bozovic, p. 1.
- ¹¹¹ Anne McClintock, *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest* (New York, London: Routledge, 1995), p. 58.
- ¹¹² Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (London and New York: Routledge, 1992), pp. 201-8.
- ¹¹³ Pratt, *Imperial Eyes*, p. 205.
- ¹¹⁴ Letter to the Second Earl Spencer, 4-30 August 1787, quoted by Leask, *Curiosity and the Aesthetics of Travel Writing 1770-1840*, p. 160.
- ¹¹⁵ Southey, 'Asiatic Researches', pp. 650-1.
- ¹¹⁶ Southey, 'Asiatic Researches', p. 651.
- ¹¹⁷ Majeed, *Ungoverned Imaginings*, p. 8.

Conclusion

This thesis has tracked the changes over Southey's life and literary output from his youthful rejection of British 'systems' to a position in which he felt able to accept the British political establishment and even reinforce it in his writing. The progression that this thesis delineates was also crucial in forming Southey's responses to colonial politics. Whereas in the 1790s Southey had advocated emigration in order to escape what he saw as Britain's restrictive political regime for a dream of democracy, now he recommended the expansion of empire in order to export British institutions and values across the world. Southey's political position only became more entrenched after what Geoffrey Carnall refers to as his 'conversion to conservatism'.¹ Carnall's study (*Robert Southey and His Age: The Development of a Conservative Mind*, 1960), more than any other, follows this progression. However, what Carnall does not elucidate is how the movement from radicalism to conservatism contributed to the overt nationalism found in Southey's writing by the time *The Curse of Kehama* was published in 1810. In the conclusion to this thesis I will reiterate some of the chapter arguments in order to reveal this narrative.

In his review of *Thalaba the Destroyer* for the *Edinburgh Review* of 1802, Francis Jeffrey recognised that Southey was creating a new kind of aesthetic in his poetry. In accusing Southey of being the leader of a new 'sect of poets' Jeffrey used religious radicalism as a metaphor for poetic individualism. For Jeffrey, Southey's poetry attempted to challenge the work of established writers – which he saw as a transgression against the laws of poetry:

Poetry has this much, at least, in common with religion, that its standards were fixed long ago, by certain inspired writers, whose authority it is no longer lawful to call in question²

Jeffrey's review points out other such misdemeanours by Southey. The 'disciples of this school' of poetry – of which he claims Southey is the leader – have 'abandoned the old models', show 'discontent with the present constitution of society' and 'constitute, at present, the most formidable conspiracy that has lately been formed against sound judgement in matters poetical'.³ But what this review highlights is that Southey – as Wordsworth was also doing in the preface to *Lyrical Ballads* (1800-1802) – was laying down a poetical manifesto in poems such as *Thalaba*.

The 'affectation of great simplicity and familiarity of language' that Jeffrey objected to in *Thalaba* was part of Southey's drive to make his credo clear to his readers.⁴ And when Jeffrey went on to accuse Southey of 'childishness' in *Kehama*, for the simplicity of his dualistic vision of the world, he was also attacking this same impulse. But for Southey it was important that his message was clearly transmitted to his readers. And belief in his own moral purpose meant that he could shrug off the negative comments in Jeffrey's review of *Thalaba* and still go on to create a similar manichean representation of the battle between good and evil in *Kehama*. Southey was also slated by Jeffrey for the 'singular structure of the versification'⁵ of *Thalaba* and it was possibly as a reaction to Jeffrey's comments that Southey included a motto from George Withers at the beginning of *Kehama*:

FOR I WILL FOR NO MAN'S PLEASURE
CHANGE A SYLLABLE OR MEASURE;
PEDANTS SHALL NOT TIE MY STRAINS
TO OUR ANTIQUE POETS' VEINS;
BEING BORN AS FREE AS THESE,
I WILL SING AS I SHALL PLEASE.⁶

It declares Southey's independence from poetic pedantry and also confirms that he is creating a new aesthetic in his writing.

Southey did not stop fighting battles all his life. He had high principles and held on to them risking unpopularity with others. The youthful ideals he held of liberty and equality became a middle aged, narrow desire to impose his own moral code on others and a concern to protect the British polity from a 'bellum servile'. In other words the individualistic principles that he used to oppose British society were made safe by being assimilated into national (rather than autonomous and therefore dangerous) values. Through this process of change Southey's nationalism became established. The years leading up to 1810 were particularly important for making his reputation as a writer. Southey emerged as a literary figure during this period, his career established and his increasingly private and parochial life in Keswick providing him with a moral high ground from which to guide and criticise British society.

Even as early as 1803 Southey felt he had given up financial reward in order to be a literary, moral guardian of Britain:

I am pleased and satisfied with my lot. In a profession I might have made a fortune. I shall yet make what will be a fortune to me, and that in a way obedient to the call and impulse of my own nature, and best adapted to develop every moral and intellectual germ implanted in me. How I must by many be regarded as an improvident man, squandering talents that might have made him opulent and raised him to a high rank! Upon their views I confess the charge; but it is a virtue for which I already receive the reward of my own applause, and shall receive the highest rewards as the feelings and truths which I shall enforce produce their effect age after age, so long as our language and our literature endure. (*SL*, I, p. 217)

For Southey writing was therefore a course of moral improvement, enabling him to work out his principles on paper. He was also free to go his own way, unrestricted by

the views of 'many' who saw him 'squandering talents' – walking his own path unconstrained by patronage. His writing would have its own 'highest rewards' in those true feelings which would be inculcated in his readers and endure 'age after age'. Again he was concerned with his future reputation but it was not simply his literary career that he had in mind in this passage, it was his career as a moral custodian, as the following incident reveals.

Southey had entrusted supervision of the publication of one of his works, *Specimens of the Later English Poets* (1807) to his friend, Grosvenor Bedford. When Southey saw the published text he was outraged, not simply by the amount of uncorrected errors he found, but that Bedford should have:

selected anything immoral, and sent it into the world under the sanction of my name. As for my literary character, I am sufficiently careless about it, so much so that even the errors which deface almost every page of this book ... do not give me five minute's concern; but this is not the case with respect to my character as a moralist – of that I am as jealous as a soldier of his honour.

(*SL*, I, pp. 419-20)

Southey had a moral test for literature which he had instructed Bedford to apply to all the material in the *Specimens* – 'that which a woman would not like to read aloud, ought not to be inserted' (*SL*, I, p. 420). Southey regarded his primary role as a writer to be to inculcate correct moral principles in his readers and so conflated his own ethics into what he considered to be correct British values. The form of nationalism he championed in his writing therefore served his own personal interest, but also promoted what he thought was best for Britain. As Southey's readership became wider over the Romantic period his code of values became disseminated in poetry, journalism, histories, biographies and essays. He also exerted an influence on his

contemporary writers (for instance Coleridge, Mary Russell Mitford and James Montgomery) and a second generation of Romantic poets (such as Byron and Shelley – before he was accused by them of apostasy).

The strongest evidence for Southey's nationalism can be seen in his long narrative poems. Despite his declaration that 'England should be the scene of an Englishman's poem', Southey was reluctant to write the history of England as a national epic.⁷ In later life he did attempt to write a poem based on the legend of Robin Hood, but felt there was not the material in English history for a long narrative poem.⁸ Therefore Southey transposed his vision of Britain onto various geographical locations by superimposing an anglicised and christianised narrative of events onto less developed areas of the globe. In these poems Southey often concentrated on a single heroic character who must complete a journey through time and space – revealing the influence of the travel narratives that provided the source materials for his poetry – as well as a moral quest against oppression and evil. And these heroes: Madoc, Thalaba, or Kailyal in *Kehama* (as well as Wat Tyler and Joan of Arc) were highly moral, righteous characters who pursued their missions through a vale of evil to emerge victorious – whether by founding a colony in America, or finding conjugal love in paradise. Southey replayed this story so many times, despite his changing political, social and religious views, that he cannot be considered to have been an apostate in his poetics even if he is considered to have been so in these other areas. The ambiguities of Southey's assertion that he remained dedicated to the same ideals all his life are resolved if we remember that he was not affirming a belief in radical politics anymore, but alluding to the high moral code to which he was committed – both on a personal and national level.

Therefore despite reviling the form of epic poetry as 'degraded' in the preface to *Madoc* (*PW*, V, p. xxi), Southey's long narrative poems are no less epics than those he criticised. If we take the definition of an epic poem to be 'a long narrative poem on a serious subject, told in a formal and elevated style, and centered on a heroic or quasi-divine figure on whose actions depends the fate of a tribe, a nation or...the human race' then it is possible to see that Southey incorporated many, if not all of these elements, in the five narrative poems he wrote between 1794 and 1810.⁹ Southey constantly replayed this epic form to suit his own purposes in disseminating a nationalist form of poetry. As Lynda Pratt points out with regard to Southey's *Joan of Arc*, he wanted 'to define it as a new kind of national epic and himself as a new, radical type of national epic poet'.¹⁰ But Southey also had such ambitions for his later poems, *Thalaba* and *Kehama*, and despite his waning radicalism he applied the same epic format to them. Because 'in the 1790s there was no consensus about what made the ideal, modern national poem',¹¹ Southey was free to create his own form – which may have originated in his anti-British politics but was transformed into a national epic. Southey may have desired to write poems on all the mythologies of the world but it is obvious that he preferred to recycle his moral vision for Britain. By so doing he made a 'national' story to champion the qualities he admired in a 'national' character. And because his characters lacked psychological depth, they appeared as quasi-divine heroes, against which other races contrasted unfavourably. Southey also 'colonised' the locations of his poetry, whether America, the Middle East or India in order to provide a supporting 'moral' background to underline his message, combined with foreign exoticism to hold his readers' interest.

Southey's poetic attempts to shape British citizens by identifying the ideal characteristics of 'Britishness' therefore contribute to an early form of nationalism. As

Linda Colley states in *Britons* (1992), it was during the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries that 'a sense of British national identity was forged' and that it has 'shaped the quality of this particular sense of nationhood and belonging ever since'.¹² Colley asserts that this national identity was formed largely by continued hostilities with France over this period:

Time and time again, war with France brought Britons, whether they hailed from Wales or Scotland or England, into confrontation with an obviously hostile Other and encouraged them to define themselves collectively against it. They defined themselves as Protestants struggling for survival against the world's foremost Catholic power. They defined themselves against the French as they imagined them to be, superstitious, militarist, decadent and unfree. And, increasingly as the wars went on, they defined themselves in contrast to the colonial peoples they conquered, peoples who were manifestly alien in terms of culture, religion and colour.¹³

In this description we can recognise Southey's nationalist development. Despite initially embracing the freedoms that the French Revolution hailed, he came to define British identity against the 'hostile Other' provided by the French, and then against other forms of cultural foreignness that he encountered. Such embryonic forms of nationalism as Southey's founded the self-perpetuating myth that Britain was a morally fit guardian to govern a large proportion of the world's territories. Southey therefore prepared the British people – in his poetry but also in his reviews, which reached a wide audience of the intelligentsia of the period – for the legacy of their imperial destiny.

Siting Southey's writing within its political and social context inevitably means taking a long view on his position within the Romantic period. From 1810 onwards I would argue that Southey was a 'proto-Victorian' in his early anticipation of several aspects of that period – for instance in his dissemination of a restrictive

moral code, his political conservatism, his crusading imperialism, as well as his elevation of the role of the 'man of letters'. His ideas were formed by the social and political controversies of the Romantic period but he increasingly slipped free of these creative origins over his life-time. Southey's transition from ostracised leader of a 'sect of poets' to poet laureate in 1813 was fundamental in creating a national poet who would shape the values of the Victorian era. A self-made man who relied on his own talents to carve out his career as a writer, he then maintained his pre-eminence as a figure of the establishment. Southey was in fact inculcating in his writing the beliefs and values of an emerging British middle class – and he spoke to that class of what was important to them in terms of morality, nationalism, aesthetics and imperial politics.

But if Southey was such an important figure in his own time, why did he fall from favour by the end of the nineteenth century? I think this was because his writing formed a transitional step between the Romantic and Victorian periods – though recognising that these terms themselves are historicised appellations – and cannot easily be placed as a product of either period. His poetry does incorporate some of the qualities of other Romantic writings but unlike Wordsworth's and Coleridge's poetry is not located within the genre of transcendent, numinous poetry, that wrongly or rightly, has come to be seen as the determining factor of Romantic poetry. Southey looked forward, presaging a new age of imperial rule in his texts and while like his fellow 'lake' poets he mourned a lost idyllic (mythical) pastoral existence, he looked forward to a future for the British Empire where he felt this could be replicated. Southey's anticipation of Britain's imperial future (much of which came to pass) was a personal vision disseminated by the authorial imposition of his values through the medium of published texts. As this thesis has demonstrated Southey's self-confident

assertion that 'I have long learnt to look upon the world as my country' (*LC*, I, p. 196), does not succeed in suppressing those anxieties and ambiguities that his vision also incorporated.¹⁴ But the application of naïve egotism to an anglocentric view of the world created the language for such imaginative acts of global appropriation – a language that Southey taught future generations of Britons to voice.

Notes

¹ Geoffrey Carnall, *Robert Southey and his Age: The Development of a Conservative Mind* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1960), p. 200.

² *Robert Southey: The Critical Heritage*, ed. Lionel Madden (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd, 1972), pp. 68-90 (p. 68).

³ *Robert Southey: The Critical Heritage*, ed. Madden, pp. 69-70.

⁴ *Robert Southey: The Critical Heritage*, ed. Madden, p. 70.

⁵ *Robert Southey: The Critical Heritage*, ed. Madden, p. 78.

⁶ CK, unnumbered page after title page.

⁷ *Southey's Commonplace Book*, 4th series, ed. J. W. Warton (London: Longman, Brown, Green and Longmans, 1851), IV, p. 17.

⁸ *Southey's Commonplace Book*, IV, pp. 17, 215 show him casting around for ideas for an English 'epic'.

⁹ M. H. Abrams, *A Glossary of Literary Terms* (Fort Worth, Texas: Harcourt Brace College Publishers, 6th edn., 1985), p. 53.

¹⁰ Lynda Pratt, 'Patriot Poetics and the Romantic National Epic: Placing and Displacing Southey's *Joan of Arc*', in *Placing and Displacing Romanticism*, ed. Peter J. Kitson (Aldershot, Burlington (U.S.A.), Singapore, Sydney: Ashgate, 2001), pp. 88-105 (p. 91).

¹¹ Pratt, 'Patriot Poetics and the Romantic National Epic: Placing and Displacing Southey's *Joan of Arc*', p. 95.

¹² Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation 1707-1837* (London: Vintage, 1996), p. 1.

¹³ Colley, *Britons*, p. 5.

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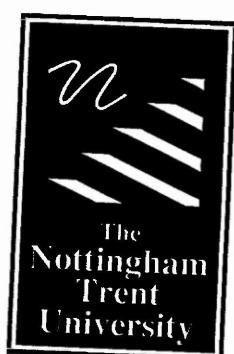
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