

398. WRITTEN AT COLEORTON

[Dec 1806]

C wrote the lines into Notebook 11 (CN II 2958). Cf 399 "Those eyes of deep & most expressive blue".

—To me the opening of thy bright blue eye
Suffused with Light on every object nigh,
And shed a kind of Life—

399. "THOSE EYES OF DEEP
& MOST EXPRESSIVE BLUE"

[Before Dec 1806?]

The only known version of the lines appears, unsigned, in the hand of JG's former assistant, J.H.B. Williams, in J.M.'s notebook album. The context in which they were transcribed, as well as their style, suggests that they might be by C. At the same time, an unsigned epigram which immediately precedes them is by Samuel Rogers, and the authorship of the present lines cannot be proved on the available evidence.

While the transcript into the album is likely to have been made c 1832, the lines, if they are by C, might date from any time between 1804 and 1806. Cf 398 *Written at Coleorton*. Such striking blue eyes belonged to the women of C's poetry, like Christabel, rather than of his real-life acquaintance (SH, DW, Mrs C). Cf also 271 *A Stranger Minstrel* 24–5.

Those eyes of deep & most expressive blue
Came between him & his midnight dreams
Offener than any other eyes he ever knew.

400. A LINE WRITTEN AT COLEORTON

[Dec 1806–Feb 1807]

The line is written into Notebook 11 (CN II 2977), and is not certainly by C. He had recorded on the previous leaf a crucial moment in the history of his jealous fears of SH's intimacy with WW, and an unexplained entry intervenes.

And the free Light may triumph in our faces—

401. TO WILLIAM WORDSWORTH,
COMPOSED ON THE NIGHT AFTER
HIS RECITATION OF A POEM ON THE
GROWTH OF AN INDIVIDUAL MIND

[Jan 1807]

The occasion of C's poem was the reading aloud, on a succession of evenings after Christmas 1806 at Coleorton, of the whole of WW's "poem to Coleridge", later named *The Prelude*. C had been familiar with the five-book version since the time he left for Malta in Mar 1804, but had seen nothing of the expanded version before the reading of 1806–7. His tribute lays particular stress on WW's French experiences in 1791–2, introduced into book IX, as well as on his developing sense of estrangement from the others in the circle round the Coleorton five (DW, MW, SH). His annotations soon afterwards to the duplicate fair copy known as MS B (DCL MS 53) are confined to the second half of book VI—as he said, "for the deadening of a too strong feeling, which the personal Passages, so exquisitely beautiful, had excited" (*Prelude* p 559 (Notes); and see Moorman *William Wordsworth* II 89–92). The personal level of C's response appears to have been different from what WW hoped: C's spirits were not lifted and WW's work on *The Recluse* was not helped forward. When *The Excursion* was published in 1814, along with the prospectus to *The Recluse*, the main philosophical section of the poem had hardly been begun.

C quoted from his tribute in the 1809 *Friend* and in *BL* as part of his argument that WW's greatness could only find expression in a philosophical poem on man, nature, and society. Publication of the whole tribute in *SL* called further attention to something known up until then only to members of the Wordsworth circle, and at the same time put pressure on WW to realise an ambition that was

as much C's as WW's own. WW's resistance to the publication of C's tribute is therefore understandable: C's poem celebrated a specific, semi-private occasion, yet it should be compared with other, more private thoughts he entertained about his friend (e.g. 374 *Latin Lines to WW as Judge* and 430 *Ad Vitium Axiologum: Latin Version*), and with other poems which engage in a dialogue with WW less directly (e.g. 301 *Hymn before Sun-rise*).

One of the two known mss was in WW's possession and the other in Lady Beaumont's when the poem was published, so that differences between the ms and printed texts may be due to the vagaries of C's memory. It was included with successive small revisions in *PW* (1828, 1829), and *PW* (1834) publicly introduced WW's name into the title (as given here) for the first time. The version reproduced below is that of *PW* (1829).

Friend of the Wise! and Teacher of the Good!
 Into my heart have I received that Lay
 More than historic, that prophetic Lay
 Wherein (high theme by thee first sung aright)
 Of the foundations and the building up
 Of a Human Spirit thou has dared to tell
 What may be told, to the understanding mind
 Revealeable; and what within the mind
 By vital Breathings secret as the soul
 Of vernal growth, oft quickens in the Heart
 Thoughts all too deep for words!—

Theme hard as high!

Of smiles spontaneous, and mysterious fears
 (The first-born they of Reason and twin-birth)
 Of tides obedient to external force,
 And currents self-determined, as might seem,
 Or by some inner Power, of moments awful,
 Now in thy inner life, and now abroad,
 When Power streamed from thee, and thy soul received
 The light reflected, as a light bestowed—
 Of Fancies fair, and milder hours of youth,
 Hyblean murmurs of Poetic Thought
 Industrious in its Joy, in Vales and Glens
 Native or outland, Lakes and famous Hills!

21. Hyblean] Hybla was a city and honey. The allusion is appropriately mountain in Sicily, famous for its conventional.

Or on the lonely High-road, when the Stars
 Were rising; or by secret Mountain-streams,
 The Guides and the Companions of thy way!

Of more than Fancy, of the Social Sense
 Distending wide, and Man beloved as Man,
 Where France in all her Towns lay vibrating
 Like some becalmed Bark beneath the burst
 Of Heaven's immediate Thunder, when no cloud
 Is visible, or shadow on the Main.
 For thou wert there, thine own brows garlanded,
 Amid the tremor of a realm aglow,
 Amid a mighty nation jubilant,
 When from the general Heart of Human kind
 Hope sprang forth like a full-born Deity!
 —Of that dear Hope afflicted and struck down,
 So summoned homeward, thenceforth calm and sure
 From the dread Watch-Tower of man's absolute Self,
 With light unwaning on her eyes, to look
 Far on—herself a glory to behold,
 The Angel of the vision! Then (last strain)
 Of Duty, chosen Laws controlling choice,
 Action and Joy!—An orphic song indeed,
 A song divine of high and passionate thoughts,
 To their own Music chaunted!

O great Bard!

Ere yet that last strain dying awed the air,
 With stedfast eye I viewed thee in the choir
 Of ever-enduring men. The truly Great
 Have all one age, and from one visible space
 Shed influence! They, both in power and act,
 Are permanent, and Time is not with them,
 Save as it worketh *for* them, not *in* it.
 Nor less a sacred Roll, than those of old,

43. The Angel of the vision] Possibly an allusion to "the great vision of the guarded mount" in *Lycidas* 161.

50-4. C's phrasing echoes *The Prelude* (1805-6) x 968-70; and the same idea is developed differently in *Sh C* 1 126, 137-8, II 229. See also WW's *Convention of Cintra* (1809) (*W Prose* 1 339).

And to be placed, as they, with gradual fame
Among the Archives of Mankind, thy work
Makes audible a linked lay of Truth,

Of Truth profound a sweet continuous lay,
Not learnt, but native, her own natural notes!

Ah! as I listened with a heart forlorn
The pulses of my Being beat anew:

And even as Life returns upon the Drowned,
Life's joy rekindling roused a throng of Pains—

Keen Pangs of Love, awakening as a babe
Turbulent, with an outcry in the heart;

And Fears self-willed, that shunned the eye of Hope;
And Hope that scarce would know itself from Fear;

Sense of past Youth, and Manhood come in vain,
And Genius given, and knowledge won in vain;

And all which I had culled in Wood-walks wild,
And all which patient toil had reared, and all,

Commune with *thee* had opened out—but Flowers
Strewed on my corse, and borne upon my Bier,

In the same Coffin, for the self-same Grave!

That way no more! and ill be seems it me,
Who came a welcomer in Herald's Guise,
Singing of Glory, and Futurity,

To wander back on such unhealthful road,
Plucking the poisons of self-harm! And ill

Such interwine be seems triumphal wreaths
Strewed before *thy* advancing!

Nor do thou,

Sage Bard! impair the memory of that hour
Of thy communion with my nobler mind

By Pity or Grief, already felt too long!
Nor let my words import more blame than needs.

The tumult rose and ceased: for Peace is nigh
Where wisdom's voice has found a listening heart.

Amid the howl of more than wintry storms,

The Halcyon hears the voice of vernal Hours
Already on the wing.

Eve following eve,

Dear tranquil time, when the sweet sense of Home
Is sweetest! moments for their own sake hailed

And more desired, more precious for thy song,
In silence listening, like a devout child,

My soul lay passive, by thy various strain
Driven as in surges now beneath the stars,

With momentary Stars of my own birth,
Fair constellated Foam,* still darting off

Into the darkness: now a tranquil sea,
Outspread and bright, yet swelling to the Moon.

And when—O Friend! my comforter and guide!
Strong in thyself, and powerful to give strength!—

Thy long sustained Song finally closed,
And thy deep voice had ceased—yet thou thyself

Wert still before my eyes, and round us both
That happy vision of beloved Faces—

Scarce conscious, and yet conscious of its close
I sate, my being blended in one thought

(Thought was it? or Aspiration? or Resolve?)
Absorbed, yet hanging still upon the sound—

And when I rose, I found myself in prayer.

* "A beautiful white cloud of Foam at momentary intervals coursed by the side of the Vessel with a Roar, and little stars of flame danced and sparkled and went out in it: and every now and then light detachments of this white cloud-like foam darted off from the vessel's side, each with its own small constellation, over the Sea, and scoured out of sight like a Tartar Troop over a Wilderness."—*THE FRIEND*, p. 220.

90. vernal Hours] The phrase is the first entry in the Gutch notebook (*CN* 19); it is traceable to Erasmus Darwin and his *Botanic Garden* 1 i 428 and 1 ii 45, and connected with Thomson's *Seasons*. See *RX* 13 and 473 n 13.

99fn. The context in *The Friend*

xiv (23 Nov 1809) 221 (*CC*) ii 193 (var) is a description of C's and the Wordsworths' voyage to Cuxhaven in Sept 1798 (see also *CW* 1 335 f 1^v; *CL* 1 425; to Mrs C 3 Oct 1798; *BL*—*CC*—ii 168).

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