

whether the 1818 text incorporates CL's later improvements. The 1818 version is as follows:

Methinks how dainty sweet it were, reclin'd
 Beneath the vast out-stretching branches high
 Of some old wood, in careless sort to lie,
 Nor of the busier scenes we left behind
 Aught envying. And, O Anna! mild-eyed maid!
 Belov'd! I were well content to play
 With thy free tresses all a summer's day,
 Losing the time beneath the greenwood shade.
 Or we might sit and tell some tender tale
 Of faithful vows repaid by cruel scorn,
 A tale of true love, or of friend forgot;
 And I would teach thee, lady, how to rail
 In gentle sort, on those who practise not
 Or love or pity, though of woman born.

Besides differences of punctuation and capitals, the 1797 text has "vast o'ershadowing branches" in line 2, "the long summer day" in line 7, "Cheating the time" in line 8, and "friends forgot" in line 11.

The version given here is from *Poems* (1796).

Methinks, how dainty sweet it were, reclin'd
 Beneath the vast o'er shadowing branches high
 Of some old wood, in careless sort to lie,
 Nor of the busier scenes, we left behind,
 Aught envying! And, O Anna! mild-eyed maid!
 BELOVED! I were well content to play
 With thy free tresses the long summer day
 Cheating the time beneath the green-wood shade.
 But ah! sweet scenes of fancied bliss, adieu!
 On rose-leaf beds amid your faery bowers
 I all too long have lost the dreamy hours!
 Besems it now the sterner Muse to woo,
 If haply she her golden meed impart
 To realize the vision of the heart.

115. THE EOLIAN HARP: COMPOSED AT CLEVEDON, SOMERSETSHIRE

[Aug–Oct 1795; also Feb? 1796]

The four ms versions date from Aug–Oct 1795 and Feb? 1796, and they bear a somewhat complicated relation to one another, arising from the fact that the original simple description of a wind-harp at sunset was enlarged to involve different times, places, emotions, and ideas. The enlargement took place perhaps within a few months, perhaps after an interval of several months. The poem was included in all seven of C's major collections. It underwent no major changes, although for a long time C continued undecided whether or not to include certain passages, and it obtained its present title only in 1817.

The original, superseded poem had a good deal in common with others that C was writing at the time (e.g. poems 109, 111, 112). There may even be a connection between its beginnings and 112 *To the Nightingale* (see the ms fragment quoted in var 19–19.1, ln). The Aeolian harp was a fashionable interest: so fashionable, indeed, that Robert Bloomfield, "The Farmer's Boy" who made Aeolian harps for a living, was able to publish a short Aeolian harp anthology in 1808, called *Nature's Music*. C's chief literary source appears to have been Thomson's *Ode on Aeolus's Harp* and *Castle of Indolence* (1748) l xxxix–xli. Lines 9–10 appear also to derive from Thomson's *Spring* 499–500. For a description and succinct history of Aeolian harps see James Thomson *Liberty, The Castle of Indolence, and Other Poems* ed James Sambrook (Oxford 1986) 437–8.

C discovered significance in what he was writing as he wrote. A number of philosophic analogues for the harp metaphor—in Böhme, Cadworth, Priestley—suggest reasons as to his uncertainty over whether or not to publish what he had written. The analogues point up implications which connect the metaphor with his lifelong attraction to and denial of "pantheistic" idealism. He described his objections to it in the margin of Kant's *Critik der reinen Vernunft* (CM—CC—III 248):

The mind does not resemble an Eolian Harp, nor even a barrel-organ turned by a stream of water, conceive as many tunes mechanized in it as you like—but rather, as far as Objects are concerned, a violin, or other instrument of few strings yet vast compass, played on by a musician of Genius.

C's later indecision centred on two passages: lines 21–5, which he preferred to omit between Jul 1797 and 1815, and lines 26–33, which were several times rearranged before they attained their final form in 1817. Cf also line 60EC.

Despite such vacillation, C recognised that the poem represented a significant advance in poetic technique, and his later *Conversation Poems* in part derive

from it. On 31 Dec 1796, soon after it was published for the first time, he wrote to Thelwall: "by the bye—that is the favorite of my poems—do you like it?" (CL 1 295). He wrote later, at the end of the poem in RS's copy of *Poems* (1797): "This I think the most perfect Poem, I ever wrote. Bad may be the Best, perhaps. I S. T. C." And, at the beginning of the poem in Francis Wrangham's (?) copy of SL, he remarked on its originality:

Let me be excused, if it should seem to others too mere a trifle to justify my noticing it—but I have some claim to the thanks of no small number of the readers of poetry in having first introduced this species of short blank verse poems—of which Southey, Lamb, Wordsworth, and others have since produced so many exquisite specimens.—It would gratify me, I confess, to see the lines from 9 (How exquisite &c) to l. 48 extracted in the Ed. Magazine—because these, with the ? opening five first pages of the Fragment, entitled the *Destiny of Nations*, p. 281.

The RT reproduces PW (1828), taking in a comma which C added at the end of line 28 in the Fitzwilliam copy.

My pensive Saral! thy soft cheek reclined
Thus on mine arm, most soothing sweet it is
To sit beside our cot, our cot o'ergrown
With white-flowered Jasmijn, and the broad-leaved Myrtle,
(Meet emblems they of Innocence and Love!)
And watch the clouds, that late were rich with light,
Slow saddening round, and mark the star of eve
Serenely brilliant (such should wisdom be)
Shine opposite! How exquisite the scents
Snatched from yon bean-field! and the world so hushed!
The stilly murmur of the distant Sea
Tells us of Silence.

And that simplest Lute,
Placed length-ways in the clasping casement, hark!
How by the desultory breeze caressed,
Like some coy maid half yielding to her lover,
It pours such sweet upbraiding, as must needs
Tempt to repeat the wrong! And now, its strings
Boldlier swept, the long sequacious notes

3. our cot] l.e. 55 Old Church Road, though Lawrence 73 raises a small
Clevedon—as a plaque announces—doubt.

Over delicious surges sink and rise,
Such a soft floating witchery of sound
As twilight Elfinns make, when they at eve
Voyage on gentle gales from Fairy-Land,
Where Melodies round honey-dropping flowers,
Footless and wild, like birds of Paradise,
Nor pause, nor perch, hovering on untamed wing!
O the one life within us and abroad,
Which meets all motion and becomes its soul,
A light in sound, a sound-like power in light,
Rhythm in all thought, and joyance every where—
Methinks, it should have been impossible
Not to love all things in a world so filled;
Where the breeze warbles, and the mute still air,
Is Music slumbering on her instrument.

And thus, my love! as on the midway slope
Of yonder hill I stretch my limbs at noon,
Whilst through my half-closed eye-lids I behold
The sunbeams dance, like diamonds, on the main,
And tranquil muse upon tranquillity:
Full many a thought uncalled and undetained,
And many idle flitting phantasies,
Traverse my indolent and passive brain,

19–25. See vol II at this point for evidence that C was much taken up with the writing of these lines. The Gutch Notebook contains another fragment which appears to be related to them (CN 1 51):

Light cargoes waëf waif of modu-
laid Sound
From viewless Hybla brought,
when Melodies
Like Birds of Paradise on wings,
that ave
Disport in wild variety of hues,
Murmur around the honey-drop-
ping flowers.

KC dates the fragment before 20 Aug 1795 and suggests that it may owe

something to Erasmus Darwin *The Botanic Garden* 1 iv 1–8 (who, at 11 i 101–6, uses the image of the Aeolian Harp); and see RX 458 n 57 on other possible sources.

C asked Cottle to omit lines 23–5

in Jul 1797 (CL 1 331), and CL did so in 1803, along with lines 21–2. C restored them differently in RS's (?) copy of *Poems* (1797), and then in SL and thereafter.

26–33. Lines 30–3 were added in *Poems* (1803), but attained their present form only in the addenda to SL, when lines 26–9 were also added. Cf Akenside's *The Pleasures of Imagination* (1744 ed) 1 109–24 (on the harp of Memnon).

As wild and various as the random gales
That swell and flutter on this subject lute!

And what if all of animated nature
Be but organic harps diversely framed,
That tremble into thought, as o'er them sweeps
Plastic and vast, one intellectual breeze,
At once the Soul of each, and God of All?

But thy more serious eye a mild reproof
Darts, O beloved woman! nor such thoughts
Dim and unhallowed dost thou not reject,
And biddest me walk humbly with my God.
Meek daughter in the family of Christ!
Well hast thou said and holily dispraised
These shapings of the unregenerate mind:
Bubbles that glitter as they rise and break
On vain Philosophy's aye-babbling spring.
For never guiltless may I speak of him,
The Incomprehensible! save when with awe
I praise him, and with Faith that inly feels;

Who with his saving mercies healed me,
A sinful and most miserable Man,
Wildered and dark, and gave me to possess
Peace, and this Cot, and thee, heart-honoured Maid!

116. ODE TO SARA,
WRITTEN AT SHURTON BARS,
NEAR BRIDGEWATER, IN ANSWER
TO A LETTER FROM BRISTOL

[Sept 1795]

The poem was originally entitled "Epistle", and when C changed it to Ode he added a note explaining that the first stanza alludes to a passage in the letter he was answering in Sept 1795. Shurton Bars is three miles from Nether Stowey, on the Bristol Channel. The spot on which C must have stood to write his poem is identified by Lawrence 68-9. C and RS were staying with Henry Poole, an undergraduate of Jesus College Cambridge, at his grandfather William Poole's house, Shurton Court. C and Sara were to get married on 4 Oct.

The text, which varies very little, is taken from *Poems* (1797), with the punctuation in line 70 corrected according to C's instructions and with corrections in the footnote to line 92. The concluding stanza was omitted in *Poems* (1803) and subsequent printings.

Nor travels my meand'ring eye
The starry wilderness on high;
Nor now with curious sight
I mark the glow-worm, as I pass,

44-8. C quoted the lines in Lecture 13 of his lectures on the history of philosophy (*P Lects*—1949—371) to illustrate the idealist position. "In other words, he, the idealist, concedes a real existence to one of the two terms only—to the *natura naturans*, in Berkeley's language, to God, and to the finite minds on which it acts, THE *NATURA NATURATA*, or the bodily world, being the result, even as the tune between the wind and the Aeolian harp." Cf also Notebook 37 = BM Add MS 47532 f 28^v.

44-7. C quotes the lines in the context of some remarks against materialism, in a letter to John Thelwall of 31 Dec 1796, alluding to Alexander Monroe's belief "in a plastic immaterial Nature—all-pervading" (CL I 294; cf *Observations on the Structure and Functions of the Nervous Sys-*

tem—Edinburgh 1783—104). In fact, C's source for his knowledge of Monroe is John Ferrar "Observations concerning the Vital Principle" in *Memoirs of the Literary and Philosophical Society of Manchester* (4 vols Warington 1785-96) III 222, 226, which throws light on his meaning.

60. inly feels] C added a last-minute note to *Poems* (1796, 1797, 1803) taken from Madame Roland's defence of her statesman husband. In the subsequent English translation published by Joseph Johnson, it reads:

"The Atheist is not, in my eyes, a man of ill faith: I can live with him as well, nay, better than with the devotee; for he reasons more; but he is deficient in a certain sense, and his soul does not keep pace with mine: he is unmoved at a spectacle the most ravishing, and he hunts for a syllogism, where I am

impressed with awe and admiration" (Madame Roland had the reputation of being a domineering wife (cf 76.XI *An Appeal to Impartial Posterity*—3 p 120 London 1795—pt 3 p 112).

However, while the note ostensibly reinforces the argument in the poem connecting faith with feeling, this suppressed critique of the criticiser in turn complicates the authority of Sara's challenge to C's "atheism".