

of Tolentino in Feb 1797, Pope Pius VI ceded to Napoleon the northern part of his states; in Dec a French general and the ambassador were killed in Rome and the Directory ordered the invasion of the city, which was occupied without resistance; on 15 Feb 1798 General Berthier and the Roman democrats proclaimed a republic. Daniel Stuart wrote to C asking him to contribute something to *M Post* "on the approaching downfall of the Pope" on 20 Jan (see *EOT—CC—III* 163; for two prose essays apparently in response to Stuart's request *ibid* 1 20–6).

However, it should be recognised that the attribution remains conjectural. The two puns must have been commonplace at the time, and Stuart may well have asked others for contributions on the same subject. Pseudo-epitaphs with satirical purpose were a known form in prose and verse; the lines are not metrical and the Latin is flawed ("accipiendia" for "accipienda"; "nonnulli" for "nonnulli"). The following translation is provided by Erdman:

ON THE POPE

A NOT VERY OBSCURE, OR INCREDIBLE, PROPHECY, 1798

Once Peter made his denials—his Vicar will at once concede

His goods, to be taken in good part/by Bonaparte;

When the Frenchman/cock crows clear again

A second Peter will go out to weep.

The Last of the Romans!

N.B. Some read *Gallico* [Frenchman] for *Gallo* [cock, or Frenchman].

Olim negabat Petrus—Vicarius statim concedet

Bona, Bona-parte accipiendia;

Iterum claro Gallo cantante

Alter fleturus exibat Petrus,

Ultimus Romanorum!

N.B. Legunt nonnulli *Gallico* pro *Gallo*.

171. FROST AT MIDNIGHT

[Feb 1798]

The beginnings of the poem might lie in an early version of Thelwall's poem to his son, *To the Infant Hampden*.—*Written during a Sleepless Night. Derby. Oct. 1797* (*Poems Chiefly Written in Retirement*—Hereford 1801—140–1), possibly in other poems by Thelwall about which C was enthusiastic at that time (*CL* 1 351; to J. Thelwall [14 Oct 1797]; cf e.g. *On Leaving the Bottoms of Gloucestershire and Maria: A Fragment in Poems* 136–9, 142–4). But the poem also

mingles enthusiasms deriving from conversations with WW and memories reinterpreted in the light of Wordsworthian preoccupations. On the simplest level, the details of C's early years at Christ's Hospital are similar to those he set down in a letter to TP at the time he wrote the poem (*CL* 1 387–9; [endorsed 19 Feb 1798]); and the description of the Lake District with which the poem closes derives entirely from WW, since C at that time had not been there. However, the way in which real and imaginary experiences combine is less simple, and mixes recollection with hopes and fears for the future in the light of C's deepening admiration for WW.

WW's influence, if that is the word, is most formative at a profound and verbal level in the way the poem moves and sounds. C had been involved in continuing and rewriting several of WW's poems during the previous months, and his lines continue the meditation on childhood which began, after HC's birth, in 150 *To the Rev George Coleridge* and which intensified after the Wordsworths moved to Alfoxden. *Frost at Midnight* might be said to be C's version of a Wordsworthian poem that WW was then only on the verge of writing. For this reason, it came to have a particular importance for WW, and he alludes to it in *The Pedlar, Tintern Abbey*, the 1799 *Prelude*, and other poems.

There are no manuscripts, but there are seven printed versions, as well as reprintings. The poem was first published in conjunction with 175 *Fears in Solitude* and 174 *France: An Ode*, and first collected in *SL*, at the close of the section of "Meditative Poems in Blank Verse". (C protested vigorously when his printer mistakenly included it among "Poems Occasioned by Political Events".) Successive versions reveal a process of continual refinement upon the original inspiration, chiefly by rewriting and curtailing the transitional passage between the first and second paragraphs and by omitting six lines at the end. The peculiarly Wordsworthian, almost ventriloquial origins of the poem might account for a noticeable feature of its textual development, the way in which C omitted and revised blocks of lines, but did comparatively little rewriting within lines. The text given here follows *PW* (1829).

The Frost performs its secret ministry,
Unhelped by any wind. The owl's cry
Came loud—and hark, again! loud as before.
The inmates of my cottage, all at rest,
Have left me to that solitude, which suits
Abstruser musings: save that at my side
My cradled infant slumbers peacefully.
'Tis calm indeed! so calm, that it disturbs
And vexes meditation with its strange
And extreme silentness. Sea, hill, and wood,
This populous village! Sea, and hill, and wood,
With all the numberless goings on of life,

Inaudible as dreams! the thin blue flame
Lies on my low burnt fire, and quivers not;
Only that film, which fluttered on the grate,
Still flutters there, the sole unquiet thing.
Methinks, its motion in this hush of nature
Gives it dim sympathies with me who live,
Making it a companionable form,
Whose puny flaps and freaks the idling Spirit
By its own moods interprets, every where
Echo or mirror seeking of itself,
And makes a toy of Thought.

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But O! how oft,
How oft, at school, with most believing mind,
Presageful, have I gazed upon the bars,
To watch that fluttering *stranger!* and as oft

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15. As C pointed out in a note to the earlier texts, these films were known as strangers and were popularly "supposed to portend the arrival of some absent friend". A more immediate literary source is Cowper "The Winter Evening" *The Task* (1785) IV 286-310. An advertisement for an enlarged edition of Cowper's poems accompanied the first publication of C's, and shared values of domestic retirement from active life are important in contemporary politics of taste. Cf Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall *Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle Class 1780-1850* (1987) 162-7 etc.

20-4. These lines were closer to the mood of Cowper in the first printed version (1798):

With which I can hold commune.
Idle thought!
But still the living spirit in our frame,
That loves not to behold a lifeless thing,
Transfuses into all it's own delights
It's own volition, sometimes with

With unclosed lids, already had I dreamt
Of my sweet birth-place, and the old church-tower,
Whose bells, the poor man's only music, rang
From morn to evening, all the hot Fair-day,
So sweetly, that they stirred and haunted me
With a wild pleasure, falling on mine ear
Most like articulate sounds of things to come!
So gazed I, till the soothing things, I dreamt,
Lulled me to sleep, and sleep prolonged my dreams!
And so I brooded all the following morn,
Awed by the stern preceptor's face, mine eye
Fixed with mock study on my swimming book:
Save if the door half opened, and I snatched
A hasty glance, and still my heart leaped up,
For still I hoped to see the *stranger's* face,
Townsmen, or aunt, or sister more beloved,
My play-mate when we both were clothed alike!

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Dear Babe, that sleepest cradled by my side,
Whose gentle breathings, heard in this deep calm,
Fill up the interspersed vacancies
And momentary pauses of the thought!
My babe so beautiful! it thrills my heart
With tender gladness, thus to look at thee,
And think that thou shalt learn far other lore
And in far other scenes! For I was reared
In the great city, pent 'mid cloisters dim,
And saw nought lovely but the sky and stars.

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42. aunt, or sister more beloved]

C's maternal uncle and his wife lived in London while he was at school, but none of his aunts or his sister Ann came up from Devon to visit him, and his brothers Luke and George did not come up until 1784-5. C refers to the early days in his school life he recalled for TP at the time he wrote the poem (CL I 387-9). The "stern preceptor" is Matthew Field, by whom C was less awed a few years later, when he could compare him with James

Boyer.

52. pent 'mid cloisters dim] The verb is carried forward from 156 *This Lime-tree Bower my Prison* 30, and alludes to PL IX 445-54. Other descriptions of C in the Christ's Hospital cloisters give a picture of less stifled schooldays. For example, CL remembered C triumphally as a Grecian (*L Works* II 24-5) and applied C's images of deprivation to himself (ibid II 15, IV 197, etc).

he could compare him with James

But *thou*, my babe! shalt wander like a breeze
 By lakes and sandy shores, beneath the crags
 Of ancient mountain, and beneath the clouds,
 Which image in their bulk both lakes and shores
 And mountain crags: so shalt thou see and hear
 The lovely shapes and sounds intelligible
 Of that eternal language, which thy God
 Utters, who from eternity doth teach
 Himself in all, and all things in himself.
 Great universal Teacher! he shall mould
 Thy spirit, and by giving make it ask.

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Therefore all seasons shall be sweet to thee,
 Whether the summer clothe the general earth
 With greenness, or the redbreast sit and sing
 Betwixt the tufts of snow on the bare branch
 Of mossy apple-tree, while the nigh thatch
 Smokes in the sun-thaw; whether the eve-drops fall
 Heard only in the trances of the blast,
 Or if the secret ministry of frost
 Shall hang them up in silent icicles,
 Quietly shining to the quiet Moon.

172. LEWTI
 OR, THE CIRCASSIAN LOVE-CHANT

[Probably Feb-Mar 1798]

C's poem is a reworking of a schoolboy poem by WW (WPW 1 263-4; WEPF 38, 40, 42, 44, cf 378-84), done probably to meet the terms of his agreement to supply material to *M Post*, but also because its mood and imagery appear at once to have gained his interest. Three ms drafts show him reworking and expanding the original poem of thirty-six lines, interpreting it by experiences going back to Christ's Hospital days and his love for Mary Evans, by his reading in Bartram, and by observations made at the time among the Quantocks.

The poem was published in a version amounting to 111 lines in *M Post* (13 Apr 1798), which combines elements of the original WW poem with C's draft reworkings and a large amount of new material. It was published over the pseudonym "NICIAS ERYTHREUS" (for "ERYTHREUS")—a signature used for another collaborative *M Post* poem, 168 *The Old Man of the Alps*. It was removed from *LB* at the last moment, and it has been supposed that this was to preserve the anonymity of that volume; but there may be other, literary reasons for the decision. The same version in eighty-two lines was included by RS in the *Annual Anthology* II (1800).

C came to associate the poem with SH and to think of it as his own (CN

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54-64. C wrote these lines before he ever saw the Lakes or knew that HC would grow up and spend his life among them. See the headnote on WW's influence, and cf the lines in WW's Alfoxden Notebook dating from Jan-Mar 1798 (WRCP 112-15; WPW v 413 var); also a similar instance in 175 *Fears in Solitude* 185-6.

69. mossy apple-tree] The same tree in C's Nether Stowey orchard that was described in 150 *To the Rev George Coleridge*.

74*. The first published version (1798) contains six additional lines: Like those, my babe! which, ere to-morrow's warmth Have capp'd their sharp keen points with pendulous drops, Will catch thine eye, and with their

may also date from this earlier time.

The name Lewti is not derived from WW's poem—which is called *Beauty and Midnight: An Ode*—and has given rise to speculation. The most likely explanation is that it is the archaic form of the word "loyalty", perhaps deriving from C's reading in the ballads at the time (it is a Scots and Border word), which happens to rhyme with *beauty*. The word "loo" or "lew" also has associations with warmth and shelter ("in or under the lee") for anyone coming from Devon: see James Jennings *Observations on Some of the Dialects in the West of England* (1825) 52, numerous poems by William Barnes, or Eden Philipotts *Man's Days*.

The title of C's first draft was originally "The wild Indian's Love-

chaunt", reflecting his current reading in Bartram's *Travels* (RX 513-14), as well as recollections of his earlier interest in North America (see on line 76c). The substitution of Circassia was very probably suggested by Collins's fourth Persian Eclogue, which is set "In fair Circassia, where to Love inclin'd, I Each Swain was blest, for ev'ry Maid was kind!" As Collins goes on to say (lines 54, 55), Circassia was "For ever fam'd for pure and happy Loves", and "boasts her fairest of the Fair". Edward Gibbon *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* ed J. B. Bury (7 vols 1909) iv 400 describes Circassian women as "the model of beauty" and "famed for love", citing Buffon and Herodotus. Cf RX 515-16.