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I hereby recommend that the thesis prepared under my supervision by Roy Marz

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The Poetry and Prose of Robert Southey: A Study in Literary Mediocrity

A dissertation submitted to the
Graduate School
Of the University of Cincinnati

in partial fulfillment of the
requirement for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

1937

by

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I. INTRODUCTION

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INTRODUCTION

Ethereal minstrel! pilgrim of the sky!
Dost thou despise the earth where cares abound?
Or, while the wings aspire, are heart and eye
Both with thy nest upon the dewy ground?
Thy nest which thou canst drop into at will,
Those quivering wings composed, that music still!

Leave to the nightingale her shady wood;
A privacy of glorious light is thine;
Whence thou dost pour upon the world a flood
Of harmony, with instinct more divine;
Type of the wise who soar, but never roam;
True to the kindred points of Heaven and Home!

Unfortunately, Robert Southey lacks the flexibility of Wordsworth's skylark. He seldom roamed, and never soared; he fixed his gaze upon the earth and his wings rarely beat the upper air of poetic illusion; he was a pilgrim, not of the sky, but of the pedestrian ways of men; he was a minstrel, but there is more of the wind than of the ether in his songs. And, much to the chagrin of his immortal ghost, his "glorious light" seems destined to hold an enduring privacy; for although his industrious spirit, to Byron's annoyance, poured upon the world "a flood of harmony", these echoes have long since died away.

However kindred the points of Heaven and Home may be, the reconciliation of these two extremes, aesthetic vision and obedience to duty, calls for a rare combination, in a single individual, of genius and character. Southey, although incontestably a great man, had no divine fire, just as Coleridge, a great poet, was wanting in human tenderness. Southey

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could shoulder Coleridge's moral obligations, look after his wife, care for his children; but Coleridge, even if he wished, could not lend out his genius. It is possible that Southey's onerous devotion to duty prevented the development of his potential talent. That the germ of poetic greatness existed in him is proved by the imaginative grandeur of such epics as Thalaba, the Destroyer and The Curse of Kehama, produced before he reached the age of forty; but in middle life he worked from dawn to night, day after day, earning a living for his family and that of his friend, upholding the political, religious, and social ideals which he believed would save humanity. Inspiration turned into drudgery, poetry became a hobby, and freedom vanished. His strength was equal to the load, but a burdened man cannot leap upon the back of the winged horse, unless his force be as great as his endurance. Men like Milton and Goethe can both dream and do, but such men are rare, and Southey is not among them. In him vision was lost in action, the fire of creating in the fever of living, and the poet in his nature died when the man was fully born.

Southey's merit as a man is attested by his letters, which Thackeray calls the record, more inspiring than piles of epics, of "an English worthy, doing his duty for fifty noble years of labour, day by day storing up learning, day by day working for scant wages, most charitable out of his small means, bravely faithful to the calling which he had chosen, refusing to turn from his path, for popular praise or prince's

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favour".[1] Likewise, when his friends wrote his eulogy, they placed emphasis on his life rather than on his works. Landor declared that "never in the course of my existence have I known a man so excellent on so many points".[2] Coleridge believed that "when future critics shall weigh out his guerdon of praise and censure, it will be Southey the poet alone that will supply them with the scanty materials for the latter"[3]. But Henry Taylor states the case more clearly: "There were greater poets in his generation, and there were men of a deeper and more far-reaching philosophic faculty; but take him for all in all -- his ardent and genial piety, his moral strength, the magnitude and variety of his powers, the field which he covered in literature, and the beauty of his life -- it may be said of him justly and with no straining of the truth, that of all his contemporaries he was the greatest Man."[4]

It was not as a man that Southey wished to be remembered. He had no egotism regarding his character, but he had grandiose hopes for his poetry. The Renaissance thirst for fame renews in him, and he trusts, with Milton, that, though fallen on evil days, his Muse will find him fit audience though few in a more enlightened age. With unconscious irony he announces his conviction that "my memory is one of those which will smell sweet, and blossom in the dust". He expressed the

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1 The Four Georges, The Works of William Makepeace Thackeray, Biographical Edition, London 1914, vol. VII, p. 704.
2 Quoted by Dowden, The Correspondence of Robert Southey with Caroline Bowles, edited, with an introduction, by Edward Dowden, Dublin and London, 1881, p. xxxi.
3 Ibid., pp. xxxi-xxxii.
4 Ibid., p. xxxii.

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same thought in My Days Among the Dead Are Past, one of his best lyrics, and the title of that poem has come to have a grim humor. His fame is all but gone; he is either ignored entirely or remembered with a patronizing smile.

This decline of prestige is due less to Southey's deficiencies than to Byron's gifts. The Laureate engaged the Libertine in mortal combat, but in this case Abdiel's spear proved less effective than the flashing sword of Lucifer. Byron laughed at Southey, and Byron set the fashion not only in clothes and haircuts but also in literary attitudes. It is still extremely modish to regard Southey with amused contempt, and there is little indication that the style will change. It is tempting to make a case for him, to present him as a first-rate writer damned to oblivion by a groundless convention, but such a procedure is unwarranted, simply because Southey does not belong in the front rank. Yet because the convention is groundless, he deserves study, if only for confirmation of Byron's charges.

A detached consideration of the man will, I think, reveal that he was something more than a target for just ridicule, that his poetry, though not beautiful, has imagination, that his prose, though colored by prejudice, has interest. His thought had no startling originality, and for this very reason he clarifies certain aspects of his times, the republicanism generated by the French Revolution, the conservatism instilled by the Terror and Bonaparte, the moral seriousness

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that came to be the distinguishing mark of the nineteenth century. But Southey is more than representative. In certain points of temperament he is of the age in which he was born rather than of that in which he flourished, the dilettante of polite learning rather than the zealous reformer of society. Perhaps, in the last analysis, he is more fruitful material for the psychological biographer than for the literary critic; his mind shows a fascinating complexity strangely at variance with the over-simplified design for living that his works present.

This present study offers no extensive account of Southey's life (except for some incidents that have direct bearing on his works), simply because the only true biography of him must be psychological rather than literary in its approach. The external events of his career can be summed up in short space. Born of humble parentage in 1774, he spent his boyhood under the care of Miss Elizabeth Tyler, his mother's sister. After four years at Westminster School, from which he was expelled because of a paper against flogging, he attended Oxford, met Coleridge, and participated in that grandiose dream of a social Utopia, Pantisocracy. Marriage with Edith Fricker turned his thoughts into a more practical channel. After a trip to Lisbon in 1795 with his uncle, the Reverend Herbert Hill, and again in 1800 with his wife, Southey settled down to a life of literary labor, fixing his residence, in 1803, at

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Greta Hall, Keswick,[1] where Coleridge also made his home. Here Southey remained the rest of his life, except for occasional visits to London and two journeys to the Continent. Here he interested himself in politics and social measures, furthered his literary endeavors, and experienced domestic tragedy when death took his wife and children. Here, in 1839, he made a second marriage, with Caroline Bowles, and here he died in 1843, after four years of mental debility.

The following pages will attempt to demonstrate the wide field of literary endeavor that Southey covered, to outline and evaluate the aesthetic and intellectual content of his work, and to define the nature of the mind that produced it. No attempt will be made to excuse his many deficiencies, but neither will his fewer virtues be ignored. In short, it is hoped that this study offers materials for a juster appraisal of Southey as a figure of some literary importance -- or for a better-grounded condemnation of him as a failure, a scholar with delusions of poetic grandeur, a fair intelligence that proposed to be a genius. But the author realizes that the decision does not rest with him, that time has already decreed that Southey continue his long sleep.

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1 DeQuincey gives an intimate picture of Southey's daily life at Greta Hall in Literary Reminiscences, Works, Boston and New York, n.d., vol.III.

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II. THE YOUTHFUL REPUBLICAN

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THE YOUTHFUL REPUBLICAN

While Gibbon, in the last quarter of the eighteenth century, was assuring Europe that the periods of great social change were gone forever, certain developments in France suggested the contrary. The first prophetic voice of the dix-huitième, Montesquieu, had examined the government of the Great Powers with a critical acuity that would have boded ill for him had Louis XV had sufficient mentality to perceive the inevitable conclusions of his thought. In the middle of the century a new generation, headed by Diderot and his Encyclopaedists, inspired by the emotional rebellion of Rousseau and guided by the hard sense of Montesquieu, boldly stated the premise that a new order of society was needed and confidently envisioned the millenium. At the same time the Physiocrats, animated by an ideal of a collectivistic Utopia, fixed attention upon such matters as private ownership of property and the prevalent system of producing and distributing food and commodities. Perhaps this radical thought would have brought about no more effect in France than had Wyclif's doctrines of equality and social justice in fourteenth-century England, if the French people had not been forced, by dire necessity, to translate theory into bloody practice. In 1789 the Bastille fell, and the new age began. The repercussion jarred England, and while the old feared that the twilight of western civilization had come, the young looked forward to a new dawn.

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If Southey had not been a young man at this time or if there had been no Revolution, he would not have appeared before the public as a flagrant radical, and his life would be without the piquancy that his early revolt lends it. His intellectual career began when his spinster aunt, Miss Elizabeth Tyler, took him down to London, a boy of fourteen, and placed him in Westminster School. Here he learned less from his masters than from the "pernicious" books of the day. In middle age Southey, reflecting on his boyhood, wrote: "I left Westminster in a perilous state, -- a heart full of feeling and poetry, a head full of Rousseau and Werter, and my religious principles shaken by Gibbon: Many circumstances tended to give me a wrong bias, none to lead me right, except adversity, the wholesomest of all discipline. An instinctive modesty, rather than any purer cause, preserved me for a time from all vice. A severe system of stoical morality then came to its aid. I made Epictetus, for many months, literally my manual. The French revolution was then in its full career. I went to Oxford in January, 1793, a Stoic and a Republican."[1] Rousseau moved him to rebel against society and the existing state of things; Goethe's romance put the germ of Weltschmerz into his mind; Gibbon's irony caused him to look askance at the traditions of Christianity; Godwin and Voltaire, whom he also read at Westminster, suggested, on the one hand, the possibility

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1 The Life and Correspondence of the Late Robert Southey, ed. by his son the Rev. Charles Cuthbert Southey, London, 1849, Vol. IV, p. 186.

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of a new order of life, on the other, the necessity of a skeptical appraisal of all things. A mere boy, he was attracted only to the iconoclastic in these authors, and this destruction of values sharply conflicted with his innate morality. Epictetus came to his rescue and fixed his ethical attitude, but the spirit of rebellion was still strong in him and sought some object outside himself upon which to fasten. The French Revolution, still in its idealistic phase, provided him with a cause, and he became an ardent republican. Fifty years later Southey explained that his early republicanism was the ideal of "a youth whose notions of liberty were taken from the Greek and Roman writers, and who was ignorant enough of history and of human nature to believe, that a happier order of things had commenced with the independence of the United States, and would be accelerated by the French Revolution."[1] But however ancient was the basis of his republicanism and however immature his appraisal of its recent application, it inclined the boy to question authority and to seek freedom from any external constraints placed upon him. A letter written in 1818 hints that he took part in some sort of rebellion at Westminster. Apparently the authorities of the school were none too lenient with the boys, for in that same letter Southey wrote: "I know something of rebellions, and generally suspect that there has been some fault in the master as well as in the

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1 Preface (1837) to Joan of Arc, Poetical Works of Robert Southey, London, 1837-38, Vol. I, p. xxix.

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boys, just as a mutiny in a man of war affords a strong presumption of tyranny against the captain."[1] Later, an unfortunate incident not only led to his expulsion from Westminster but also caused him to resent authority of any kind.

Southey and three of his school-fellows, Charles Wynn, Grosvenor Bedford, and George Strachey, inspired by the success of the Etonian Microcosm, planned a periodical of the same kind for Westminster. Wynn and Strachey left school before the paper came into existence, but Bedford and Southey finally managed to publish the first number on March 1, 1792. The writing was entirely Bedford's, but Southey took as much pride in it as if it had been his own.[2] The periodical, called The Flagellant, represented itself as the work of four Westminster scholars who, secure in a ruined monastery, had taken upon themselves the task of laying bare the corruptions of society.[3] Bedford apparently wrote the first four numbers, but the fifth was Southey's and contained an indictment of flogging that terminated the paper's existence and Southey's career at Westminster. The essay was harmless enough. "I treated it," wrote Southey, "in a strange, whimsical, and ironical sort of manner, because it had formed a part of the religious ceremonies of the heathens, and the Fathers had held that the gods of the heathens were our devils, and so I proved it to be an invention of the Devil, and therefore unfit to be

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1 Life and Correspondence, Vol. IV, p. 318.
2 Ibid, p. 319.
3 William Haller, The Early Life of Robert Southey, 1774-1803, New York, 1917, p. 40.

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practised in schools; and though this was done with very little respect for the Devil, or the Fathers, or the heathen gods, or the schoolmasters, yet I as little expected to offend one as the other."[1]

But Dr. Vincent, headmaster of Westminster, apparently discerned subversive tendencies in the author.[2] Southey acknowledged his authorship of the article and wrote a letter of apology, but he was expelled from school and was refused admission to Christ Church, where a friend of his uncle might have secured him a studentship.[3] At this critical point his father died, leaving the family only a meagre income. The Reverend Herbert Hill, Mrs. Southey's brother and the Chaplain of the British factory in Lisbon, had financed the boy's education at Westminster, with the hope that his nephew would eventually enter the Church. Hill now offered to send Southey to Oxford the next autumn.

From early spring until November, 1792, he lived with Miss Tyler, experiencing in his enforced idleness "every imaginable mood of mind; now giving way to fits of despondency, revolving first one scheme of future life and then another."[4] He was just turned eighteen, and the unduly harsh treatment given him must have expanded, in his impressionable mind, into a symbol of the general injustice inflicted on humanity by its rulers. His faith in the French Revolution was already

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1 Life and Correspondence, Vol. IV, p. 320.
2 See Haller, Early Life of Robert Southey, for a thorough investigation of this incident.
3 Life and Correspondence, Vol. IV, p. 320.
4 Ibid. Vol. I, p. 162. This is Charles Cuthbert Southey's comment.

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shaken, for he wrote to Thomas Philip Lamb, whom he had known at Westminster, that the struggle for liberty, equality, and fraternity had resolved into a mere transference of bondage. "Everything that is respectable, every barrier that is sacred, is swept away by the ungovernable tyranny."[1] He was still a revolutionary, but he saw that the republican golden age was more distant than he had earlier supposed.

In January, 1793, he took residence at Balliol, having been refused admission at Christ Church. Apparently he went to Oxford determined not to be impressed, for he expected "to meet with pedantry, prejudice, and aristocracy", and immediately after his arrival he announced that he had "entered under the banners of science or stupidity, -- which you please."[2] His resentful attitude moved him to carp at the discipline and etiquette demanded by the College, and the prospect of his future troubled him. "Four years hence I am to be called into orders.... I must learn to break a rebellious spirit, which neither authority nor oppression could ever bow; it would be easier to break my neck. I must learn to work a problem instead of writing an ode. I must learn to pay respect to men remarkable only for great wigs and little wisdom."[3] But there were alleviating features. Before a week was out, a party of

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1 Selections from the Letters of Robert Southey, ed. by his son-in-law John Wood Warter, London, 1856, vol. I, p. 3.
2 Life and Correspondence, vol. I, p. 169.
3 Ibid., p. 170.

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students gathered around him, and one of these was Edmund Seward, who until his death two years later, kept alive Southey's faith in the efficacy of righteousness.[1]

During the Long Vacation of 1793 Southey wrote the first draught of Joan of Arc and gave vent to his republican hatred of kings and ministers who starved the poor with taxes and killed them with wars.[2] His choice of a French subject for his first epic shows that he still regarded the French as the saviors of liberty, but the massacre of the Girondists and the execution of Brissot shocked out of him all sympathy with the Revolution. After he heard the news he was so agitated that he could not sleep, and from the depths of his disillusionment he cried: "I am sick of this world, and discontented with every one in it. The murder of Brissot has completely harrowed up my faculties, and I begin to believe that virtue can only aspire to content in obscurity; for happiness is out of the question. I look round the world, and everywhere find the same mournful spectacle -- the strong tyrannising over the weak, man and beast; the same depravity pervades the whole creation...."[3] At this point the first phase of Southey's republicanism terminates. Discontented with his own country, he had looked to the world-reformation which the French Revolution seemed to promise. When the Revolution passed into the Reign of Terror,

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1 Ibid., vol. IV, p. 320.
2 See the discussion of Joan of Arc in the chapter Southey as an Epic Poet.
3 Life and Correspondence, vol. I, p. 189.

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he lost faith in the belief that society could amend itself; sick of the world, he turned from it and in the spirit of romanticism sought escape in some arcadian Utopia.

By 1794 he was engaged to Edith Fricker, one of five daughters of Mrs. Stephen Fricker, who kept a dame-school in Bristol. Southey was eager to marry and begin domestic life, but he had decided against taking orders because his unsettled mind could not assent to the doctrines of the Church of England.[1] He wished to do something practical -- and something that would benefit society as well as allow him to marry Edith. "Every day," he wrote to Bedford, "do I repine at the education that taught me to handle a lexicon instead of a hammer, and destined me for one of the drones of society."[2]

His first choice of a useful profession was medicine, and for a while he attended the anatomy school; but he abandoned the new career as abruptly as he had taken it up, partly because of his nausea in the dissecting-room, partly because love of literature distracted his mind from the text-books.[3] But he did not believe that he could support a family by the labor of his pen. The conviction must have come that he was a misfit in a social scheme that offered few opportunities for the indigent young, however ambitious they may be and however grandiose their expectations. But surely there was some place on earth where a man might work with his hands and help build a society

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1 Ibid, p. 203.
2 Ibid., p. 205.
3 Ibid., pp. 204-205.

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that would square with his ideals of justice and equality. Like a true romanticist, he had visioned a return to the past golden age -- a Grecian republic with the Muses restored to splendor, with a grove of Academus and a garden of Epicurus where he and his chosen friends might study and teach, with a house "in the prettiest Doric style" where he and Edith might live in idyllic simplicity.[1] But this was a dream, and he was determined to be practical. America was the place, for this was a land "where men's abilities would ensure respect; where society was upon a proper footing, and man was considered as more valuable than money..."[2] He imagined himself in America, on ground uncultivated since the world's beginning, wielding his axe, grubbing up roots, and building a lowly hut, his sole companion a Negro slave whom he had bought only to free.[3] This was in 1793. In June of the following year Coleridge, a wild youth who had left Cambridge to become a dragoon, visited a friend at Oxford and was introduced to Southey. Each admired the other, and finding that their opinions on politics and allied matters were similar, they formed a warm friendship. It was Coleridge who first suggested that scheme of emigration and colonization to which the young visionaries gave the name "Pantisocracy".[4] Southey, of course, responded ardently, and soon a small group was organized for the sponsorship of the

1 Ibid., pp. 192-193.
2 Ibid., p. 194.
3 Ibid., p. 196.
4 For a full treatment of Pantisocracy, see Haller, Early Life of Robert Southey, Chapter III.

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project. There were Robert Lovell, a wealthy Quaker's son who had recently married Mary Fricker; George Burnett, a member of Southey's Oxford circle; Robert Allen, the friend who had brought Coleridge and Southey together; and Edmund Seward, a luke-warm adherent who early deserted. The aim was to plant in America a colony shaped along socialistic lines, where absolute equality among men was to be the guiding principle. It will be remembered that Coleridge hailed even a young ass as his brother and wished to take it with him to the Dell of Peace and mild Equality. In order to insure unimpeachable morality, all Pantisocrats were to be married, and the female population, for which the Fricker family would provide the nucleus, were to cook and keep house. From a common fund, land would be bought, and the cultivation of it would be put upon a communal basis, each man being assigned a certain occupation. And at the close of day there were to be "social converse and literary pursuits."[1] Haller, in his biography of Southey, quotes a statement by Thomas Poole, who was moderately attracted to the scheme, as the fullest explanation of the project by one in direct contact with its sponsors:

> Twelve gentlemen of good education and liberal principles are to embark with twelve ladies in April next. Previous to their leaving this country they are to have as much intercourse as possible, in order to ascertain each other's dispositions, and firmly to settle every regulation for the government of their future conduct. Their opinion was that they should fix themselves at -- I do not now recollect the place,

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1 Life and Correspondence, vol. I, p. 211.

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> but somewhere in a delightful part of the new back settlements; that each man should labor two or three hours a day, the produce of which labor would, they imagine, be more than sufficient to support the colony. As Adam Smith observes that there is not above one productive man in twenty, they argue that if each labored the twentieth part of time, it would produce enough to satisfy their wants. The produce of their industry is to be laid up in common for the use of all; and a good library of books is to be collected, and their leisure hours to be spent in study, liberal discussions, and the education of their children. A system for the education of their children is laid down... The regulations relating to the females strike them as the most difficult; whether the marriage contract shall be dissolved if agreeable to one or both parties, and many other circumstances, are not yet determined. The employments of the women are to be the care of infant children, and other occupations suited to their strength; at the same time the greatest attention is to be paid to the cultivation of their minds. Every one is to enjoy his own religious and political opinions, provided they do not encroach on the rules previously made, which rules, it is unnecessary to add, must in some measure be regulated by the laws of the state which includes the district in which they settle. They calculate that each gentleman providing 125 pounds will be sufficient to carry out the scheme into execution. Finally, every individual is at liberty, whenever he pleases, to withdraw from the society.[1]

The most enthusiastic proponents of the plan were Coleridge and Southey. Coleridge talked about it in extravagant flights of rhetoric and exclaimed to his friend "... thou dost make the adamantine gate of Democracy turn on its golden hinges to most sweet music".[2] It was not his nature to consider matters practically, and there was his courtship of Sarah Fricker and his lingering passion for Mary Ann Evans to distract him. But he did take the trouble to learn, from an American acquaint-

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1 Quoted by Haller, Early Life of Robert Southey, p. 134.
2 Life and Correspondence, vol. I, p. 213.

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ance, that £3000 ~~pounds~~ would be needed, that credit might be secured, that the Susquehanna was a region of "excessive beauty", and that American mosquitos were no worse than English gnats.[1] Also he solicited subscriptions for his Specimens of Modern Latin Poets. In order "to raise money enough to settle... across the Atlantic", Southey industriously prepared Joan of Arc for the press, worked with Coleridge on the tragedy Robespierre, and composed his own revolutionary drama Wat Tyler. The future seemed so sure that in September he wrote to his brother Tom that March, 1795, would find him, his mother, his cousin Margaret, his friends, and the Frickers settled in America. In Bristol, the city of Southey's birth, he and Coleridge preached Pantisocracy, the equal government of all, and Aspheterism, the communization of individually owned property. They converted the town-apothecary, but they did nothing to swell the exchequer to the necessary £3000 ~~pounds~~. In fact, when Miss Tyler heard of Pantisocracy and the intended union with Edith, she turned her nephew out of doors and refused ever to see him again. Southey suggested that a Utopia in Wales rather than in America would be less expensive, but the adventurers found that this too would take money.[2] He had ceased to reside at Oxford, where his uncle had paid his way. In the autumn of 1794 he had published, with Robert Lovell, a small volume of Poems, but it brought little returns. Coleridge was

1 Ibid., pp. 218-219.
2 Ibid., p. 237.

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as badly off, and the two of them were forced to find some means of subsistence. With characteristic ambition and self-assurance they gave a course of public lectures on the origin and progress of society and religion.[1]

Meanwhile Robert Lovell made the acquaintance of a sentimental young Bristol printer, Joseph Cottle, and explained to him the doctrine of Pantisocracy. Although Cottle "suspected there was an old and intractable leaven in human nature that would effectually frustrate these airy schemes of happiness",[2] his mind fastened upon the fact that the movement was headed by two young poets -- and Cottle fancied himself something of a poet. He asked that the two geniuses be introduced to him; shortly after, Southey called upon Cottle, and in time the second party of the "epidemic delusion" was induced to present himself. Cottle, greatly flattered, offered each of the poets thirty guineas for a volume of verses, and fifty guineas for Joan of Arc.[3] The proposal, of course, was eagerly accepted. In addition, Southey and Coleridge, earnestly endeavoring to finance Pantisocracy, planned to issue a joint collection of poems and to publish a periodical.[4] Neither of these two ideas reached fruition; and Pantisocracy, at least in Southey's mind, gradually receded into the background of his ambitions. Gradually too his friendship for Coleridge cooled.

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1 Ibid., pp. 234-235.
2 Joseph Cottle, Reminiscences of Samuel Taylor Coleridge and Robert Southey, London, 1848, p. 3.
3 Ibid., p. 12.
4 Life and Correspondence, vol. I, p. 157.

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It was natural that differences should arise between the two men, for in temperament they were essentially different, even if alike in attitude and aim at this stage of their careers. Coleridge's irresponsible spirit -- he had already formed the habit of disappointing lecture-audiences -- irked his more punctilious friend, and his incessant grandiloquence regarding the new life in America wearied Southey. The latter lacked Coleridge's ability to ignore the calls of duty, and he had found that even though life in England fell short of the expectations of an idealistic nature, it was a grim business that demanded a good deal more than roseate dreaming on perfect communities. There was his family to consider, and there was Edith, waiting all too patiently for marriage. Words passed between the two men, and on one memorable occasion, related by Cottle with comic pomposity, during an excursion to Tintern Abbey they engaged in a heated argument, in which their ladies joined, until the noisy belligerence forced Cottle to retire to a distant part of the inn.[1]

In the summer of 1795 the Reverend Herbert Hill visited England and once more adjured his nephew to enter the Church. Southey was now so settled in religion that he could "confute the Atheist, and baffle him with his own weapons; and... at least, teach the Deist that the arguments in favor of Christianity are not to be despised;"[2] but the Test Act was a

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1 Cottle, Reminiscences, pp. 28-29.
2 Life and Correspondence, vol. I, pp. 247-248.

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stumbling block: "... the gate is perjury, and I am little disposed to pay so heavy a fine at the turnpike of orthodoxy.[1] He had already formed a decision regarding his future. At an earlier date Wynn had promised that, upon reaching his majority, he would allow Southey a pension of £160, provided that he would settle down and study law. Southey resolved now to accept Wynn's proposal. This resolution, of course, implied a desertion of the pantisocratic scheme. At heart, Southey was neither a rebel nor a social pioneer. The strongest element of his personality was unwavering moral righteousness. It was this moralism that caused him to cry out against injustice and social corruption and to adopt revolutionary doctrine; but, as he must have realized at this time, the best milieu for the operation of the moral faculty is an established social order. Another factor that cannot be ignored is the strain of practicality in his nature. Coleridge, dazzled by his own poetic reasoning, was blind to the distress that his erratic visions caused his family and Sarah Fricker; Southey was all too conscious of his immediate duty and of how, up to this time, he had neglected it.

He informed his uncle of his plan to enter the legal profession. Mr. Hill assented, but prevailed upon his nephew to accompany him back to Lisbon, where, the clergyman fondly hoped, he could induce in the young man more moderate views and dissuade him from the imprudence of marrying Edith Fricker.[2]

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1 Ibid., p. 245.
2 Ibid., p. 250.

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But on November 14, 1795, before sailing, Southey secretly married Edith; and then, parting from her at the church, he joined his uncle on the ship bound for Portugal. Before he left England he received a long letter from Coleridge, defending his own conduct and lamenting the death of Southey's free soul: "O selfish, money-loving man! What principle have you not given up? Though death had been the consequence, I would have spat in that man's face and called him a liar, who should have spoken that last sentence concerning you nine months ago. For blindly did I esteem you. O God! that such a mind should fall in love with that low, dirty, gutter-grubbing trull, Worldly Prudence!"[1] This hostility, however, did not prevent the two poets from establishing friendly relations later in life, nor did Southey remember it when, after Coleridge's death, he supported the latter's family.

A record of this phase of Southey's life is found in his juvenile pieces and early poems. In 1791, while still at Westminster, he composed an ode To Horror, creditable for a boy of seventeen and clearly pointing the direction of his thought. In melodramatic despondency, he asks to be taken to the Conqueror's battle-field, where he may see the dead and dying; then he wishes to be at the death-bed of the tyrant and see him convulsed by fear of Hell; next, he asks to be translated to "that accursed shore" where the Negro writhes on the stake. Finally he appeals to Horror:

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1 Letters of Samuel Taylor Coleridge, ed. by Ernest Hartley Coleridge, London, 1895, vol. I, p. 148.

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> Arouse the opprest; teach them to know their power;
> Lead them to vengeance! and in that dread hour
> When ruin rages wide,
> I will behold and smile by MERCY's side.[1]

This outcry against war, tyrants, and slavery, and this exhortation to the lowly to rise in vengeance occur again and again in Southey's early verse. Even in The Triumph of Woman, 1793, an imitation of Alexander's Feast, the revolutionary strain is lifted by Zorababel, the Hebrew rhapsodist who participates in the contest of song at Darius' court:

> The King commands, the peasant goes,
> From all he loved on earth he flies,
> And for his monarch toils, and fights, and bleeds, and dies.[2]

In another poem of the same year, The Chapel Bell, a different aspect of his revolt reveals itself. At Westminster Gibbon and at Oxford Godwin shook Southey's belief in religion. In this piece he shows his discontent with formalized worship, symbolically represented by "Superstition's bell":

> Thou tedious herald of more tedious prayers,
> Say, dost thou ever summon from his rest
> One being wakening to religious cares?
> Or raise one pious transport in the breast?[3]

Written on a Sunday Morning amplifies the thought of The Chapel Bell. Here the influence of Akenside, whom Southey admired enough to quote frequently, is clearly prevalent. It is Akenside's

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1 Works, vol. II, p. 131.
2 Ibid., p. 13.
3 Ibid., p. 143.

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"Great Spirit" of nature, rather than the church service, to which the poet turns for religious inspiration:

> Go thou and seek the House of Prayer!
> I to the woodlands wend, and there
> In lovely Nature see the God of Love.[1]

In 1793 Southey gave elaborate expression to his republicanism, his hatred of war, and his sympathy with the oppressed in Joan of Arc, which is discussed fully here in connection with his epic poems. In 1794, in a number of sonnets, he focussed his indignation on the slave-trade. But it is not to be supposed that humanitarian endeavors exclusively occupied his attention. He also composed sonnets to Edith Fricker in a eulogistic strain continued in the Love Elegies and a group of verses, composed in 1799 and betraying the influence of the Latin lyricists, quaintly titled The Amatory Poems of Abel Shufflebottom. There are sonnets in the 1794 group on still other subjects -- on the beauties of nature, on his reminiscences of childhood, on his wish to live in peace and solitude, sighing for the miseries of mankind. But the best and most significant are those that express his anger at a business which England had found lucrative since the time of Sir John Hawkins. In 1787 a society for the suppression of the slave trade, headed by Thomas Clarkson, Granville Sharp, and W. Dillwyn, was formed in London; and in Parliament William Wilberforce and Pitt agitated so successfully that in 1788 the crown ordered an inquiry

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1 Ibid., p. 153.

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into the slave trade, with the result that Parliament passed an act ameliorating, to some extent, the revolting conditions of the system. But in 1791 a bill prohibiting the further importation of slaves failed; it was this that aroused Southey's wrath and inspired his vehement sonnets. These poems are not without merit as forceful expressions of sincere emotion:

> Hold your mad hands! for ever on your plain
> Must the gorged vulture clog his beak with blood?
> For ever must your Niger's tainted flood,
> Roll to the ravenous shark his banquet slain?
> Hold your mad hands! and learn at length to know,
> And turn your vengeance on the common foe,
> Yon treacherous vessel and her godless crew!
> Let never traders with false pretext fair
> Set on your shores again their wicked feet:
> With interdict and indignation meet
> Repel them, and with fire and sword pursue!
> Avarice, the white cadaverous fiend, is there,
> Who spreads his toils accursed wide and far,
> And for his purveyor calls the demon War.[1]

In an attempt to win public sympathy for the slaves, Southey dedicates a sonnet to the broken-hearted maid whose lover has been taken captive, or writes from the point of view of the black wife whose domestic bliss has been destroyed by the white marauders.[2] Again, he pictures a Negro gasping beneath the "mangling scourge", and proudly informs those who "sip the blood-sweetened beverage" that his cheeks glow with indignation when

> A sable brother writhes in silent woe.[3]

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1 Ibid., p. 55.
2 Ibid., pp. 56-57.
3 Ibid., p. 56.

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Another sonnet justifies a Negro who has murdered his white master, and the succeeding poem luridly describes a hanged slave eaten by vultures. From this spectacle Southey turns to address the English government:

> Hither look, O ye
> Who tore this man from peace and liberty!
> Look hither, ye who weigh with politic care
> The gain against the guilt! Beyond the grave
> There is another world!... bear ye in mind,
> Ere your decree proclaims to all mankind
> The gain is worth the guilt, that there the Slave,
> Before the Eternal, "thunder-tongued shall plead
> Against the deep damnation of your deed![1]

Southey's agitation for the abolition of the slave trade was not confined to 1794. To the Genius of Africa, composed in the following year, is an ineffectual plea for vengeance, but The Sailor, 1798, the confession of a Guinea-man mariner, has the vividness and dramatic power of Southey's ballads. In 1806 Parliament adopted a resolution to abolish the slave trade at the next session, and the following year the abolition bill was carried in both houses and received the crown's assent. In 1809 Lord Grenville, under whose premiership the bill was passed, was chosen Chancellor of Oxford, and Wynn, Grenville's nephew and Southey's friend, invited the poet to compose an ode for the Chancellor's installation.[2] Southey took this opportunity to express his gratification at the measures the government had adopted to stamp out slavery. The

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1 Ibid., p. 58.
2 Selections from the Letters of Robert Southey, vol.II, p.179.

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Verses Spoken in the Theatre at Oxford Upon the Installation of Lord Grenville have little merit as poetry, but they mark the happy conclusion of one phase of Southey's liberal humanitarianism. In passing, it should be noticed that Coleridge, in such poems as La Fayette, 1794, and Ode on the Departing Year, 1796, paralleled Southey's efforts to arouse feeling against slavery.

Akin to Southey's eagerness for the abolition of the slave trade is his early sympathy for criminals condemned to the Australian penal colonies. This sympathy, part and parcel of his democratic ideal, is expressed in a series of poems composed at Oxford in 1794 and ironically titled Botany-Bay Eclogues. Here Southey suggests no reform, not even so much as the experiment in ecology proposed by Coleridge in The Dungeon; but the poems, which are cast in dramatic monologues or dialogues, attempt to realize the "ruins of the human mind" among the pariahs of society and by implication to criticize the social order. In the first of these "eclogues", Elinor, a prisoner grieves for his lost sweetheart but consoles himself with the thought that at Botany Bay, far from the "comforts and crimes of polished life", he can honestly earn his frugal bread and expect the grace of Heaven.[1] In Humphrey and William, two prisoners relate their past histories. William has been condemned to life-long exile because he shot the Squire's fowl which were ruining his crops. Humphrey, a gayer youth, had

1 Works, vol.II, pp. 71-74.

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been persuaded to join the army, which to Southey, an anti-militarist in his youth, is a hot-bed of vice; after contracting venereal disease, Humphrey was discharged from the army and forced to thieve for a living.[1] Here is Southey's version of the soldier's heroic ~~life.~~ profession. John, Samuel, and Richard, continuing the theme, tells how the war-machine caused a soldier and a sailor to disgrace themselves and end their careers at Botany Bay. Again Southey strips the veneer of glory from the military life:

> Long journies, short halting, hard work, and small pay,
> To be popt at like pigeons for sixpence a day!...[2]

Conditions in the navy are no better, for the reward of fierce fighting and ~~risk of life~~ peril is ever thus:

> The Captain gets rich, and the Sailors get drunk.[3]

Frederic, the last of the eclogues and the only one of any merit, is spoken by an escaping prisoner, glad to die if death be the end of suffering. Two lines in this poem sum up Southey's early attitude toward crime and the placing of guilt:

> If I have sinned against mankind, on them
> Be that past sin; they made me what I was.[4]

The implication is clear. Crime is not to be traced to flaws

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1 Ibid., pp. 75-80.
2 Ibid., p. 82.
3 Ibid., p. 84.
4 Ibid., p. 89.

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in human character, for Southey is convinced, at this stage, that man is essentially good. Society is at fault, a society in which the distribution of wealth is so unjust that the poor are forced to criminal tactics in order to sustain life. In Pantisocracy, of course, there would be no crime, since the impulse, bitter want and undeserved oppression, would be absent. As Coleridge put it, "The leading idea of pantisocracy is to make man necessarily virtuous by removing all motives to evil -- all possible temptation."[1]

In 1793 Southey, in Joan of Arc, had consigned kings, war-lords, and oppressors of the poor to the tortures of Hell. Two other revolutionary works, almost as elaborate as the epic but in dramatic form, were written in 1794. During the Long Vacation of that year Southey, Coleridge, and Lovell decided to unite their creative forces and compose a republican tragedy on the fall of Robespierre. "It originated," Southey explained, "in sportive conversation at poor Lovell's, and we agreed each to produce an act by the next evening -- S.T.C. the first, I the second, and Lovell the third. S.T.C. brought part of his; I and Lovell, the whole of ours. But L.'s was not in keeping, and therefore I undertook to supply the third also by the following day. By that time S.T.C. had filled up his."[2] The Fall of Robespierre had, for its only source, contemporary journalistic accounts, and was composed "as fast as newspapers could

1 Letters of Samuel Taylor Coleridge, vol. I, p. 90.
2 Life and Correspondence, vol. I, p. 217.

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be put into blank verse".[1] The completed performance was offered to a Bristol bookseller who was too shrewd to buy it; thereupon Coleridge took the manuscript to Cambridge, revised his first act, and published the tragedy under his own name.[2]

This play, ~~in three short, confusing acts,~~ tells of the ~~faction~~ Terror in France that finally caused the ruin of Robespierre. Coleridge's first act outlines the formation of the conspiracy against the dictator; the rest of the drama, written by Southey, shows Barrère, Tallien, and Bourdon l'Oise denouncing Robespierre in the Convention and thus bringing about his death. There is a good deal of talk about freedom of speech, blood-cemented thrones, and the chains of oppression, but the play is really an indictment of Robespierre, whose growing power threatens the liberty toward which France is striving. Thus he is pictured as a Machiavellian villain who solves every problem by murder, who regards conscience as "Superstition's dream" and mercy as "Self-centering Fear".[3] Yet he had absolute belief in his rectitude and is contemptuous of death. With his removal, the dramatists would have us believe, France had a clear course before her, and, although she has been condemned by other nations and assailed by her own subjects,

> She shall wield
> The thunder-bolt of vengeance -- she shall blast
> The despot's pride, and liberate the world![4]

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1 Ibid.
2 Haller, Early Life of Robert Southey, p. 139.
3 The Fall of Robespierre, an Historic Drama, Cambridge, 1794, pp. 10-11.
4 Ibid., p. 37.

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Needless to say, The Fall of Robespierre is drama of the poorest sort; it consists mainly of a series of pompous speeches delivered by characters who are the merest types, who are prompted by confused motives, and who are as much at sea as the authors who projected them.

Having found the composition of tragedy so easy, Southey in the same year wrote one all his own, Wat Tyler, filled with the same revolutionary sentiment as Robespierre and dashed off in three mornings.[1] Twenty-three years later he quoted, in self-satire, the following lines from Bunyan to describe the birth of the tragedy:

> It came from mine own heart, then to my head,
> And thence into my fingers trickled;
> Thence to my pen, from whence immediately
> On paper did I dripple it daintily.[2]

The manuscript was given to Lovell, who tried to find a publisher for it. He could do no better than entrust the play to a bookseller named Ridgeway, at the time detained in Newgate. Ridgeway, in conjunction with a Mr. Symonds, agreed to publish the tragedy anonymously, but Southey never received proofs or further notice, and concluded that Ridgeway and Symonds had changed their minds. The matter was soon forgotten, but twenty-three years later, in 1817, Wat Tyler, to Southey's surprise and indignation, appeared in print as a recent publication of

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1 Works, vol.II, p.22.
2 Selections from the Letters of Robert Southey, vol.III, p.59.

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the Laureate.[1] By this time Southey had completely changed his political views, and the appearance of the revolutionary drama as the effort of one of the staunchest conservatives in England created a sensation. Southey's liberal enemies took advantage, and made him the recipient of such satire as the following:

> Sir,
> Your truly patriotic and enlightened poem of Wat Tyler was last night presented to a most respectable and crowded audience here, with cordial applause; nor was there a soul in the theatre but as cordially lamented the sudden deterioration of your principles, intellectual and moral, whatever might have been the cause thereof.
> Yours,
> Jack Straw.[2]

Southey attempted to secure legal redress from the unscrupulous publishers but was defeated. Thereupon he boldly acknowledged Wat Tyler as his own, and in 1837 printed it unaltered in his Poetical Works, "that it may not be supposed I think it any reproach to have written it, or that I am more ashamed of having been a republican, than of having been a boy."[3] To those who invidiously compared the early drama with his laureate poems and his mature stand in politics, he made dignified answer: "Had I written lewdly in my youth, like Beza, -- like Beza, I would ask pardon of God and man; and no considerations should induce me to reprint what I could never think of without sorrow and shame. Had I at any time, like St. Augustine, taught

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1 Life and Correspondence, vol.IV, pp.236ff.
2 Ibid., p. 237.
3 Works, vol.II, p.22.

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doctrines which I afterwards perceived to be erroneous, -- and if, as in his case, my position in society, and the estimation in which I was held, gave weight to what I had advanced, and made those errors dangerous to others, -- like St. Augustine, I would publish my retractions, and endeavor to counteract the evil which, though erringly, with no evil intention, I had caused.[1]"

In Wat Tyler the youthful Southey had presented a dramatization of the Peasants' Revolt of 1381, exaggerated into agreement with his hatred of monarchy and love of the common people. These are so plagued by taxes that they find it impossible to maintain a decent standard of living. Wyclif and John Ball, early precursors of Pantisocracy, equality, and Aspheterism, have taught the people that God made men equal and that

> Nature gives enough
> For all; but Man, with arrogant selfishness,
> Proud of his heaps, hoards up superfluous stores
> Robbed from his weaker fellows, starves the poor,
> Or gives to pity what he owes to justice![2]

Popular indignation is heightened by the fact that the poll-tax, besides allowing the court to wallow in luxurious vice, pays for a war that the people abhor. A direct incentive for rebellion is given when a tax-collector attacks Wat Tyler's daughter. Crying "Liberty! No Poll-tax! No War!", the peasants free John Ball, imprisoned for his democratic principles, and march on

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1 Ibid.
2 Ibid., p. 27.

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London, animated not by vengeance but by justice.

At this point Southey gives his conception of monarchy, -- cowardly, greedy, perfidious, abetted by a corrupt clergy. In parley with King Richard, Wat Tyler is stabbed by the Lord Mayor of London, but Richard quiets the rebels by promising to fulfill all their demands. In the interval that follows, John Ball, with Southey's own basic conservatism, laments that revolution must ever be accompanied by violence. The rebels, however, are still convinced that ranks should be abolished and king, lord, and slave ennobled into Man. But the treacherous Richard looses his soldiers on the divided mob, withdraws his grants, and orders wholesale slaughter. John Ball is brought to trial, and answers his accusers with sturdy defiance:

> If it be guilt,
> To preach what you are pleased to call strange notions,
> That all mankind as brethren must be equal;
> That privileged orders of society
> Are evil and oppressive; that the right
> Of property is a juggle to deceive
> The poor whom you oppress; I plead me guilty.[1]

Furthermore, he asserts to the court that monarchical government exists for the sole purpose of mulcting its subjects. For this treason he is sentenced to be hanged, then to be cut down while still alive, mangled, burnt, quartered, and exposed upon the city's gates. Ball calmly accepts the judgment, sustained by the faith that some day "the gore-dyed throne", with its ministers "more savage than the priests of Moloch", shall be consumed

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1 Ibid., p.53.

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in the flames of justice.

Wat Tyler is drama only in external form. Southey makes no attempt to draw character, and he conducts the action with an exaggerated abruptness that suggests caricature. It is clear that the three mornings devoted to the play were spent with no other thought in mind save that democracy must be deified and kings damned in language of unrestrained violence. In consequence, Wat Tyler makes its point by a forensic display that borders dangerously on the ridiculous.

The year 1794, which saw the composition of the slave-trade sonnets, the Botany Bay Eclogues, The Fall of Robespierre, Wat Tyler, and the revision of Joan of Arc, was the most productive period of Southey's liberalism. It is significant that his friendship with Coleridge was warmest at this time. In 1795 occurred the break with Coleridge, and in this year the revolutionary ardor of his verse undergoes perceptible abatement. Strains from Joan of Arc, Robespierre, and Wat Tyler echo in such short pieces as The Pauper's Funeral, The Soldier's Funeral, and The Soldier's Wife. But the poem "On a Landscape of Gaspar Poussin reveals a significant change of attitude. Here Southey is sick of struggle and wishes to escape from a civilization in which there is no justice -- and the implication is that the reform of such a civilization is hopelessly remote.[1] Moreover, his attention is now engrossed by Madoc, a subject which reveals a marked tendency to escape into the past and exotic surroundings.

It is not to be supposed, however, that Southey ab-

1 Ibid., pp.221-223.

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ruptly abandoned his liberal and humanitarian principles. Two poems of 1798, The Complaints of the Poor, an indictment of the ill-adjusted social order, and The Victory, another outcry against England's militarism, demonstrate that, although his revolt had been tempered, it had not ceased altogether. Haller asserts, on the strength of information given by Mr. Ernest Hartley Coleridge, that the household at Greta Hall, Southey's permanent home from 1803 until his death, was conducted in accordance with democratic principles, with as little distinction between servant and master as possible; moreover, Southey continued to be interested in schemes of Utopian settlements.[1] But marriage and domestic life, exalted in the Hymn to the Penates, 1796, were incompatible with the restive spirit of revolt; and at the core of his personality Southey was a conformist, for his intrenched morality and traditionalism were at odds with radical change. The discontent of Rousseau gave way to the resigned acceptance of Epictetus; gradually -- and naturally -- he sank into bourgeois security. In 1808 he wrote to Landor: "...were I your confessor, I should enjoin you to throw aside Rousseau, and make Epictetus your manual. Probatum est."[2] Even after he had lost faith in the French Revolution, he strongly disapproved of England for her enmity toward France and even suspected that the abominations of the Terror were made necessary by English sympathy for French aristocrats. But his anger at his country changed to admiration

1 Haller, Early Life of Robert Southey, p.166.
2 Life and Correspondence, vol.III, p.144.

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when the Peace of Amiens was signed in 1802. "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 (sic) sure to produce their proper and salutary effect."[1]

As the laureate poetry shows, admiration proceeded to the extreme of jingoism, and the erstwhile rebel became the Tory champion of the monarchy that he had so roundly condemned in his youth. When in his forties he became an influential periodical writer, his chief motive, according to his son, was to combat revolutionary thought.[2] As he grew still older, his hatred of radicalism intensified. Of the two extremes of politics, tyrannical government and anarchy, he dreaded most the latter, and therefore he supported the authority of government, urged the suppression of seditious thought, and opposed all measures emanating from the increasingly strong democratic element. Catholic Emancipation and Free Trade received his unconditional damnation, and he regarded the Reform Bill as an absurd piece of Whiggish roguery, thoroughly unjust and contemptuous of all constitutional principles.[3] But, on the other hand, it cannot be said that he was entirely satisfied with the prevalent state of things. In the Quarterly Review and in

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1 Selections from the Letters of Robert Southey, vol.III, p.320.
2 Life and Correspondence, vol.IV, p.200.
3 Southey's Correspondence with Caroline Bowles, ed. by Edward Dowden, Dublin and London, 1881, p.223.

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his letters he advocated such reforms as national education, wholesome training for poor children, higher qualifications for hospitals and nurses, establishment of savings banks throughout England, prohibition of flogging in the army and navy, alteration of the poor laws and game laws, moderation in the criminal code and abatement of capital punishment, betterment of the lot of factory workers, reduction of child labor, granting of land to laborers, and employment of paupers for the reclamation of waste lands. But these reforms, it must be understood, were to emanate from a strong Tory government.[1] In short, however transient was Southey's revolutionary phase, the humanitarian strain in him was deep and abiding, and his political attitude in his later years may be described as benevolent Toryism.

Southey's shift from revolt to conformity, from sharp criticism of country to jingoism, from condemnation of kings in Joan of Arc to apotheosis of them in The Vision of Judgment, made him the target for ridicule. Byron, in Don Juan, called him a turncoat and renegade;[2] Shelley, in a satiric fragment, wrote

> .....who that has seen
> What Southey is and was, would not exclaim,
> Lash on![3]

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1 See Charles Cuthbert Southey's summary of his father's political and social opinions, Life and Correspondence, vol.V, pp.1-6.
2 Poetical Works of Lord Byron, Boston, 1868, vol.IX, pp.257,267.
3 This "satire upon satire" fragment, composed at Pisa, January 25, 1822, was first published by Edward Dowden in the appendix to the Correspondence with Caroline Bowles, p.385.

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Hazlitt insultingly patronized him as a man of unstable and even insincere principle.[1] Even after his death, the prevalent liberal judgment was that "the only opinions England has cause to dread are those held and advocated by Robert Southey during middle life".[2] That the liberals should satirize Southey because of his Tory principles is in itself an irony, for in 1797 George Canning and other Tories bent on suppressing the New Philosophy, had parodied the young poet's liberalism in The Anti-Jacobin.[3] It was out of long experience that Southey contemptuously asserted: "Abusing me is like flogging a whipping-post."[4]

However much it may be regretted that Southey lost his democratic ideal, the criticism of him as a turncoat, a hireling, a mercenary flatterer of those in power, is unjust. He frequently averred, in his maturity, that if human nature were other than it is he would still be a republican.[5] He did not desert liberalism, but grew out of it when the demands of living forced him to look with a practical eye upon his dreams of social equality. Moreover, it must be understood that his early radicalism was a rapture, not a reality, that the ideal commonwealth he envisioned was no earthly possibility but a republica Platonis. Conservative in temperament, conforming in reason, he took a step wholly compatible with sincerity when, after the foment of his youth had subsided, he joined the ranks of Toryism.

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1 The Complete Works of William Hazlitt, ed. by P. P. Howe, vol. VII, pp.86-95; cf. pp.24-25, 168-170,196. See also the essay on Southey in The Spirit of the Age, Works, vol.XI, p.78ff.
2 Life and Correspondence, vol.V, p.3.
3 See Life and Correspondence, vol.I, p.347.
4 Ibid., p.61.
5 Ibid., vol.IV, p.200; Works, vol.I, p.xxix.

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III. THE EPIC POET

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THE EPIC POET

Introduction

The greater bulk of Southey's poetic work comprises the several epics which he composed from 1793 when Joan of Arc was completed, to the last years of his life, when he vainly tried to finish Robin Hood. It was doubtless through these long poetic narratives, variously called by their author 'epics', 'rhythmical romances', and 'metrical tales', that Southey hoped for that immortality in which his memory would "smell sweet, and blossom in the dust". Ironic fate, however, has decreed that these very efforts, which Southey intended to safeguard his renown, should provide the grounds for his literary damnation. No one reads them, and they are abused by all. They have brought him notoriety rather than fame, and they are considered by the literary historian, not as works of any appreciable aesthetic merit, but as convenient transitions, along with Scott's Lay of the Last Minstrel, Marmion, and The Lady of the Lake, from the abortive attempts of the eighteenth-century writers of epic to the nineteenth-century endeavors of Tennyson, in The Idylls of the King, of Arnold, in Baldor Dead, and of Morris, in Jason and Sigurd the Volsung.

It was a mistake on Southey's part to have chosen as his especial poetic medium a form which had, historically, a rather steady degeneration. Certainly he had inherited from

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the eighteenth century a tradition of the epic that promised little or nothing to a poet who aspired to meet more than the formal requirements of the genre. It would seem that here is a bow that only Ulysses can bend -- either a Ulysses of natural poetic strength, inspired by the hard life of a primitive environment, as in Beowulf, or a Ulysses of the most highly developed imaginative powers who can instill in a form exotic to his own day the strength of a Paradise Lost. Southey possessed no genius comparable to Milton's; he lived in an age over-conscious of itself, an age in which the epic had received neither natural nor skilful treatment. In the eighteenth century, the quality that had distinguished Beowulf disappeared and left only its inanimate form as a heritage to Southey.

This quality had shown itself but rarely in English literature. In the period of Old English, Beowulf and the epic fragments Waldhere, The Fight at Finnsburh, and The Battle of Maldon give evidence of a living epic spirit, a spirit that delights in telling the valorous deeds of a mighty hero and in picturing, in strong, forceful language, life in the camp and the hall. But Beowulf, close as it is to the Anglo-Saxon temperament, does not celebrate the life of a hero directly associated with England. The various treatments of Arthurian matter from Nennius to Malory take for their subject an historical or mythical king of a Celtic tribe, and their action is significantly patriotic; but even Malory, whose Morte D'Arthur provides a crystallization of earlier and shorter versions,

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cannot lay claim to having written an epic, for his narrative is too episodic and too lacking in unity, -- its interest being divided among several heroes.[1] The fourteenth-century metrical romance, Sir Gawayne and the Green Knight, the most artistic treatment of Arthurian matter, lacks the scope of an epic; and other Middle English romances, such as Sir Orfes, Sir Launfel, Sir Tristrem, drawn from French sources, or Havelok the Dane, King Horn, Beves of Haumtoun, Guy of Warwick, from the Norse, are obviously based on the ballad rather than on the epic form.[2] Of all Middle English writings, the Brut of Layamon, circa 1205, is, perhaps, most epic in its scope, but the Brut throws its stress on the development of English history rather than on the development of a hero, and, therefore, is rightly called a rhymed chronicle.

With The Knight's Tale of Chaucer, derived from Boccaccio, the fusion in English literature of epic and romantic, on a literary scale, begins. Here the subject matter, classical in nature, is as exotic as the form which Chaucer borrowed from the Italians.[3] A half-hearted return to the spirit of the national epic is recognizable in Spenser's Fairy Queen, but, despite the inclusion of King Arthur and the presence of Elizabeth as Gloriana, the Fairy Queen is essentially a foreign growth and romantic rather than heroic. In quality, the histories of Shakespeare are the nearest approaches made to the

1 W. MacNeile Dixon, English Epic and Heroic Poetry, London, 1913, p.109.
2 Ibid., p.111.
3 Ibid., p.117.

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epic in the Elizabethan period, but their dramatic form would seem to preclude their being placed in the epic category. And the historical poems of Daniel and Drayton remain rhymed histories, although W. Macneille Dixon is disposed to call Daniel's History of the Civil Wars a failed epic.[1]

In England the one great example of a wholly successful literary epic, that is, a conscious imitation of the older fixed form, is Paradise Lost; but the followers of Milton rather than Milton himself are pertinent in the present study, for the other so-called epics of the seventeenth century provide examples of that abuse of the genre that had wholly vitiated the form when Southey took it up. Cowley's Davideis, written in heroic couplets and Biblical in theme, wholly deserves Johnson's urbane damnation, "Whatever is said of Cowley is meant of his other works".[2] Davenant's Gondibert, influenced by the heroic plays of the seventeenth century and recording the epic irresolution of Gondibert, is scarcely more successful. William Chamberlayne's Pharonnida, a novel in verse which Southey criticized as one of the worst specimens of English poetry, is epic only in its length.[3] Dryden, too, was interested in the genre, as his inclusion of epic machinery in Annus Mirabilis and his Discourse on Epic Poetry testify. And a different sort of interest -- the same interest that Cervantes had in the romances of chivalry -- is displayed by Samuel Butler

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1 Ibid., p.179.
2 Samuel Johnson, Lives of the Poets, Works, Oxford, 1825, vol.VII, p.42.
3 Dixon, English Epic and Heroic Poetry, p.234.

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in Hudibras and later by Pope in The Rape of the Lock.

Despite the just evaluation that Butler and Pope had made of a form that had outlived its heyday, authors of the eighteenth century continued to write epics. Sir Richard Blackmore composed no less than four, entitled Prince Arthur, King Arthur, Eliza, and Alfred -- despite his realization that his task was hopeless, that Homer and Vergil alone had succeeded in this form.[1] Glover's Leonidas, much talked of in his own time because it supposedly favored political opposition to Sir Robert Walpole,[2] gave its author such renown that after his death a second epic in thirty books, The Athenaid, was published from his manuscript. William Wilkie, a Scotch minister, also tried his hand at epic, and, although his effort was coldly received in England, his countryman, David Hume, generously paid tribute to his labors, ranking him with Homer.[3]

One hesitates to call these men presumptuous. Apparently they recognized their own limitations as poets; certainly Blackmore did. Why, then, did they apply themselves to a form that demands the highest order of poetic talent? W. Macneille Dixon ventures a reasonable explanation; criticism in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries was directed not at aesthetic merit in epic composition but at compliance with certain formal rules.[4] Dryden, in his Discourse on Epic

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1 Richard Blackmore, Preface to Prince Arthur, London, 1695, p. ix.
2 Dixon, English Epic and Heroic Poetry, p.246.
3 Ibid., p.249.
4 Ibid., pp.242-243.

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Poetry, stresses the "manners" of the hero, the arrangement of the episodes, and the propriety of sentiments, and he strongly intimates that if a poet of moderate talent but follow the rules he may fashion a worthy epic. Indeed, he expresses the wish that Spenser had read Bossu in order that he might have correctly directed his genius.[1] Sir John Dennis, in his criticism of Blackmore's Prince Arthur, and Pemberton, in his appraisal of Glover's Leonidas, observe the same principles of Renaissance criticism. And the implication is clear enough -- that if poetic genius is a native gift, propriety, at least, may be learned; that if the poet may not write a great epic, he may, at least, compose a correct one.

Such was the state of epic composition when, in the last decade of the century, Southey set himself to work on Joan of Arc. It might seem, at first glance, that the same motive that influenced Blackmore, Glover, and Wilkie, urged Southey to employ this form, but such is not the case. His choice was determined, not by the chance it seemed to offer for a man of cultivation to compose correct poetry, but by a true affection for the older pieces of the epic type, both heroic and romantic, -- an affection instilled into him in his early boyhood. According to his own statement, the year and a half before he was placed at Westminster School was a time in which he was conscious of vast intellectual improvement.[2] A shy,

1 Discourses on Satire and on Epic Poetry, London, 1894, p.112.
2 The Reverend Charles Cuthbert Southey, The Life and Correspondence of the Late Robert Southey, London, 1849, vol.I, p.117.

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bookish boy, he was living with his aunt, the eccentric spinster Miss Elizabeth Tyler, at Bath and Bristol. After a spirited attempt to rear and educate ~~the boy~~ him in accordance with the principles of Rousseau's Emile, Miss Tyler, devoted to the theatre and to her literary friends, among whom she fancied herself to be something of a blue-stocking, left ~~the boy~~ him to his own devices. He read widely, and he practiced poetic composition -- with the evident hope that some day he would be one of England's great epic geniuses. "Early as my hopes had been directed toward the drama," he writes, "they received a more decided and more fortunate direction from the frequent perusal of Tasso, Ariosto, and Spenser. I had also read Mickle's Lusiad and Pope's Homer."[1] Here, then, are the literary influences that turned the ~~boy~~ youth toward the epic.

The first of his "Epic Dreams" was inspired by Ariosto. At the age of nine or ten, he planned to add a story to the Orlando Furioso, unaware that Italian and Spanish disciples of Ariosto had followed the same procedure. In this attempt, some verses of which were written in heroic couplets on the covers of his Phaedrus, the Moors, after their defeat in France, were to be led by Marsilius to Arcadia, where the hero of the piece, Alphonso, who had already distinguished himself by catching the hippogriff, was to defeat them again.[2] But the continuation of the Orlando Furioso remained little more than a projected poem, and the boy turned to other subjects.

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1 Ibid.
2 Ibid., p.118.

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He would write of the Trojan Brutus; but this plan failed, as did his third, a treatment of the War of the Roses with a reconciliation, in the end, of the two opposing parties. His fourth attempt, an epic based on the life of Egbert, the strong king of Wessex, fared better. Several folio sheets were covered with verse, which Miss Tyler -- unfortunately for the shy youth -- discovered and praised.[1]

In his twelfth and thirteenth years Southey interested himself in classical literature, and translated from Virgil, Ovid, and Horace. More significant is his composition, at this time, of a satirical poem describing a journey through Hades. "I remember," he wrote in 1824, "the conclusion only, and that because it exhibits a singular indication how strongly and how early my heart was set upon that peculiar line of poetry which I have pursued with most ardour. It described the Elysium of the Poets, and that more sacred part of it in which Homer, Virgil, Tasso, Spenser, Camoens, and Milton were assembled. While I was regarding them, Fame came hurrying by with her arm full of laurels and asking in an indignant voice if there was no poet who would deserve them? Upon which I reached out my hand, snatched at them, and awoke."[2] What is notable here is not the early indication of that obsession for fame that continued to be the last infirmity of his noble mind, but rather the consciousness, at this early age, that his mark was to be made in the same field in which Homer, Vergil, Tasso, Spenser,

1 Ibid., p.119.
2 Ibid., p.119.

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Camoens, and Milton had created. His intention, then, was not to follow in the steps of Blackmore, Glover,[1] and Wilkie -- men whom he scarcely had heard of (although he had read Chamberlayne's Pharonnida) -- but to take up the pen that had fallen from the cold fingers of Milton and add some of his own lustre to the bright tradition.

Inspired by Homer, the boy, in the first year of his teens, began a story of the Trojan Wars in dramatic form, the scene being laid in Elysium, and each warrior, as he enters the sacred portals, informing the shades of the latest progress made above. But this project was abandoned in favor of a new epic treating a British subject, the life of Cassibelan. Of this, three books and part of a fourth were completed before the youthful writer entered Westminster School.[2]

It was during his stay at Westminster that Southey read Bernard Picard's Cérémonies et Coûtumes Religieuses de Tous les Peuples du Monde Representées par des Figures, avec une Explanation Historique, et quelques Dissertations curieuses. "The book impressed my imagination strongly; and before I left school, I had formed the intention of exhibiting all the more

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1 In a letter dated November 13, 1793, to Horace Walpole Bedford, he mentions Leonidas as one of his favorite poems, particularly appealing to him because of its Greek subject. As far as I can ascertain, this epic, which Southey apparently read at the age of eighteen or nineteen, with Pharonnida, which he had read much earlier, constitutes his sole acquaintance, preceding the composition of Joan of Arc, with the English epic after Milton. It is to be noted that Southey mentions none of these in connection with the period of development prior to his entrance of Westminster in which he consciously prepared himself for a career as an epic poet.

2 ~~Cuthbert Southey~~, Life and Correspondence, vol.I, p.121.

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prominent and poetical forms of mythology which have at any time obtained among mankind, by making each the groundwork of an heroic poem."[1] At this time, then, the young Southey had not only formed the ambition to be an epic poet of the old order but had also adopted a program for his endeavors. Several subjects were floating through his mind. At the age of fifteen, he met at school Charles Watkin Williams Wynn, beginning a friendship that lasted their lives long. The boys often discussed the Welsh hero Madoc and his potentialities as an epic subject.[2] A year or two later, Southey read, and was deeply impressed by, Sayer's versification of Percy's prose translation of Mallet's Introduction à l'Histoire de Dannemarc;[3] doubtless he considered treating a subject from the Norse mythology in an epic. By the time that he had reached the age of thirteen, he had read "the Arabian and mock-Arabian tales"[4] out of which Thalaba grew.[5] Any of these subjects would allow him to exhibit poetical forms of mythology, but his first serious attempt at epic creation was drawn not from mythology but from history.

Joan of Arc

Southey's choice of Joan of Arc as the theme of

1 Southey, Vindiciae Ecclesiae Anglicanae, Letters to Charles Butler, Esq. Comprising Essays on the Romish Religion and Vindicating the Book of the Church, London, 1826, p.7.
2 Preface (1837) to Thalaba, Works, London, 1837-1838, vol.IV, p.ix.
3 Haller, Early Life of Robert Southey, p.46; Preface (1800) to Thalaba, Works, vol.IV, p.xv.
4 Life and Correspondence, vol.I, p.117.
5 Preface (1800) to Thalaba, Works, vol.IV, p.xv.

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his first epic is, if surprising, thoroughly explicable. In his youth he was a free thinker with an uncommon amount of fiery conviction -- conviction so strong, indeed, that in his reactionary maturity he availed himself of every opportunity to state his repudiation of earlier doctrine. He was expelled from Westminster, it will be remembered, for his heretical ideas on flogging and his courageous acknowledgment of them as his own. His life with Miss Tyler had not that security and comfortable assurance that breeds complacent acceptance, and when he entered Oxford, with the assistance of his uncle, the Reverend Herbert Hill, who planned an ecclesiastical career for the boy, he felt contempt for academic life[1] and actual repugnance toward taking orders in the Church.[2] He was nurturing democratic opinion, as opposed to the authority and aristocracy that Oxford and the Church of England symbolized. The mind that was battening upon themes of iconoclastic republicanism, the mind that looked hopefully toward France as the savior of liberty[3] and with outrage at England, the "legal robber" of the poor[4], the mind that, under the influence of the impulsive Coleridge, dreamed of a Pantisocracy on the banks of the Susquehanna, was able to express its fulminations in no vague mythos; it needed a definitely historical subject in which the contemporary striving for liberty in France might be typified by

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1 Life and Correspondence, vol.I, p.169.
2 Ibid., pp.201-202.
3 The note (1837) appended to the original preface of Joan of Arc, Works, vol.I, p.xxix.
4 Wat Tyler, Works, vol.II, p.26.

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a person of that country, and in which England might be exposed as the unholy tyrant assailing freedom and equality. The subsequent epics of Southey are romantic in their avoidance of the strictly temporal topics of his time; Joan of Arc comes cloth, cut, and hue out of his youthful reaction to his country's political attitude.

It might be asked why Joan of Arc was not placed, like The Fall of Robespierre, in the present time, why a past era of French history was chosen. Robespierre was written in direct collaboration with Coleridge, before whose thunderous reasoning all argument was stilled, but Coleridge, although he wrote part of the second book of Joan[1] and aided in the revision of the whole[2], had little share in the actual execution of the work. Is it not possible that Southey, left to his own somewhat calmer reasoning, feared that he would weaken the effect of his preachment if he referred directly to a movement that already, through its excesses, was shaking his belief, not in the ideal of liberty, but in France's misuse of that ideal?[3] Certainly Southey, at the very time he was at work on Joan of Arc, was uncertain of the sanctity of France's execution of her mission. On November 11, 1793, he wrote to Grosvenor Bedford: "I am sick of this world, and discontented with every one in it.

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1 Preface (1837) to Joan of Arc, Works, vol.I, p.xx. In the second edition Coleridge's contribution was omitted.
2 Haller, Early Life of Robert Southey, p.97.
3 In the first edition, 1796, Southey indirectly refers to the French Revolution by alluding to the fall of the Bastille and by mentioning Brissot and Madame Rolande, the "martyred patriots". Joan of Arc, Bristol, 1796, pp.94-95, p.314.

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The murder of Brissot has completely harrowed up my faculties, and I begin to believe that virtue can only aspire to content in obscurity; for happiness is out of the question. I look round the world and everywhere find the same mournful spectacle -- the strong tyrannizing over the weak, man and beast; the same depravity pervades the whole creation; oppression is triumphant everywhere, and the only difference is, that it acts in Turkey through the anger of a grand seignior, in France of a revolutionary tribunal, and in England of a prime minister."[1]

Moreover, Southey wished to give religious significance to his ideal of freedom, and Joan of Arc, he was sure, was inspired by God. Then too, the mere story of the maid appealed to him. All in all, his best procedure would be to symbolize his political opinions in the fifteenth-century struggle of the French and English.

Early in July, 1793, he talked "with an old schoolfellow" at Oxford on the epic qualities inherent in the history of Joan of Arc, and during the long vacation he outlined a plan of action for the poem and wrote some three hundred lines. In August he visited Grosvenor Bedford at Brixton Causeway, and there, in a summerhouse pleasantly situated, completed the twelve books of his epic in six weeks.[2] Toward the close of 1794, he planned to publish the work by subscription and issued an announcement to that effect; but shortly afterward Joseph

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1 Life and Correspondence, vol.I, p.189.
2 Preface (1837) to Joan of Arc, Works, vol.I, p.xv.

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Cottle, a fellow-townsman of Bristol and a venturesome publisher, offered him fifty guineas for the copyright, and Southey, of course, accepted the proposition. During the six months before the work appeared, with Coleridge's help he recast and recomposed most of the poem, leaving only the first half of the first book intact.[1]

When the epic was finally published in 1796, it stirred considerable interest, which Southey modestly attributes to causes in no way connected with his own talents. In 1837, writing from the vantage point of conservative old age, he observes that such republican sentiments as he had expressed in Joan of Arc "were then as unpopular in England as they deserved to be; but they were cherished by most of the critical journals and conciliated for me the good will of some of the most important writers who were at that time engaged in periodical literature, though I was personally unknown to them."[2] Moreover, for many years no poem of such ambitious conception had appeared, with the exception of Glover's Athenaid, which had almost immediately dropped into obscurity.[3] "A work of the same class," Southey writes in 1837, in reference to his first epic, "with as much power and fewer faults, if it were published now, would attract little or no attention."[4]

But the later Laureate had no need to be ashamed of

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1 Ibid., pp.xviii-xix.
2 Note (1837) appended to the original preface of Joan of Arc, Works, vol.I, pp.xxix-xxx.
3 Ibid., p.xxix.
4 Ibid.

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this poem which he had composed at the age of nineteen. Despite the rhodomontade and detonations of youth, despite the dullness of long stretches of versifying, despite the complexity of the material never mastered, Joan of Arc is an interesting, if not entertaining, [redacted]. And the task was beset with difficulties that might have discouraged a more experienced poet. In the first place, adequate sources were not available. Southey was able to list in his preface only a few productions "to the memory of Joan of Arc," and, although of these he had read only the Pucelle of Chapelain, he had heard by report that all were bad. According to the notes which he published at the end of his epic, he pieced together the story of the coming of Joan, of the siege of Orleans, and of the battle of Patay out of Enguerrand de Monstrelet's Des Croniques de France, Holinshed's Chronicles, Thomas Fuller's The Holy and Profane State, Paul de Rapin-Thoyras' Histoire d'Angleterre, David Hume's History of England, and Hugh Clarendon's New and Authentic History of England, as well as a number of other French and English historical works.[1] Southey boasted, in his original preface, that he had faithfully followed history -- such as he knew it from these sources -- except for a few minor and necessary deviations such as changing the time of the death of Salisbury and of the Talbots.

He encountered his greatest difficulty, however, in

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1 See Appendix B of Haller's Early Life of Robert Southey for a list of the works used in the preparation of Joan of Arc.

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delineating the character of the Maid. Here his sources gave him little help. Monstrelet expressed no opinion on the authenticity of Joan's inspiration, and Holinshed regarded her as a witch. Fuller saw the possibility of her saintliness, but Hume and Rapin-Thoyras had treated her as an unwitting victim of the scheming court.[1] Schiller had not yet written his Jungfrau, and Voltaire's Pucelle had made her the subject of lascivious jests. England's uncertainty as to the correct attitude to take toward the Maid of Orleans is revealed by an anecdote which Southey tells in his original preface. In the last decade of the century a pantomime performed at Covent Garden represented Joan as carried off by devils and thrown into hell-fire; but the audience was so shocked that the management, after a few nights, allowed an angel to rescue the Maid.[2]

Southey represents Joan of Arc as an embodiment of liberty sent by God to free her enslaved country. She is a visionary, a rapt enthusiast who is impelled against her will to the execution of her mission. When she appears before the Lord of Vaucouleur, she cries out:

> The hand of God is strong upon my soul,
> And I have wrestled vainly with the Lord,
> And stubbornly I fear me. I can save
> This country, Sir! I can deliver France!
> Yea... I must save the country! ... God is in me;

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1 Haller, Early Life of Robert Southey, p.102.
2 Preface (1795) to Joan of Arc, Works, vol.I, p.xxviii. A detailed account of this representation is given in a letter to Thomas Southey, Selections from the Letters of Robert Southey, edited by his son-in-law, John Wood Warter, London, 1856, vol.I, pp.50-51.

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I speak not, think not, feel not of myself.
He knew and sanctified me ere my birth;
He to the nations hath ordained me;
And whither He shall send me, I must go;
And whatso He commands, that I must speak;
And whatso is His will, that I must do;
and I must put away all fear of man,
Lest He in wrath confound me.[1]

It is necessary for Southey to make the Maid a god-sent messenger, for in his eyes the ideal of liberty is holy. The Bastard of Orleans, present at Vaucouleur, resolves to take her to the King. With a last human regret for the country in which her soul had enjoyed "holy quietness", Joan leaves Domremy. In Chinon the pusillanimous Charles sits hopeless, reproached by the fair Agnes Sorel. Joan is brought to him and successfully withstands the test of recognizing the King disguished in one of his courtier's garments. To still all doubt, Charles convokes the Doctors of Theology to examine the Maid and pass sentence on the divinity of her calling. Joan, the disciple of Rousseau, asserts that nature has taught her the fullness of religion which has singled her out for a mighty purpose; and to the monks' admonition that nature leads to sin, that nature can teach nothing of the church's dogma, Joan simply replies:

..... Ye have told me, Sirs,
That Nature only teaches man to sin!
If it be sin to seek the wounded lamb,
To bind its wounds, and bathe them with my tears,
This is what Nature taught! No, Fathers, no!

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1 Works, vol.I, p.3. Whenever possible, footnotes will refer to the version of Joan of Arc contained in the Poetical Works of 1837-38, as a more definitive and more accessible edition than the original one of 1796.

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> It is not Nature that doth lead to sin:
> Nature is all benevolence, all love,
> All beauty![1]

This utterance and others of its kind in the epic seem to show the influence of Wordsworth; but Joan of Arc was written in 1793, before Wordsworth had published his poems that crystallized his attitude toward nature. The hand that guides Southey here is that of Rousseau,[2] whose works balanced those of Epictetus in the reading of the young poet.

Despite the skepticism of the Doctors, Joan is sure of her divinity, and, pointing to the tomb of St. Katherine, she exclaims,

"The sword of God is here!"

A pale blue flame rises from the tomb, whence comes the sound of arms, as if below

"A warrior buried in his armor, stirred."

The priests are convinced, and the maiden is consecrated to the cause. Two incidents occur to disturb her peace before her departure for Orleans. Conrade, a warrior whose tales had roused her in Domremy, bursts into the court and curses Charles as the seducer of Agnes Sorel, Conrade's former sweetheart. Joan intervenes and persuades Conrade to forget private grief

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1 Ibid., p.48.
2 Or, as Haller suggests, Early Life of Robert Southey, pp. 107-109, that of Mark Akenside. Edward Dowden, however, (Robert Southey, English Men of Letters, New York, n.d. p.52) finds in Joan a definite influence from Rousseau.

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and vengeance in the more general concern of France herself. The classical authors who imbued in Southey republican ideas[1], also taught him that the whole is greater than the part and that the individual must adjust himself to the general harmony. He had listened to the emotional outcry of Rousseau, but he had also heard the sterner voice of Epictetus: "What then does the character of a citizen promise? To hold nothing as profitable to himself, to deliberate about nothing as if he were detached from the community, but to act as the hand or foot would do, if they had reason and understood the constitution of nature, for they would never put themselves in motion or desire anything otherwise than with reference to the whole."[2]

But Joan herself only with difficulty rules the self out of her being. At Chinon she finds Theodore, her lover from Domremy, who has come to protect her in the battle. When he clasps her in his arms, she feels human impulses stir within her; but in the moment of temptation God sends to her a vision of the stake and the flame, and she realizes that she is not destined for mortal happiness. It is interesting to note that Southey foreshadows here the problem that forms the theme of a much greater treatment of Joan of Arc -- Schiller's Die Jungfrau von Orleans, which, composed seven years later, finds tragedy in the conflict of human and spiritual forces.

At the king's court Joan refuses to join in the

1 Note (1837) appended to the original preface of Joan of Arc, Works, vol.I, p.xxix.
2 Discourses of Epictetus, trans. by George Long, New York, p.130.

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revelry that precedes the departure of the forces. She can think only of the fear, the hunger, the expiring hope of the poor wretches in Orleans. The monarch may be merry and indulge his senses; the savior of the people can feel no joy until her mission is successfully fulfilled, and until that time she knows only sympathetic pain.[1]

Up to this point in his narrative, Southey has allowed his account to proceed at a comfortable jog-trot that has no especial thrill for the reader. When he actually begins the history of the lifting of the siege of Orleans, his verse assumes something of martial dignity. Is there not a strain of epic grandeur in this account of the departure of the host?

> Twelve hundred men,
> Rearing in ordered ranks their glittering spears,
> Await her coming. Terrible in arms
> Before them towered Dunois, his manly face
> O'er-shadowed by the helmet's iron cheeks.
> The assembled court gazed on the marshalled train,
> And at the gate the aged prelate stood
> To pour his blessing on the chosen host.
> And now a soft and solemn symphony
> Was heard, and chaunting high and hallowed hymn,
> From the near convent came the vestal maids.
> A holy banner, woven by virgin hands,
> Snow-white they bore. A mingled sentiment
> Of awe and eager ardor for the fight,
> Thrilled through the army, as the reverend man
> Took the white standard, and with heaven-ward eye
> Called on the God of Justice, blessing it.
> The Maid, her brows in reverence unhelmed,
> Her dark hair floating on the morning gale,
> Knelt to his prayer, and stretching forth her hand
> Received the mystic banner.[2]

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1 Works, vol.I, p.68.
2 Ibid., pp.69-70.

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To inform the reader of what has occurred prior to the time of the narrative, Southey avails himself of a convenient epic device: Isabel, escaped from the siege that has orphaned her and separated her from her lover, relates to Joan, Conrade, and Dunois how the English have held Orleans. Isabel's account of the siege is, in some respects, superior to the narration of how the siege was lifted. It has a forceful conciseness and economy of expression that Southey cannot attain in his more expansive description, repetitious and unnecessarily detailed, of those events that form the last six books of his epic.

The poet takes great pains to make the Maid no lover of bloodshed and martial cruelty. She uses weapons of force simply because there is no other way. It will be remembered that, ardent as his hopes for France were, Southey was sickened by the bloody measures of the Revolution. Now, somewhat naively, he represents Joan as sending a herald to the English lords, Salisbury, Suffolk, Fastolffe, Talbot, and Scale, entreating them to withdraw peacefully and turn back towards England. But when Joan sees her herald bound to the stake by the savage Salisbury, she exclaims: "Not upon us, O God! Not upon us cry out the innocent blood", and rides down upon the English.

> O'er the host
> Howled a deep wind that ominous of storms
> Rolled on the lurid clouds. The blackened night
> Frowned, and the thunder from the troubled sky
> Roared hollow. Javelins clashed and bucklets rang;

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> Shield prest on shield; loud on the helmet jarred
> The ponderous battle axe; the frequent groan
> Of death commingling with the storm was heard,
> And the shrill shriek of fear.[1]

When the English retreat, and the way into Orleans is open, she, despite the strong dissent of the French lords, insists on sparing the lives of the English prisoners; for war to her is not a thing in itself but only a sorry means to the accomplishment of her purpose. And God, as a sign of his approval of her clemency, strikes down the heavily manned tower that the English still hold on the Loire bridge.[2]

The battle is won, but it has taken its toll; Theodore, in attempting to protect Joan, has been killed. Now, with Orleans freed, she goes to the convent in which he is buried, to honor him. A monk, perceiving her world-weariness, attempts to persuade her to renounce active life, now that she has proved herself, and find peace in pious contemplation. But if Southey learned from Epictetus the wisdom of accepting sorrow and injustice with resignation, he could never accept the more extreme doctrine that avoidance of such pain is a mark of wisdom. He is as impatient as Milton with the cloistered life that never knows the dust and heat of the race.[3] Hence, Joan replies to the monk:

> Amid these tombs,
> Cold as their clayey tenants, know, my heart

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1 Ibid., pp.99-100.
2 Ibid., p.149.
3 "Areopagitica", The Student's Milton, ed. Frank Allen Patterson, New York, 1931, p.738.

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> Must never grow to stone! Chill thou thyself,
> And break thy midnight rest, and tell thy beads,
> And labour through thy still repeated prayer;
> Fear thou thy God of Terrors; spurn the gifts
> He gave, and sepulchre thyself alive!
> But far more valued is the vine that bends
> Beneath its swelling clusters, than the dark
> And joyless ivy, round the cloister's wall
> Wreathing its barren arms.[1]

She returns to the camp, and it is well that she does so, for the English, having strengthened their forces, turn at Patay and prepare to engage with the French again. Once more Joan is victorious, although Conrade, in dealing the valiant Talbot a death blow, is mortally wounded. The epic closes with France's winning freedom from the invaders, an outcome historically erroneous but aesthetically proper. Joan of Arc crowns Charles in Rheims, informing him of the responsibilities of king and subject. From God comes all of a monarch's powers, and by God the king is bound to duty and restrained from license; he must rule according to God's word and the laws, and must never turn a deaf ear to the pleas of his suffering subjects or allow iniquity to prevail over righteousness or relax discipline to favor vice. The subjects too have duties: To fear God and honor their king. Southey finds a Christian basis for this contract:

> If thy heart be set
> To do His will and in His ways to walk,
> I know no limit to the happiness
> Thou may'st create.[2]

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1 Works, vol.I, pp.156-157. In the edition of 1796, hostility to Catholicism is more pronounced. The rites of the Church are likened to the charms of Thessalian "hell-hags" (p.106), and Superstition, Ignorance, and Cruelty attend the priests who come to examine Joan (pp.104-105).

2 Works, Vol.I, p.189. In the 1796 edition the same sentiments are couched in stronger language.

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These are, indeed, strange sentiments for a revolutionary to harbor; but it must be remembered that Southey, a moral rather than a political thinker, objected to the evil practices of monarchy rather than to monarchy as a mode of government. But even in the epic as he revised it for printing in 1837[1], several indictments of decadent monarchism occur. Charles, in the beginning of the poem, is represented as an impotent, cowardly man unfit for his station and drawing even from his mistress, Agnes Soral, contemptuous reproach:

> Go then, unworthy of thy rank! retreat
> To distant Dauphiny and fly the war,
> Recreant from battle! I will not partake
> A fugitive's fate; when thou hast lost thy crown
> Thou losest Agnes. -- Do'st not blush, Dunois!
> To bleed in combat for a Prince like this,
> Fit only like the Merovingian race
> On a May morning decked with flowers, to mount
> His gay-bedizened car, and ride abroad
> And make the multitude a holiday.
> Go Charles! and hide thee in a woman's garb,
> And these long locks will not disgrace thee then![2]

And Conrade, with just cause, cries out against the monarch who, while his loyal subject is fighting for his throne, seduces the subject's fiancée.[3] The Maid herself laments the social inequality that prevails on earth and causes much of the world's suffering:

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1 Southey explains in the note appended to the original preface that, in preparing Joan of Arc for appearance in his Poetical Works, 1837, he has expunged or altered passages that expressed "the political prejudices of a young man who had too little knowledge to suspect his own ignorance". Works, vol.I, p.xxxiii. The 1837 version of Joan of Arc is different, in several respects from the original edition of 1796.

2 Works, vol.I, p.36.

3 Ibid., p.59.

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"Oh what a blessed world were this! she cried,
"But that the great and honorable men
Have seized the earth, and of the heritage
Which God, the Sire of all, to all had given,
Disherited their brethren!....."[1]

But the great of the earth, not satisfied with their unhallowed dominion over the lowly, send the common men to their deaths in wars intended only to increase royal magnificence:

"Ah me! when war the masters of mankind,
Woe to the poor man! if he sow his field,
He shall not reap the harvest; if he see
His offspring rise around, his boding heart
Aches at the thought that they are multiplied
To the sword!....."[2]

But the poor have their reward: a quiet sleep in death:

".....A little while
Though shelterless they feel the wintry wind,
The wind shall whistle o'er their turf-grown grave,
And all be peace below. But woe to those,
Woe to the Mighty Ones who send abroad
Their ministers of death and give to Fury
The flaming firebrand; these indeed shall live
The heroes of the wandering minstrel's song;
But they have their reward; the innocent blood
Steams up to Heaven against them: God shall hear
The widow's groan."[3]

Nor is this indignation addressed to the world at large. That it is specifically meant for England is shown by the following passage that occurs in the poem directly after the English have suffered heavy reversals:

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1 Ibid., p.7.
2 Ibid., p.25.
3 Ibid., p.30.

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> One there was
> Who, learning wisdom in the hour of ill,
> Exclaimed, "I marvel not that the Most High
> Hath hid his face from England. Wherefore thus
> Quitting the comforts of domestic life,
> Came we to desolate this goodly land,
> Making the drenched earth rank with human blood,
> Scatter pollution on the winds of Heaven?[1]

England, in fact, is the villain of the piece, and Southey's criticism of his country is as bitter as Coleridge's in Ode on the Departing Year or as Wordsworth's in his sonnet on London, 1802. Nor can such criticism be dismissed as the mistake of a youthful mind later corrected, for Southey assures us that the sentiments of Joan of Arc, as it appears in The Poetical Works, are "in accord with those opinions which the author has maintained for thirty years through good and evil report, in the maturity of his judgement as well as in the sincerity of his heart."[2]

Joan of Arc is of main interest because of its revelation of the ferment in the young poet's mind, but what is its intrinsic worth as a piece of literature and, more specifically, as an epic?

In the preface that the nineteen-year-old author wrote for his first epic he freely criticized previous examples of the form. An epic poem, he asserts, need not have a national subject,— a necessary conclusion, on his part, inasmuch as he had been notably lacking in patriotism in his own effort.

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1 Ibid., p.152.
2 Note (1837) appended to the original preface of Joan of Arc, Works, vol.I, p.xxxiii.

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The subject of an epic, he observes somewhat platitudinously, must be well chosen: Lucan and Statius have suffered neglect because of their unattractive themes; Southey rightly thought that his Joan of Arc treated a subject rich in dramatic interest, in spectacle, and in emotional appeal. But no matter how good a poet's subject may be, if he fails to make his principal character heroic and human at the same time, his epic will fail. This is the common fault of epic poems, Southey believes -- that the reader feels small interest in the heroes; Achilles and Aeneas may reach the heart of a Greek or Roman by appealing to his national vanity, but to the modern world these heroes are simply warriors characterized by a surprising scarcity of human feeling. But Ulysses is an exception, since he appears as father and husband, and thus invites the reader's love as well as his admiration.[1]

It is precisely as a human being that Southey's Joan is disappointing. As an epic character she is adequate; she is far above the level of usual men and women, and her high aspiration and impossible idealism give her grandeur of character; but those episodes in which Southey attempts to endow her with human qualities -- the scene in which Theodore embraces her, for instance -- are painfully unconvincing. Yet Joan does possess a second quality which Southey believed indispensable to the ideal epic character: moral goodness.[2] Indeed, Southey was so successful in spiritualizing Joan into a divine sub-

1 Preface (1795) to Joan of Arc, Works, vol.I, p.xxiii.
2 Ibid., pp.xxiii-xxiv.

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stance that he left nothing for the human flesh to cling to.

For the conventional devices of the epic he cares nothing, and he assures the reader that he will find in Joan of Arc "no descriptions of armour, no muster-rolls, no geographical catalogues, lion, tiger, bull, bear, and boar similes, Phoebuses or Auroras".[1] He has as little respect for the conventional supernatural machinery, and believes that the employment of superior agents in palpable form would reduce his heroine to the status of a fairy-tale princess; accordingly, he prefers to allow his heroine to act "wholly from the workings of her own mind, from the deep feeling of inspiration".[2] But if Southey hints here of a psychological treatment of his character, he fails to fulfill the reader's expectation, although it is true that no gods manipulate the action of his story and that the supernatural appears but seldom, as in the case of the sword that the Angel drops before Joan in Domremy or of the blue light that rises from the tomb of St. Katharine to prove that the Maid's spirituality is authentic.[3]

Yet, despite the independence that distinguishes this attitude toward the epic, Southey follows Homer in Joan of Arc. The similarity between the siege of Troy and the siege of Orleans is obvious, and the scattering of interest among several heroes seems Homeric also. In both the Iliad and in Joan of Arc a woman is the motive force. And is it not possible that

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1 Ibid., p.xxvi.
2 Ibid., p.xxii.
3 In the first edition, the preface of which (in some points different from the "original" preface printed in 1837) makes no objection to supernaturalism, the elements of the miraculous is much more pronounced. See Joan of Arc, 1796, p.130.

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the moral Southey, looking askance at the destructive Helen, delighted in exalting woman, in his epic, as the saving genius of mankind?

A Homeric influence is noticeable, too, in Southey's style. It is only to be regretted that he was not more successful in imitating Homer's diction, which he considered exemplary in its dignity and simplicity.[1] Seldom, indeed, does Southey approach Homer's simple, natural inevitability of phrase; but the following passage has, perhaps, some faint suggestion of that quality:

> His sires had lived in peace;
> They heaped the hospitable earth, they spread
> The feast, their vassal loved them, and afar
> The traveller told their fame. In peace they died,
> And to their ancient burial-place were borne
> With book and bell, torches, and funeral chaunt;
> And duly for their souls the neighboring monks
> The solemn office sung. Now far away
> Their offspring falls, the last of all his race,
> Slain in a foreign land, and doomed to share
> A common grave.[2]

Too often Southey's verse in Joan of Arc is wretchedly hackneyed, and frequently a terrific strain is placed upon language, wrenching it into strange twists and contortions:

> His eye not slept, tho' long the All-Just endured
> The woes of France; at length his bared right arm
> Volleys red thunder. From his veiling clouds
> Rushes the storm, Ruin, and Fear, and Death.
> Take Son of Orleans the relief of Heaven:

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1 Works, vol. I, p. xxiii.
2 Ibid., p. 113.

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> Nor thou the wintry hour of adverse fate
> Deem useless: tho' unhoused thou roam awhile,
> The keen and icy wind that shivers thee
> Shall brace thine arm, and with stern discipline
> Firm thy young heart for fearless enterprise
> As who, through many a summer night serene
> Had hovered round the fold with coward wish;
> Horrid with brumal ice, the fiercer wolf
> From his bleak mountain and his den of snows
> Leaps terrible, and mocks the shepherd's spear.[1]

Southey himself was conscious of the impossibility of such passages as this one, for in editions later than the first, such unnaturalness of language was, in large part, corrected. But seldom is the poet sure of his expression. Now he imitates Milton's sublimity[2], now Homer's artless and artful lucidity,[3] now Coleridge's philosophical versifying.[4] In the Vision of the Maid, which formed the ninth book of the first edition but which was expunged from subsequent editions, he seems to be under the influence of Dante (it is probable that he read Boyd's translation of the Divine Comedy, 1785): the ghost of her dead lover Theodore acts as Joan's Vergil in a tour of the limbo of Death, in which the Maid witnesses the various tortures inflicted on Murder, Mammon with his accursed followers, Appetite and his slaves, and those lascivious poets who composed aphrodisiacal verse; and as Dante gives to traitors the worst penalty of all, Southey reserves for kings, the "mur-

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1 Joan of Arc, 1796, pp.7-8.
2 Ibid., pp. 17-18; pp. 53-55.
3 Ibid., pp.243-244.
4 According to Southey's own statement, the first 450 lines of Book II of the first edition, with the exception of 88 interspersed lines, are by Coleridge. (Preface to Joan of Arc, 1796, p.vi). Without Southey's direction, it would be difficult to tell where Coleridge left off and Southey began.

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derers of mankind", his most exquisite torture, a crown of fire that burns into the brain.[1]

But Southey also imitates, in the first edition of Joan of Arc, poets less removed from his own days. The eighteenth-century fashion of introducing allegorical abstractions into poetry is represented in a long parade of such familiar figures as Superstition, Ignorance, Cruelty, Hypocrisy, Revenge, Slaughter, Despair, Avarice, Jealousy, Fear, Oppression, Remorse, Poverty, Misery, Mercy, Wisdom, Chastity, Health, Hope, Content, Charity, Affection, Tenderness, and Love, a parade that begins in the second book of the poem but that appears in its full length only in the Vision of Book IX.

That Southey, at the time of the composition of Joan of Arc, had no sense of the ludicrousness that may lie in the combination of words is proved by his repeated use of the two epithets he chose for Joan, "the Missioned Maid" and "the Delegated Damsel" and by the unconscious humor of such lines as

> .....the glistening tear
> Softened her eye and all the Woman reigned[2]

and

> My father stood encircling his old limbs
> In long forgotten arms.[3]

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1 Joan of Arc, 1796, pp.251-253.
2 Ibid., p.10.
3 Ibid., p.165.

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That he had very little artistic discretion is evident in the untoward number of similes[1] which he employed in an obvious attempt to give the work an epic flavor.

But, apart from the general want of sincere poetic expression on the part of Southey, his most serious mistake is the attempt to mingle the domestic with the heroic. He was engaged to Edith Fricker and was eager to marry her and set up his own establishment. Over and over again, in his letters, he day-dreams about a little cottage, situated now by the sea, now in a quiet rural district, with hollyhocks at the gate and Edith at the door to welcome him. It was inevitable that this element of his personality should enter into the personalized atmosphere of Joan of Arc. Homer had proved that the domestic strain was not incompatible with the epic, but the quality of his Hector and Andromache episode is not easily imitated. Certainly Isabel's mingling of the grisly account of the siege of Orleans with memories of her youth -- her family's honest toil, their homely sustenance --[2] and Joan's rhapsodic reminiscences of her peaceful life in Domremy[3], or the antiphonal mooning of the two over their lost chances of domestic happiness[4] contribute nothing of epic quality to Joan of Arc. And Southey is all too fond of the device of nauseating the reader with a gory description of a soldier's death and then

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1 Similes are drawn from Mohammedan, Greek, Mexican, Biblical, Norse, and early English and French historical subjects. These similes are proof of Southey's learning but scarcely of his taste.
2 Joan of Arc, 1796, pp.162-163.
3 Ibid., p.183.
4 Ibid., p.184.

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immediately "flashing back" to the happy life he would have enjoyed if he had only stayed at home. Frequently, it is true, Southey introduces the domestic note to enhance his propaganda, as a contrast to the cruelty of war and bloodshed:

> "O happy age!"
> He cried, "when all the family of man
> Freely enjoyed the goodly earth he gave,
> And only bowed the knee in prayer to God!
> Calm flowed the unruffled stream of years along,
> Till o'er the peaceful rustic's head, grey grew
> The hairs in full of time. Then he would sit
> Beneath the coetaneous oak, whilst round,
> Sons, grandsons, and their offspring joined to form
> The blameless merriment; and learnt of him
> What time to yoke the oxen to the plough,
> What hollow moanings of the western wind
> Foretel the storm, and in what lurid clouds
> The embryo lightning lies. Well-pleased, he taught,
> The heart-smile glowing on his aged cheek,
> Mild as decaying light of summer sun."[1]

But such Arcadianism has no place in an epic, and, purposeful though it may be to Southey's thought, it intrudes in the narrative as a recognizable piece of propaganda. In fact, Southey's dual purpose in writing Joan of Arc -- to revive the epic form and to express his liberal opinions -- was not conducive to the creation of a poem of unified, heroic effect. But there is no unity at all in Joan of Arc; it is neither pure propaganda nor pure epic; at the same time that it expresses Southey's individuality it is imitative; in its emotionalism it belongs to the romantic period or rather to the Storm and Stress that produced Werther, a work that finds its way into the notes of

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1 Ibid., pp.243-244.

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the first edition[1]; in its diction it acknowledges kinship with the eighteenth century; republicanism and Rousseau's worship of nature are uttered in courts hung with mediaeval trappings and in Dantean torture-chambers. There is little evidence of the selective artist here. All that Southey knew, all that he believed, all the impressions that he had gained from extensive reading, he poured into this crucible, under which he allowed the fires of ardent youth to burn brightly. When the liquid solidified it presented a strange shape, but the young poet, undaunted by the odd contours of his creation, gave it the name of epic.

Madoc

Although Joan of Arc was by no means a financial success,[2] it won sufficient notice from the critics to spur Southey on to further endeavor in the epic form. He chose, as the subject for his next work, the wanderings and adventures of Madoc, Prince of North Wales, a theme which had aroused his imagination in his early youth.[3]

But whereas Joan of Arc, although copiously revised thereafter, was written in six weeks, in a fever-heat of inspiration, during a time when Southey focussed all his thought and emotion on the ideal of liberty that forms the substance of the work, Madoc was composed over a space of four years,

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1 Ibid., p.335.
2 Life and Correspondence, vol.I, p.291.
3 Preface (1837) to Thalaba, Works, vol.IV, p.ix.

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during which significant changes, in both his outer life and his inner being, occurred to thwart all singleness of purpose.

It is interesting to trace, through Southey's letters, the progress of Madoc. Begun in the autumn of 1794, it was laid aside when he saw the necessity of a wholesale revision of Joan of Arc. This revision, it will be remembered, extended over a six-months' interval, but on May 27, 1795, Southey wrote to his confidant, Grosvenor Charles Bedford: "I shall copy out what I have done of Madoc and send you ere long; you will find more simplicity in it than in any of my pieces, and of course it is the best. I shall study three works to write it -- the Bible, Homer, and Ossian...."[1] In the following August, Southey, hard pressed for funds, wrote to Bedford that he planned to make Madoc a financial success,[2] but in October his attitude is less mercenary: "Madoc is to be the pillar of my reputation; how many a melancholy hour have I beguiled by writing poetry!"[3] By this time he had come to regard Joan of Arc with something of a patronizing attitude: its composition had been too hasty; its plan was unsatisfactory; its depiction of battle scenes was repetitious and without interest; its preface was "a hodge-podge of inanity".[4] Madoc, he determined, would be a slower and surer work, a truer sample of his poetic talent. "I pleased myself

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1 Life and Correspondence, vol.I, p.238.
2 Ibid., p.245.
3 Ibid., p.248.
4 Ibid., p.237, p.267, p.270. See also the preface (1837) and the note appended to the original preface of Joan of Arc.

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with the hope that it (Joan of Arc) would one day be likened to Tasso's Rinaldo, and that as the Jerusalem had fulfilled the promise of better things whereof that poem was the pledge, so might Madoc be regarded in relation to the juvenile work which had preceded it. Thinking that this would probably be the greatest poem I should ever produce, my intention was to bestow upon it all possible care, as indeed I had determined never again to undertake any subject without due preparation."[1]

On November 14, 1795, the Reverend Herbert Hill, anxious to remove his nephew from the radical atmosphere of Coleridge and Pantisocracy and from the charms of Miss Edith Fricker, took Southey to Portugal; but before he sailed, Southey secretly married Edith Fricker and sent her to live in the Cottle household, pending his return.[2] With marriage came an increased sense of responsibility and a more sober view of life. The thought of death and separation from Edith is often in his mind during the trip to Portugal and during his stay there, but with such morbid speculation comes complete trust in God.[3] By this time his interest in a practical Pantisocracy had waned, and the break with Coleridge had come with the letter that scornfully denounced Southey as the traitorous deserter.[4] Southey himself is frank to admit that little of that enthusiasm "which so lately fevered my whole

1 Preface (1837) to Madoc, Works, vol.V, p.xi.
2 Selections from the Letters of Robert Southey, vol.I, p.42.
3 Life and Correspondence, vol.I, pp.261,283,284.
4 Haller, Early Life of Robert Southey, pp.167-168.

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character" still remains in him,[1] that he has come to love "settled quietness" rather than ardent emotionalism.[2] But his nature could not form itself into the urbane rationalism of the eighteenth-century classicists. When he suffered from a nervous disorder in 1799, William Taylor attributed his condition to 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-rending woe."[3] Yet his feeling was no longer large enough to embrace the trouble of all mankind, and to seek reparation for humanity.[4] The turn that affairs had taken in France changed him from a practical republican into a theoretical one, and his experiences in Portugal, his witnessing of the most cruel sort of governmental oppression, made him think kindlier of his own country. In short, the reformer in him was giving way to the philosopher. On June 26, 1797, he writes to John May of Madame Roland's Appel à l'impartiale Posterité: "It is one of those books that make me love individuals, and yet dread, detest, and despise mankind in a mass." He has learned, he asserts, the futility of "man-mending", of bringing to a sanative condition the "great lazar house of society". "He acts the wisest part who retires from the contagion; nor is that part either a

1 Life and Correspondence, vol.I, p.375.
2 Ibid., p.324.
3 Ibid., vol.II, p.12.
4 Ibid., vol.I, p.375.

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selfish or a cowardly one; it is like ascending the ark, like Noah, to preserve a remnant which may become the whole."[1] He had tried his hand at man-mending in Joan of Arc and Wat Tyler. With Madoc, however, aesthetic rather than ideological in its purpose, he might find that romantic escape that he believes now to be the wiser part of conduct.

The work advanced slowly, but it afforded Southey moments of happiness and content. In February, 1796, he writes to Bedford from Lisbon: "There is a fine ocean of ideas floating about in my brain-pan for Madoc, and a high delight do I feel in sometimes indulging them till self-forgetfulness follows."[2] And in the following June, now back in England, he assures Bedford that Madoc has become a vital part of his existence: "Seriously, Grosvenor, to go on with Madoc is almost necessary to my happiness: I had rather leave off eating than poetizing..."[3]

But his friend and Maecenes, C. W. W. Wynn, had taken a more practical view of the matter. Wynn had promised Southey, in their school-days, that he would settle an annuity on him[4] when he, Wynn, became of age. Now, however, Wynn, distressed at Southey's lack of a profitable occupation, conditioned his promise: Southey must take up the study of law.[5] Southey accepted the condition, and, although Blackstone was a source of

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1 Ibid., p.317.
2 Ibid., p.369.
3 Ibid., p.381.
4 According to DeQuincey, Wynn was moved to this generosity by Southey's moral excellence at Oxford. Haller, Early Life of Robert Southey, p.164 n.
5 Haller, Early Life of Robert Southey, p.164.

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constant torment to him, he seriously applied himself until Wynn, perceiving that law and poetry, in Southey's case, were hostile, withdrew the condition. Study of law, demanding as much as nine hours of each day, served to concentrate Southey's creative abilities on Madoc, for he found that effort divided between several literary projects in the short time that study left him was useless. In February, 1797, a few days before he began his legal education, he wrote to Joseph Cottle from London: "As to my literary pursuits, after some consideration I have resolved to postpone every other till I have concluded Madoc. This must be the greatest of all my work. The structure is complete in my mind; and my mind is likewise stored with appropriate images. Should I delay it these images may become fainter, and perhaps age does not improve the poet..... In two years the poem shall be finished, and the many years it must lie by will afford ample time for correction."[1]

During this time he is on the alert for any bit of information or personal experience that he may turn to account in Madoc. His brother, Thomas Southey, for instance, sends him a description of the Spanish coast about St. Sebastian which the poet versifies and incorporates in his epic.[2] He lives so intensely in his writing that he cannot help [redacted] comparing the imaginative world of his own creation with the actual world in which he lives; thus he laments to Bedford, in May, 1797, the difference between the hospitality of the Susque-

1 Life and Correspondence, vol.I, pp.303-304.
2 Ibid., p.307.

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hannah Indians, which he had just described in Book V of Madoc in Wales, and the indifference of modern society.[1]

In the winter of 1797 he was preparing Joan of Arc for a second edition, and through the first half of the next year he was engaged in several literary enterprises, including the preparation for the press of a second volume of minor poems, a second edition of the Letters from Spain and Portugal, and a collection of his writings for The Annual Anthology.[2] He was living now, with his wife, his mother, and his cousin Margaret Southey, in a little house in Westbury, a few miles from Bristol. But in spite of all distraction he worked steadily on Madoc, and at an incredibly rapid pace. In the 1837 preface to Thalaba he asserts that never before or since did he produce as much poetry in the same space of time. On August 29, 1798, he wrote to his brother Tom: "I have learnt to rise early when at home, and written two new books of 'Madoc' wholly, before any one else in the house was up."[3] It must be noticed, however, that some of the books of Madoc are as short as one hundred lines.

A short walking-trip through Wales, in the summer of 1798, must have spurred him to hotter endeavor with Madoc, but in the winter of 1798-99, new plans -- this time for a tragedy based on such subjects as the escape of the Pythoness with a young Thessalian, a Spanish intrigue, religious persecution in

1 Ibid., p.312.
2 Ibid., p.339.
3 Ibid., p.347.

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Queen Mary's times, life in the days of feudalism, and Spartan civilization[1] -- once more distracted him, and ill health, either a genuine nervous condition or the "mimosa sensibility" to which William Taylor referred, curbed his creative powers. But he was determined to finish Madoc;by midsummer he had completed the penultimate book of the epic, and at last, on July 13, 1799, he was able to write to Thomas Southey: "Yesterday I finished Madoc, thank God! and thoroughly to my own satisfaction; but I have resolved on one great, laborious, and radical alteration."[2]

So great was Southey's relief at concluding the poem that he did not begin the great revision of it until 1803, when he was settled at Keswick. Twelve months were spent in a process of alteration more drastic even than that of Joan of Arc. He divided the epic into two parts, Madoc in Wales and Madoc in Aztlan, and increased the poem by one-third of its original length, subdividing it into short episodical sections. Madoc was published in 1805 as the third epic from the pen of Robert Southey, for, during the interval between the completion of the original version of Madoc and its final revision, Thalaba the Destroyer had been composed, and published in 1801.

Who was this figure Madoc? Supposedly, he was the youngest son of the twelfth-century king of North Wales, Owen Gwyneth or Gwynned, but no contemporary mention is made of

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1 Ibid., vol.II, pp.5-6.
2 Ibid., p.20-21.
3 Preface (1837) to Madoc, Works, vol.V, p.xii.

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such a son.[1] The earliest trace of Madoc, son of Owen Gwyneth, sea-rover and discoverer, is found in a poem by Maredudd ap Rhys, a bard of the fifteenth century who, speaking of the fascination which fishing holds for him, compares himself to Madog [sic], whose sole possession was the broad sea. In a manuscript of the sixteenth century Madog's voyage to the new world is referred to as the last of three mysterious embarkations, but the mythical nature of these three sea-journeys is revealed in the account of the second embarkation, that of Merlin and nine other bards in a house of glass. It is evident, however, that, before the time of the discovery of Columbus, a Welsh legend concerning a mysterious westward voyage of a son of Owen Gwyneth existed.

Dr. David Powel, who, in 1584, published his Historie of Cambria, composed of Humphrey Lloyd's translation and continuation of the account of the fourteenth-century Welsh chronicler, Caradoc, with further additions by Powel, was the first to advance seriously the claim that the semi-mythical Welsh prince discovered America some three centuries before Columbus' time. According to Powel, Madog, left Wales to avoid strife with his brothers, about 1170, and sailed to an unknown land which Powel identifies as Florida. The prince returned to Wales and then set out a second time, never to be heard of again. Powel even goes to the pains of advancing several purported facts in support of his theory that Madog settled in

1 This historical account of Madoc is drawn from John Edward Lloyd's article on Madog in the Dictionary of National Biography, ed. Sidney Lee, New York, 1893, vol.xxxv, pp.302-303.

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America. There occur, says Powel, certain words in the languages of the American Indians that have a connection with Welsh words, an assertion which the findings of modern philology have failed to substantiate. Moreover, Powel continues, early explorers of America found that in some parts of the continent the cross was recognized and revered, a certain proof that Madog had planted the seeds of Christianity in the new world. Then, too, Powel refers the unbeliever to the fact that the ruling class of ancient Mexico had a foreign origin, the implication being that the descendants of Madog reigned as the Incas of the Aztec civilization.

The romantic story was enthusiastically subscribed to by Welsh nationalists. In 1791 the Gentleman's Magazine received a series of notes, in the interest of the cause, from Dr. W. O. Pughe and his friend Iolo Morganwg (Edwards Williams). It is the claim of John Edward Lloyd[1] that Southey heard the story of Madoc from Pughe or one of his adherents. According to Southey's own words[2], a conversation with his schoolfellow C. W. W. Wynn suggested the subject. It is possible that Wynn, himself a Welshman[3], acquainted Southey with the general contours of the story and that contact with Pughe or Williams, either directly or indirectly through the pages of the Gentleman's Magazine, gave him a more detailed account of the legend.

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1 Dictionary of National Biography, vol.xxxv, p.303.
2 Preface (1837) to Thalaba, Works, vol.VI, p.ix.
3 See Selections from the Letters of Robert Southey, edited by his son-in-law John Wood Warter, London, 1856, vol.III, p.516, and vol.IV, p.408, for Southey's fanciful claim to Welsh ancestry and relationship with Wynn.

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Study of Southey's notes to Madoc reveals only that he had read Powel's account; it is true that he mentions the Cambrian Biography, which narrates the adventures of Madoc as established fact, but the Cambrian Biography was not published until 1803, too late to be of any assistance in the fashioning of the epic, [redacted] early enough to provide Southey with several citations for his notes. Other works on Welsh history, civilization, and landscape, which Southey mentions in his notes -- such as Evan Evans' Specimens of the Poetry of the Antient Welsh Bards, Edward Davies's Celtic Researches, and old Welsh "Triads" -- are never cited in reference to Madoc. Indeed, it seems that Southey has made a deliberate effort to shroud in mystery the source of his knowledge of his epic hero.

At the outset of his poem, Southey pictures Madoc as a young and hardy adventurer, eager to journey over seas in search of a new land far removed from the strife of his brothers in North Wales. After the death of Owen Gwyneth in 1169, Hoel, the illegitimate son of Owen Gwyneth, had ruled for a short time, Yorwerth, the eldest legitimate son, having been denied the throne because of a facial blemish. Hoel, however, was slain by David, oldest son of Owen Gwyneth by a second marriage, and David killed or drove into exile his younger brothers.[1]

Madoc, [redacted] choosing a free life on the sea rather than a hunted one in Wales as the fugitive brother of a king who holds a blood-stained throne and courts the hated

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1 Preface to First Edition of Madoc, Works, vol.V, p.xix.

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Saxons, sets sail toward the west with Cadwallon, son of Cynetha whom Owen Gwyneth had sorely wronged. Through tempest and mutiny -- which Southey describes in vivid detail, ~~detail~~ learned, perhaps, from his brother Tom, a midshipman in the English navy -- the two ships sail westward, the sailors ever expectant of reaching the verge of creation, down which the ocean tumbles into chaos.[1] Finally, however, and after great peril, land is sighted.

In what part of the continent does Madoc set foot when he reaches his new world? Southey is notably vague on the point. His descriptions of primitive native life are drawn partly, as his notes show, from accounts of the North American Indians[2] -- such as those of the Susquehanna --, but he speaks of the cedar, the cypress, and the palm, and of a great river whose banks are bordered by high mountains. With allowance for a slight ignorance of American topography, the reader might conclude that this river is to be identified with the Mississippi, up which the Welsh hero could voyage to the branches of the lower Missouri where Madoc was supposed, by some of his historians, to have settled.[3] But this can scarcely be the case, for the mystic city of Aztlan, where the action of the

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1 Madoc, Works, vol.V, p.34.
2 Ibid., Notes, pp.153,154,164,etc.
3 Southey, in a note dated 1815, observes that "wherever Madoc may have settled, it is now certain that no Welsh Indians are to be found upon any branches of the Missouri". Preface to First Edition, Works, vol.V, p.xx.

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second part of the epic takes place, is situated on wide savannas within sighting distance of the sea. In a letter to Thomas Southey, July 12, 1799, the poet intimates that he has carried Madoc down the Maranon river but will, in revising the poem, allow him to land in Florida.[1] In the following October he had changed his mind; since it was improbable that Madoc had ever been in Florida, he would place his action on "the banks of the Orinoco or Maranon, Brazil, Paraguay, or El Dorado".[2] Southey's final plan, apparently, was to respect neither Welsh tradition nor conjectural American history, but to create an imaginary locale, an El Dorado, in which to place his city of Aztlan; for the geography of the epic, as revised and published, is so vague that efforts to identify it with that of any actual location are fruitless.

Madoc, in Southey's poem, is directed to Aztlan, nthe city of the Aztecas, by the youth Lincoya, a member of that race which the stronger Aztecas had disinherited of their land and forced back into brutish primitivity. Erillyab, queen of this race of Hoamen, laments the Aztecas' savage slaughter of her husband and her people, and appeals to the fair god, Madoc, begging him to save her nation from extinction on the sacrificial altars of Aztlan and from their own benighted religion. For those children of the Hoamen who are not claimed by the bloody priests of Mexitli are given to the Hoamen's own god,

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1 Life and Correspondence, vol.II, pp.20-21.
2 Selections from the Letters of Robert Southey, vol.I, p.88.

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the huge snake that lies in a dark cavern under the hill.

It is at this point that Madoc becomes the characteristic Southey hero. He has a purpose. God has commissioned him, as He had commissioned Joan of Arc, to right an awful wrong, to set in just balance a society inclined toward evil. Although Madoc is comparatively free of intellectual substance, of those theories of reform that permeate Joan of Arc, it has its burthen of Christian conversion, of the necessary defeat of the gods of evil and the establishment of Christian teachings. And Madoc combines the qualities of the hardy adventurer with those of the zealous missionary. For the sake of inner consistency Southey was forced to give Christian significance to Madoc; otherwise, his hero would appear as the detested invader whom Joan in the earlier epic had fought against. Without a religious purpose Madoc would be the very antithesis of Joan of Arc, a greedy conqueror trampling under his iron heel the liberties of a people. It is to be doubted if the addition of that purpose makes Madoc something more than that. Certainly he follows the tactics of Mohammed, and spreads his own religion by the broad sweep of the sword.

Southey does all in his power, however, to make this bloody conversion no act proceeding from the will of Madoc himself; he takes no delight in the battle and prefers the ways of peace (so Southey tells the reader, although Madoc's virile conduct in battle seems to indicate the contrary); when he takes up the sword it is as God's agent and with God's strength.

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He visits Coanacotzin, king of the Aztecas, and is shown the pyramids of human skulls, the temples reeking with human blood, the palaces in which the skeletons of slain enemies form a part of the furniture; Christian nausea rises in him, and when Coanocotzin reminds him that defeat of the Aztecas is hopeless, that ten cities, widely peopled with strong warriors, and thirty conquered nations will answer the drums of war, Madoc cries out:

> "Not though ten Cities ten times told obeyed
> The King of Aztlan's bidding, should I fear
> The power of man!"[1]

And when Coanocotzin asks him if he is more than man, Madoc, feeling God's spirit take possession of his frame, does not "undeceive him from that fear".

In the battle that follows, the Cymric, allied with the Hoamen, defeat the Aztecas. But Madoc takes no unfair advantage of the victory. He seals the peace between the Aztecas and the Hoamen, henceforward free to dwell in equality beside the men of Aztlan, persuades the Aztecas and the Hoamen to renounce their savage gods and revere only "the great For-Ever One, the God of Gods", and sets sail for Wales, where he will spread the tidings of his discovery and entreat his exiled brothers to return with him to the new world.

Back in his native land, Madoc finds his brother David an unhappy king, constantly fearing the vengeance of his

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1 Works, vol.V, p.50.

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brothers and refusing all offers of reconciliation with them. He has married a Saxon bride, Emma, who lives in ~~deadly fear~~ dread of him, ~~and Saxon priests are in the land~~. Madoc is a stranger in his own ~~land~~ country, which has grown unrecognizably somber ~~to him~~. The disease of civil strife, the malign influence of the Saxons to whom David extends a welcoming hand, have crushed the proud spirit of Wales, which seems to wait with weary resignation its final extinction. Here Southey allows Wales to symbolize Europe, as Madoc, filled with enthusiasm for the brave new world, symbolizes the spirit of that pantisocratic migration that Southey and Coleridge sponsored. Thus the bards at Mathraval lament, with Ossianic melancholy, the past lustre of old days, and the young Caradoc, fired by the tale of Madoc, chants:

> "Who seeks the better land?
> Who mounts the vessel for a world of peace?
> He who hath felt the throb of pride, to hear
> Our old illustrious annals; who was taught
> To lisp the fame of Arthur, to revere
> Great Caratach's unconquered soul, and call
> That gallant chief his countryman, who led
> The wrath of Britain from her chalky shores
> To drive the Roman robber. He who loves
> His country, and who feels his country's shame;
> Whose bones amid a land of servitude
> Could never rest in peace; who, if he saw
> His children slaves, would feel a pang in Heaven....
> He mounts the bark, to seek for liberty.
>
> Who seeks the better land? The wretched one
> Whose joys are blasted all, whose heart is sick,
> Who hath no hope, to whom all change is gain,
> To whom remembered pleasures strike a pang
> That only guilt should know,... he mounts the bark,
> The Bard will mount the bark of banishment;
> The harp of Cambria shall in other lands

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> Remind the Cambrian of his father's fame; ..
> The Bard will seek the land of liberty,
> The world of peace... O Prince, receive the bard![1]

Here, perhaps, is a piece of autobiographical writing composed at the time when Southey believed that his own song would some day sound in a distant land of liberty, where his children might grow in freedom and where his own bones, after his death, might rest in a peace removed from England's servitude.

Madoc visits his old friends, those chiefs still strong in their native Welsh strength, like Rhys of Dinevawr, to whose court he brings his newly found brother Ririd. On the Isle of Bardsey Madoc meets Llewelyn, son of his slain brother Yorwerth, and begs him to join him on the return voyage; but Llewelyn, disguised as a peasant now, knows that his destiny lies in his own land and tells Madoc that he has sworn to murder David and claim the throne inherited from Yorwerth.

In a hut near Aberfraw Madoc meets the woman Llaian and her child. She is the bride of Hoel, who was killed by David before he was able to marry Llaian, living now in fear of David and rearing the child in ignorance of his father's royalty. Joyfully she accepts the protection of Madoc and the prospect of a free life in the new country that Madoc has discovered. Madoc has now gathered around him all the living members of his exiled kin except Rodri, whom David holds in prison, and he and his sister Goervyl, who has lived at David's court lamenting the disintegration of her family, are eager

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1 Works, vol.V, pp.85-86.

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to set out with their band of adherents. But Madoc has one more task to do. Hearing a Saxon priest excommunicate his friend, Cyveilioc, the old Prince of Powys, Madoc had scornfully denounced the Saxon priestcraft. In revenge, the priest intends to disinter the bones of Owen Gwyneth and throw them into a common foss. But Madoc guards the tomb of his father, routs the Saxons, and carries Owen's bones to his ship, which will carry them to the new world.

At last the day of departure comes, and the ship, filled with emigrants, sails from the harbor. A few miles from the coast, a small boat hails the ship. It is Llewelyn, and with him is Rodri, who has broken prison to help Llewelyn in his fight against David. Brother and nephew bid Madoc and his company farewell, and the ship is pointed westward.

> So over ocean through the moonlight waves,
> Prince Madoc sailed with all his company.
> No nobler crew filled that heroic bark,
> Which bore the first adventurers of the deep
> To seek the Golden Fleece on barbarous shores:
> Nor richlier fraught did that illustrious fleet
> Home to the Happy Island hold its way,
> When Amadis with his prime chivalry,
> He of all chivalry himself the flower,
> Came from the rescue, proud of Roman spoils,
> And Oriana, freed from Roman thrall.[1]

Thus the epic's first part, Madoc in Wales, reaches its conclusion.

In the second part of the epic, Madoc in Aztlan, Southey treats, in more detail, the life of the Aztecas. He

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1 Works, vol.V, pp.136-137.

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explains in his notes: "I have described Aztlan like the cities which the Spaniards found in New Spain. How large and how magnificent they were may be learnt from the True History of the Conquest of Mexico, by Bernal Diaz. This delightful work has been abridged into English by Mr. Keating, and if the reader has not seen it, he may thank me for recommending it to his notice."[1] It is probable that Southey drew from the account of Diaz much of the detail of the manners, civilization, and religion of the Aztecas that gives vividness and authenticity to the second part of the epic. One cannot be positive on this point, for the notes that he appended to each of his epics were sometimes gathered after the poem itself was completed, from sources that he had not read in preparation for actual composition. Other Spanish authors who appear frequently in the notes, in substantiation of detail in the poem, are Juan de Torquemada,[2] Francesco Lopez de Gomara,[3] Antonio Herrera,[4] Gonzalo Fernandez de Oviedo,[5] Augustin Davila Pavilla,[6] and Francesco Saverio Clavigero.[7]

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1 Works, vol.V, p.155.
2 Primera (segunda y tercera) parte de los veinte i un Libros Rituales y Monarquía Indiana, con el Orígen y Guerras de los Indios Occidentales, de sus Poblaçones, Descubrimiento, Conquista, Conversion, y otras cosas maravillosas de la mesma tierra, distribuidos en tres tomos.
3 Crónica de la Nueva España, Medina del Campo, 1553.
4 Descripcion de las Indias occidentales, Madrid, 1601 and 1615.
5 Historia General y Natural de las Indias Islas y Tierra-firme del Mar Oceano, Seville, 1535.
6 Historia de la Fundacion y Discurso de la Provincia de Santiago de Mexico de la orden de Predicadores, Madrid, 1596.
7 Clavigero wrote his history in Italian, Storia Antica del Messico, Cesena, 1780-81. Southey probably read C. Cullen's translation, A History of Mexico, published in 1787.

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When Madoc returns to Aztlan, he finds that dangerous undercurrents threaten to disturb the serene peace he had established prior to his departure for Wales. In the absence of the white leader, the Aztecas have doubted the wisdom of forsaking their old gods, the terrible and definite Mexitli, Tezcalipoca, Quetzalcoal, and Tlaloc, in reverence of the vague, unpersonified Ipalnemoani, who corresponds to the Christian God. The priests of Mexitli have subtly encouraged rebellion, and now the Aztecan chiefs -- including the valiant Yuhidthiton, sworn to friendship with Madoc -- visit no longer Caermadoc, the settlement of the Welsh, governed, in Madoc's absence, by Cadwallon. Malinal, the younger brother of Yuhidthiton, has alone remained faithful, convinced that his people have lived in error, that the way of the Christians is the only true one.

Among the Hoamen a similar condition of rebellion prevails. Neolin, the Priest of the Snake, has, in hours of inspiration, heard his god crying out for blood. Quite reasonably, from his own point of view, he demands:

> Sons of the Ocean, why should we forsake
> The worship of our fathers? Ye obey
> The White-Man's Maker; but to us was given
> A different skin and speech and land and law.
> The Snake-God understands the Red-Man's prayer,
> And knows his wants and loves him. Shame be to us,
> That since the Stranger here set foot among us,
> We have let his lips be dry![1]

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1 Works, vol.V, p.223.

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The situation among the Hoamen is further complicated by the request of Amalahta, the brutish, degenerate son of Erillyab, that Madoc's sister, Goervyl, be married to him as proof that the white men accept the red as their brothers. Madoc's refusal to surrender his sister to the savage moves Amalahta to plot with Neolin against the Welsh. A crisis occurs when Neolin summons the Snake from the cavern, allows it to twine about his body, and stirs the primitive fears of the Hoamen. They revert to the horror of the old religion, and intoxicated with barbaric frenzy, join Neolin in offering a child to the Snake.

> Round and round
> The accursed minister of murder whirled
> His senseless victim; they too round and round
> In maddening motion, and with maddening cries
> Revolving, whirled and wheeled. At length, when now,
> According to old rites, he should have dashed
> On the stone Idol's head the wretch's brains,
> Neolin stopt, and once again began
> The long, shrill, piercing, modulated cry.
> The serpent knew the call, and, rolling on,
> Wave above wave, his rising length, advanced
> His open jaws: then, with the expected prey,
> Glides to the dark recesses of his den.[1]

Erillyab, in desperation, sends for Madoc. He comes, intent on throwing the priest to the serpent and then destroying the monster. But Neolin has no fear:

> Strike, man! quoth Neolin.
> This is my consummation! the reward
> Of my true faith! the best that I could ask,
> The best the God could give:... to rest in him,
> Body with body be incorporate,
> Soul into soul absorbed, and I and He

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1 Ibid., p.242.

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> One life, inseparable, for evermore.
> Strike, I am weary of this mortal part;
> Unite me to the God![1]

Southey's attitude toward this priest, the most prominent opposer of Christianity, is proof of his growing artistry. Morally and religiously biased as he was, he still was able to present Neolin with (for him) brilliant detachment and with all due fairness. Neolin is no villain, but a true believer, a priest of genuine enthusiasm and of barbaric heroism. If he uses his cunning to plot against Madoc, if he hoaxes his followers into superstitious credence, he does so in the name of his faith and with no selfish purpose; and he dies heroically, a martyr to his cause. In an epic that threatens to change at any moment into a piece of Christian propaganda, Southey manages to place an artistic ideal higher than his desire to exalt his own religion, and succeeds in understanding, with a perspicacity rare in him, even the character that represents the reverse of his strong emotional beliefs. His attitude toward the religion of the Aztecas is as just. Madoc's original plan was not to force Christianity upon the people but merely to purge their religion of its crueler qualities and to dethrone all lesser deities that stand between the inhabitants of Aztlan and the Great Spirit, Ipalnemoani.[2] He begins his Christianization of the new world only when he realizes that as long as a vestige of the older rites remains,

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1 Ibid., p.244.
2 Ibid., pp.64-66.

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the barbaric instincts of the people will turn again and again to the old inhuman practices.

Before Christianity may reign among the Hoamen, the Snake must be proved mortal. In one of the most remarkable passages of the epic -- a passage strongly reminiscent in subject matter of Sigurd and the dragon, and, in its blunt straightforwardness and simplicity of means to achieve powerful effect, of the slaying of Grendel in Beowulf[1] -- Southey narrates how Madoc and his followers drive, with torches of fire, the huge Snake into the central chamber of its cavern. Through an opening in the roof, his men drop great stones upon the monster, pinning it to the ground. Madoc leaps upon a boulder and tantalizes the Snake to lift its head above him. Then he plunges a spear down its throat and drives another spear through its eyes and into the earth. The Welsh drag the Snake into the open, and burn both the priest and his god before the eyes of the people. On the next day, with all solemnity the cross of Christ is planted before the unholy cavern, and the Hoamen are received into Christianity.

But the Aztecas present a more difficult problem. Tlalala, the Tiger, fiercest of the Aztecas, incited by Tezozomoc, priest of Mexitli, steals Madoc's nephew Hoel for the sacrificial altar. Madoc, attempting to rescue the child,

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1 There can be no question here of the influence of Beowulf or even of Southey's using Beowulf as a model, inasmuch as Kemble's edition of Beowulf was not published until 1833 and the translations with glossary, prefaces, and notes not until 1837. There is no evidence to believe that Southey had either the learning or opportunity to read the Cottonian manuscript.

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is taken by the Aztecas and carried to Aztlan. But the hearty race of the Aztecas refuses to allow the strong white hero to die without a struggle on the altar. Coanocotzin, the king, offers him his freedom if he succeeds in besting each of Aztlan's strongest warriors. Chained to the sacrificial stone Madoc defends himself until the duelling is interrupted by the attack of the Welsh upon the city. In the excitement that follows, Coatel, a maiden of Aztlan in love with Lincoya, Madoc's follower, frees Madoc and takes him to the cave in which Hoel is concealed. Finding the child safe, Madoc hurries back to the battle.

Meanwhile Amalahta, lusting for Goervyl, attacks Caermadoc during the absence of the men, but the women with their young protector Malinal, borrowing heroism from their husbands and lovers, defend the fortress, kill Amalahta, and rout his followers.

The return of Madoc to his forces inspires in the Welsh new strength, and after fierce fighting they overpower the Aztecas. Coanocotzin falls before the sword of Madoc, and when Madoc dashes up the stairs of the altar and shatters the image of Mexitli with his club, the Aztecas retreat in terror to the southward city of Patamba. There they bury their dead, and there Coatel, her treachery discovered, is killed. Yuhidthiton, succeeding Coanocotzin as king, resolves with Tlalala to lead the Aztecas once more in battle, this time in the great war canoes across the lake at the farther end of

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which Caermadoc is situated. True to epic tradition, the Aztecas engage in sports before arming themselves. Then they turn their canoes toward Caermadoc. But Madoc is prepared, for his brother Ririd had superintended the dismantling of the ship in which Madoc crossed the ocean. On the shore of the lake the ship is reconstructed and launched, and, in a spectacular lake fight which follows, the Aztecas are totally defeated.

They retreat again to Patamba, and await the judgment of their gods. If, in three days, the sun once more rises above the mountain, they will again march to war. In the darkness of the third morning all eyes watch the mountain peak. A glow lights the sky, but instead of the sacred sun, the Aztecas see a volcano blow the top off the mountain and pour red ashes and boiling lava down its sides, and a tempest tears through the land. Yuhidthiton, accepting the judgment, gathers those of his people still left alive and tells them that the land is theirs no more. He lights a fire, and in the still morning air the smoke bends northward, and in that direction the great exodus begins. The infirm and the timid stay behind with the Welsh. The tiger-hearted Tlalala, unable to leave his father's house, plunges his javelin into his heart and dies on the threshold. But Yuhidthiton leads the vast procession of the Aztecas, the priests with the image of Mexitli before him, into the wilderness, leaving Madoc sole lord of the land.

The action of Madoc has been given in its full outlines simply because the success of the epic depends almost

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entirely upon its skillful handling of massive, spectacular subject matter. Varied as the strains of narrative are, Southey leads them forward with a directness and a lucidity that are almost incredible in the poet who, a few years before, staggered through the wirr-warr of events in Joan of Arc. If the earlier work was totally lacking in unity, Madoc has its principal distinction in its masterful singleness of purpose: to produce an heroic and grand effect. Ideas function in the work not as a separate interest, as in Joan of Arc, but only as a natural commentary on the action.

Perhaps it is advisable to summarize, at this point, what ideas occur in Madoc. Here, as in Joan of Arc, the influence of Epictetus moves Southey to denounce ambition, but with a moral rather than a philosophical bias:

> O what is Princes' love? what are the ties
> Of blood, the affections growing as we grow,
> If but ambition come?[1]

Another echo of Roman stoicism is discernible in Southey's lasting conviction that suffering is beneficent:

> Affliction is not sent in vain, young man,
> From that good God, who chastens whom he loves.
> Oh! there is healing in the bitter cup![2]

But Southey can accept here, no more than in Joan of Arc, the passivity of Epictetus. When Madoc, a fugitive in Wales,

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1 Works, vol.V, p.20.
2 Ibid., pp.22-23.

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wearies of all effort and seeks a rest removed from the unequal struggle of good against evil, Cadwallon counsels him:

> What if the asylum of the Church were safe,...
> Were there no better purposes ordained
> For that young arm, that heart of noble hopes?
> Son of our kings, ... of old Cassibelan,
> Great Caratach, immortal Arthur's line,
> Oh, shall the blood of that heroic race
> Stagnate in cloister-sloth?[1]

But, as might be expected, Southey's chief intellectual concern in Madoc is with God and religion. In a rather magnificent passage of poetry[2], the substance of which is drawn from the ancient Welsh "Triads", Southey explains the course of spiritual progress. God, the essence of love, power, and wisdom, created the imperishable mind in the lowest depth of being -- in the terms of the Bardic system, the Circle of Inchoation[3]. Through a process of progressive change, guarded and guided by God, the mind proceeds to the second plane of existence, that of Liberty in the State of Humanity. Here God teaches the mind to know evil, which, once recognized and understood in its causes, may be exterminated. Finally, the soul, emancipated by death, rises to the third circle, Happiness in Heaven. It must be understood that this theological system is a part of Southey's mythological apparatus rather than of his own deep belief (although the Bardic system is so close to the doctrines of Christianity as to allow a partial identification with them)

I Ibid., p.24.
2 Ibid., p.15.
3 Notes to Madoc, Works, vol.V, p.145.

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and should properly be regarded as an attempt to inject into the poem the religious manners of the Welsh.

In an interesting Book entitled "The Peace", in which the Welsh and the Aztecas compare their religions, Southey recounts the history of the true faith. Reigning over all peoples, the ultimate God of all religions, is the Universal Father, who at the first was universally honored. But when mankind multiplied, when the human element had sufficiently increased, evil attained to a firm hold on creation, and sin, misery, and untruth entered the world. At this stage began idolatry, a form of religion in which a lesser being is interposed between God and man to hide divinity from human sight.[1] One chosen race, however, remained true, and, when that race faltered, God flowed into the being of holy men and caused them to utter warning and wisdom. To this race was renewed the promise given to Adam and Eve, that their progeny would at length be redeemed from error and sin and finally would form "one happy family of love".[2] In Joan of Arc the "happy family of love", it will be remembered, was to be secured through the overthrow of kings[3]; apparently, at the time of the composition of Madoc, Southey had lost faith in perfectibility through political measures and had come to regard religion, the instinct of righteousness, as the reforming agent of mankind. It is this instinct that dictates to man the categorical imperative of

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1 Works, vol.V, p.65.
2 Ibid.
3 Joan of Arc, 1796, pp.353-354.

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Christian ethics: "Do ye to others, as ye would that they should do to you!"[1]

Southey, however, does not insist on Christianity in Madoc. What he wishes, at this stage of his thought, is a world-wide religion which, however diversified its form may be in different localities, acknowledges and obeys one supreme God who is just and good and who influences men to live the righteous and gentle life of a Christ. It has been seen that Madoc's first plan was to give to the Aztecas such a religion, without the dogma, ceremony, or even the mythology of the Christian church. They were to keep their own outward forms: they were to look beyond the evil of Mexitli to the good of Ipalnemoani, the creator, the "For-Ever One"; and Christ was to be represented to them, not as a deity or a part of the Christian trinity, but only as the "Beloved Teacher". The meaning rather than the forms of Christianity are of importance to the young and liberal Southey. But he realizes that so long as the old pagan forms, with their evil associations, are allowed to remain, these forms will appeal to the error inculcated by the old religion.

> Vain it is
> To sow the seed where noxious weeds and briars
> Must choke it in the growth.[2]

For this reason only Madoc finally determines to overthrow the altars and idols of the old faith and establish the forms of

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1 Works, vol.V, p.66.
2 Ibid., p.208.

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Christianity.

But the amount of intellectual substance in Madoc is relatively small, and perhaps for this reason it seems the truest epic that Southey wrote.[1] Joan of Arc has, as the most distinctive of its several elements, its propagandistic purpose; Thalaba and The Curse of Kehama are unencumbered by a superflux of idea, but the ornamentation and multiplicity of effect make those works seem something other than epics, although their protagonists, on technical grounds, must be called epic heroes; and Roderick, the Last of the Goths, is not epic at all in quality, but tragic. Madoc, however, great in scope, stirring in its martial incidents, exciting the reader to marvel at its vast, spectacular movement, especially in the last quarter of the poem, may be called a genuine epic.

Madoc afforded Southey ample opportunity to describe what he considered an indispensable attribute of poetry of this sort: the manners or customs of a people. One of the constant interests of his life was history, of an ethnological as well as political cast. His abilities as a scholar were more pronounced than his talents as a poet[2], and it was in recognition of his poetic deficiency that he brought scholarship

1 Despite the fact that Southey, in the Preface to the First Edition, states that Madoc "assumes not the degraded title of Epic...", Works, vol.V, p.xxi.

2 "Me indice, I am a good poet, but a better historian; because though I read other poets, and am humbled, I read other historians with a very different feeling." Letter to William Taylor, March 9, 1805, Letters of Robert Southey, a Selection, edited by Maurice H. Fitzgerald, London, 1912, p.99.

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to his aid in his creative efforts. The results of intensive study of life in New Spain and in mediaeval Wales, from the sources at his disposal, are apparent in the delineation of manners in Madoc. In Madoc in Wales this interest in manners is most strikingly evident in the eleventh book, entitled "The Gorsedd", in which "the Bardic science" is portrayed in full detail. In Madoc in Aztlan manners are incorporated to a much greater degree -- in vivid description of the Field of the Spirit, on which the pagan priests lie to await the voice of the god; of the barbaric ceremony in honor of the Snake; of the invocation of Mexitli and of the pageantry attending sacrifice to him; of the dedication of the warriors to their blood-thirsty work; of the sports of the Aztecas, to which a whole book is dedicated; of the funeral of the heroes killed in the battle in Aztlan; and of the temples and palaces of the city. The union of the scholar and the poet is, however, a happy one in Madoc, for Southey's stress on manners contributes a decidedly epic tone to the work; through them he conveys a vivid impression of the national life of a people.

Moreover, the epic atmosphere of Madoc is unadulterated by that element of domesticity[1] which enters so painfully into Joan of Arc and which robs even Roderick of some of its

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1 It is true that Madoc shows some domestic feeling in his attitude toward his sister Goervyl and his brothers. But Southey manages to preserve epic relations here. There is nothing sentimental about Madoc's attitude toward the grim Rodri, whose destiny Madoc accepts with epic fatalism (Works, vol.V, p.135) and Ririd is regarded as a strong aid rather than as a brother. Goervyl is treated with more tenderness, but her heroism (see Book XVI, "The Women") allows her to assume a natural place in the epic pattern.

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tragedy. Madoc is a free hero, unencumbered by wife or hometies; and Southey manifested rare taste in not allowing his hero to contract any amorous attachments, for, as has been observed, the poet had no gift for depicting the passion of love in heroic measures. Madoc is a successful epic hero simply because he commands admiration as a strong, fearless, masculinely pious figure, the born leader who stands apart from common men in pursuit of lesser happiness, the lover of the unconquerable who sublimates his yearnings into one splendid strength that defies all opposition to the attainment of his quest. Madoc, like Joan, is a child of nature, but the difference between the two, in this respect, is significant. Southey says that Joan has grown in the benevolent environment of nature; he demonstrates that Madoc has taken his strength from the rugged mountains of Wales, from the tempestuous ocean, and from the wilderness of the new world; in Joan of Arc Rousseau's idea is presented as a theory; in Madoc it is embodied in a credible individual. The Welsh hero presents no incongruity to the wild primitiveness of America, and both the Hoamen and the Aztecas, living close to nature, respect Madoc, not as a man of superior culture and wisdom, but as one of strength and purpose.

If Southey read Homer, as he intended[1], in preparation for the composing of Madoc, he profited from such study. He proposes comparison with the Greek epics in his preface,

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1 Life and Correspondence, vol.I, p.238.

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where he states: "The story consisted of two parts, almost as distinct as the Iliad and Odyssey...."[1] And Southey joins his two distinct parts in the same manner that Homer employed -- in the Odyssean sea-wandering of Madoc. Homeric also is the use of epithet: Madoc, the Lord of Ocean; Tlalala, the Tiger; Ocellopan, the Blood-thirsty; Mexitli, Woman-born. Then, too, Southey avails himself of Homer's device, adopted by Vergil and later epic poets, of allowing much of his action to be narrated by one of his characters: as Nestor and others tell of the events preceding the siege of Troy, Madoc narrates to Goervyl and David his first voyage to Aztlan[2], and Cadwallon tells to Madoc what has occurred in Aztlan during his absence.[3]

But more important than these resemblances of outward forms is Southey's approach to Homeric objectivity. Such objectivity, it is true, is rudely interrupted at times by Southey's denunciation, spoken by the author rather than by a character, of the blood-thirsty religion of Mexitli[4], but the general attitude that prevails is a detached one that allows the poet to embody in concrete form, rather than to state in abstractions, his conception. This talent for form -- a talent scarcely evident at all in the tangled action and vague characters of Joan of Arc --, whether acquired from study of Homer

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1 Preface (1837) to Madoc, Works, vol.V, p.xii.
2 Madoc in Wales, Books II-VIII.
3 Madoc in Aztlan, Book II.
4 The intrusion of the subjective element is especially inappropriate in the closing lines of the epic, Works, vol.V, p.395.

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or resulting from the natural progress of Southey's creative power, is revealed most strongly in the second part of the epic, in the depiction of the valiant, hardy race of Aztecas, of the more highly cultured but by no means effete or supercilious band of Welshmen, preserving their own civilization in the wild new world, and of an action that is more highly varied and yet more lucidly presented than the complications of Joan of Arc. This talent for reducing the large and the massive to coherent form is the most striking virtue of the poem; Southey is by no means as successful in his treatment of the more minute phases of Madoc. No single character of the epic, not even Madoc himself, is as convincingly presented as the race of the Aztecas, who, in the last sections of the poem almost overshadow the hero in the sympathies of the reader, representing as they do the tragedy of a people.

If these merits be granted, it might be asked why Madoc is not conceded a place among the best examples of epic literature. Madoc is a good epic, and the almost total neglect of it is unmerited; but it is not a great epic. Its fault results from that deficiency in Southey which definitely places him in the rank of second-rate poets: inadequate verbal expression. His powers of conception, showing to such advantage in Madoc, are indeed extraordinary; but his language is seldom of sufficient excellence to represent his conception in truly great verse.

Certainly he has attained in Madoc a purer and

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stronger quality of poetry than he displayed in Joan of Arc: his diction is terser, simpler, and more natural; the innumerable similes that form such a meretricious ornamentation in Joan of Arc are reduced in number and length in the later work. The verse of Madoc meets, in general, the ideal that Southey set for heroic poetry in a letter to Chauncey Hare Townshend in 1818: "That poetry (I am speaking of heroic narrative) which would reach the heart, must go straight to the mark like an arrow. Away with all trickery and ornaments when pure beauty is to be represented in picture or in marble; away with drapery when you would display muscular strength. Call artifices of this kind to your aid in those feebler parts which must occur in every narrative, and which ought to be there to give the other parts their proper relief."[1]

It was Southey's boast that in Madoc he took no "unwarrantable liberties of language -- there is not a solitary sin of the kind in the whole 9,000 lines".[2] But purity of language and beauty of language are two different things. Occasionally Southey finds words of vividness and charm, as in his description of the sea:

Blue, darkly, deeply, beautifully blue[3]

or tersely forceful expression, as in the characterization of

1 Fitzgerald, Letters of Robert Southey, p.286.
2 Ibid., pp.105-106.
3 Works, vol.V, p.39.

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the priest Tezozomoc:

Emaciate like some bare anatomy.[1]

But too often his verse has the quality of such phrases as "aright he weened"[2], "dight themselves to battle"[3], "in gratulations of reiterate joy"[4]. His blank verse is always facile, although he is guilty at times of false metrics, but it never takes on the sublime dignity of Milton or the strange beauty of Shakespeare.

Thalaba, The Destroyer

Madoc was finished on July 12, 1799, at Kingsdown, Bristol, at the home of Charles Danvers. Southey rose early the next morning, and had the first hundred lines of Thalaba "fresh from the mint" to show Danvers when the latter came down to breakfast.[5] Before another year had passed, Thalaba was completed, but it was not as hurriedly conceived as at first glance might appear. Four years earlier he had determined to write a Mohammedan tale[6]. By July 31, 1796, he had decided upon the exact subject of this tale, for he mentions, in a list of several proposed subjects for poetic composition,

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1 Ibid., p.265.
2 Ibid., p.300.
3 Ibid., p.301.
4 Ibid., p.341.
5 Preface (1837) to Thalaba, Works, vol.IV, p.xi.
6 Ibid.

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"My Oriental poem of The Destruction of the Dom Daniel".[1] A month later he had made a skeleton outline of his plot, but it was some time before he had progressed far in the composition of the poem. In the spring of 1799, William Taylor advised him to follow the procedure of Milton, Klopstock, and Bodmer and write on a Biblical subject; for a while Biblical themes mingled with the idea of the Mohammedan tale in his mind, and the deluge floated in his brain "with the Dom Daniel and the rest of my unborn family".[2] Three months later he had completed Madoc, had determined upon a metrical scheme for the new poem, and had written its first hundred lines.[3] On September 22, 1799, in a letter to Joseph Cottle, expressing enthusiasm for Gebir and an eagerness to meet its anonymous author, Southey states that Thalaba, the Destroyer (note the change in title and the stress on the hero) is progressing. From this time forward Southey composed rapidly. It had taken him several years to write Madoc. But he believed that the best procedure was to write rapidly. "I am convinced," he wrote to Coleridge in the autumn of 1799, "that the best way of writing is, to write rapidly and correct at leisure. Madoc would be a better poem if written in six months, than if six years were devoted to it."[4] The dubious truth of this

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1 Life and Correspondence, vol.I, pp.287-288. The Dom Daniel is the hall of evil spirits mentioned in The New Arabian Nights (1792) of Dom Chavis and M. Cazotte.
2 Life and Correspondence, vol.II, p.16.
3 Ibid., p.21.
4 Ibid., p.30.

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statement is proved by a comparison of the hastily composed Joan of Arc with the carefully wrought Madoc, but the decision to create with all speed was certainly carried into effect, for on October 25, 1799, he was able to announce to his brother Tom that the fifth book of Thalaba was begun, and by the end of the year he was engaged on the sixth book and had completed the notes for the whole poem. Moreover, he wished to print immediately the half of Thalaba that he had composed.[1]

A few days later an unhappy idea occurred to him. His mind, always attracted to the vast and the spectacular, conceived the notion "of making a Darwinish note at the close of the poem, upon the effects produced in our globe by the destruction of the Dom Daniel. Imprimis, the sudden falling in of the sea's roots necessarily made the maelstrom; then the cold of the north is accounted for by the water that rushed into the cavern, putting out a great part of the central fire; the sudden generation of steam shattered the southern and south-east continents into archipelagos of islands; also the boiling spring of Geyser has its source here, -- who knows what it did not occasion."[2] Fortunately this plan was discarded, probably because Southey's imagination was soon directed into less scientific and more specifically oriental channels of fancy. At this time he was planning with Coleridge

1 Ibid., p.36.
2 Ibid., p.39.

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a "long and important poem" of which Mohammed was to be the subject.[1] Only a fragment of Mohammed was written, and another oriental poem based on Zoroaster -- Southey read Du Perron's translation of the Zend-Avesta with great interest -- never advanced beyond the stage of conception.[2] But Thalaba progressed steadily, and Southey kept his interest in his own oriental poem keyed up to a high degree of enthusiasm by reading over Landor's Gebir. It is probable, however, that Gebir influenced him only in that it spurred him on to complete his own oriental tale; certainly Landor's poem, classical in spirit, filled with classical allusions and including the conventional journey through Hades, has little in common with the lush eastern spirit of Thalaba.

On April 2, Southey and his wife departed for Portugal, for a visit with his uncle. Life in Lisbon, especially the government and the religion of the Portuguese, distracted his attention from his creative work, and yet on June 15, 1800, he wrote to Tom that he had finished the tenth book of Thalaba.[3] Again we find Southey observing life with a quick alertness, and adapting his observation to the poetic work in hand: in Lisbon, for instance, he attended a bull-fight, and carried away from it a vivid impression of the death-sweat "darkening the dun hide" of the animal,[4] a detail that finds its way into

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1 Ibid., pp.47-48.
2 Selections from the Letters of Robert Southey, vol.I, p.82.
3 Life and Correspondence, vol.II, p.88.
4 Ibid., p.91.

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the description of the deer killed by Mohareb's dogs in Thalaba:

> And now the death-sweat darkens his dun hide;
> His fear, his groans, his agony, his death,
> Are the sport, and the joy, and the triumph![1]

On July 23, 1800, he writes, from Cintra, to Wynn that Thalaba is finished and in the process of revision.[2] It had taken him exactly a year to complete this long oriental tale. He had composed with enthusiasm and ease. When he viewed the completed product, he realized that it needed polish and revision. Through the summer he worked at this task. In August he wrote to Henry Southey: "I am polishing and polishing, and hewing it to pieces with surgeon severity. Yesterday I drew the pen across six hundred lines..."[3] Finally, in October, he sent the manuscript to his friend, the artist John Rickman, who was to negotiate with the firm of Longman and Rees for the poem's publication. He had hoped to obtain the sum of £100 for four hundred quarto copies or £130 for one thousand copies of a smaller size. He would not sell all the rights to the poem because he expected it to be popular and thus remunerative.[4] Actually he received £115 for one thousand copies of the first edition.[5] Although Thalaba was not the great

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1 Works, vol.IV, p.319.
2 Life and Correspondence, p.95.
3 Ibid., p.108.
4 Ibid., p.104.
5 Ibid., p.124.

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financial success that Southey hoped it would be, he was proud of his work when it appeared, in 1801, in published form. In February, 1801, he wrote to Wynn: "... such as it is, I know no poem which can claim a place between it and the Orlando. Let it be weighed with the Oberon[1]; perhaps, were I to speak out, I should not dread a trial with Ariosto. My proportion of ore to dross is greater; perhaps the Anti-Jacobin criticasters may spare Thalaba; it is so utterly innocent of all good drift; it may pass through the world like Richard Cromwell, notwithstanding the sweet savour of its father's name."[2] And if Thalaba did not bring him fortune, he was sure it would bring him fame: "la sorte de Thalabe est fort semblable à celle de son auteur, sa réputation est faite -- mais pour sa fortune -- hélas! n'importe! L'un ne sente pas, l'autre ne se soucis pas, et tous les deux vivront."[3]

If Southey evidenced, in Madoc, romantic inclinations in his love for the exotic, he showed the same romantic trait in his next long tale, Thalaba. Southey, it will be remembered, disdained to use the "degraded title of Epic" in reference to the finished Madoc, although he had certainly considered that work an epic when he was composing it. He carefully avoids the use of the term "epic" when he writes of Thalaba, preferring the description "metrical romance".[4] Yet

1 Southey alludes here to Wieland's poem. Although Southey was studying German under William Taylor, he read Oberon in Sotheby's translation; Selections from the Letters of Robert Southey, vol.I, p.68.
2 Life and Correspondence, vol.II, p.134.
3 Selections from the Letters of Robert Southey, vol.I, p.187.
4 Selections from the Letters of Robert Southey, vol.I, p.135.

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Thalaba bears a common resemblance to Madoc and Joan of Arc: the hero, acting as the agent of God, pursues his purpose through all lets and hindrances to his final goal, the execution of a mighty deed; the martial strain is more subdued than in the two earlier works, but Thalaba himself, like Joan and Madoc, combines in his nature the qualities of the warrior with those of the servant of God, and particular emphasis is placed on his courage and physical strength; Southey attempts here, as in Madoc, to delineate the manners of a people, especially the religious manners, and Thalaba, perhaps more than Madoc, fulfills, in part, Southey's early intention "of exhibiting all the more prominent and poetical forms of mythology which have at any time obtained among mankind, by making each the groundwork of an heroic poem"[1]; moreover, in its twelve books, it is epic in length, and makes generous use of the epic supernatural machinery. Thalaba, then, in its technical form if not in its quality, may be considered an epic.

Having exhausted, in Madoc, the possibilities of the new land of the west, America, Southey turned, in Thalaba, toward the east and thus identified himself with a growing tradition in English literature. Orientalism was in the air, and Southey, attracted by the glamor of the east, made his first large contribution to the oriental strain in Thalaba. It is true that, as early as Joan of Arc, he had revealed some interest in the east in such figures as the similes drawn from the episode of Gibeon and the sun,[2] from the traveller

1 Vindiciae Ecclesiae Anglicanae, p.7.
2 Works, vol.I, p.100.

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in the Arabian desert,[1] from Alexander in the Sogdian waste,[2] from the swords of the Saracens,[3] and in the simile-anecdote drawn from Mohammedan history and narrated in Book VI.[4] But Thalaba is the first of Southey's tales that can rightly be classed as an example of romantic orientalism, inasmuch as here, for the first time, he treats an oriental scene and subject.

Southey was less the innovator than the follower of fashion. In Madoc he had identified himself with the Celtic Revival sponsored by Gray and Macpherson. In Thalaba he took up a much older strain. The tradition of orientalism in English letters had begun in the first decade of the eighteenth century, when the earliest English version of the Arabian Nights was published.[5] It should be noted, however, that orientalism, in some slight degree, had been a constant element in English literature since medieval times: it had appeared, in the form of names of persons and places, in medieval romance and the early drama, in the "Squier's Tale" of Chaucer. In Elizabethan times the narratives of Purchas and Hakluyt had generated an interest in the east, and such Elizabethan writers as Painter, in the tale of "Mahomet and Irene", included in the Palace of Pleasure, Kyd, in Soliman and Perseda, and Marlowe, in Tamburlaine, treated oriental historical characters.

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1 Ibid., p.102.
2 Ibid., p.103.
3 Ibid., p.98.
4 Ibid., p.91.
5 Martha Pike Conant, The Oriental Tale in England in the Eighteenth Century, New York, 1908, p.xvii.

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Richard Knolles furthered this interest in eastern history by publishing, in 1603, his Generall Historie of the Turkes.[1] In the diction of Milton, in Davenant's Siege of Rhodes and other heroic tragedies of the seventeenth century, as well as in Waller's Turkish poems and in several passages in Pope, the oriental strain appears.[2]

In the eighteenth century, the English conquest of India and the study of eastern history and languages created a keener interest in the orient.[3] By 1707 a part of Antoine Galland's French translation of the Arabian Nights had been translated into English. The popularity of the Arabian Nights in France had moved Pétis de la Croix to translate into French a collection of Turkish tales which he called L'Histoire de la Sultane de Perse et des Vizirs and a similar collection of Persian Tales, Les Mille et un Jour [sic]. The Turkish tales appeared in English in 1708, and six years later Ambrose Philips published his translation of the Persian tales.[4] Moreover, in France the Arabian Nights and the Persian and Turkish tales had inspired such writers as Bremond, Segrais, Gueullette, and Montesquieu to imitation; several of these imitations were translated into English,[5] and created in that country something

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1 Ibid., pp.xix-xx.
2 Edna Osborne, "Oriental Diction and Theme in English Verse, 1740-1840", Humanistic Studies of the University of Kansas, 1916, vol.II, pp.11-13.
3 Marie E. de Meester, "Oriental Influences in the English Literature of the Nineteenth Century", Anglistische Forschungen, Heidelberg, 1915, vol.46, p.2.
4 Conant, The Oriental Tale in England, pp.270,273.
5 See Conant, The Oriental Tale in England, Appendix B,I.

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of the oriental fad prevalent in France.

During her husband's embassy in Constantinople, 1711-1718, Lady Mary Montagu Wortley wrote the famous Letters which in England aroused such interest in Turkish life.[1] In 1719 Defoe published The Farther Adventures of Robinson Crusoe, in which his hero travels through China, and in 1726 appeared Defoe's System of Magic, containing two oriental tales.[2] Addison, Steele, and other contributors to The Spectator, The Tatler, and The Guardian, published, in those periodicals, short oriental tales of a moralistic nature.[3] And in 1721 Thomas Parnell composed The Hermit, a narrative based on an oriental theme current in Europe since the Middle Ages.[4]

The use of the oriental fashion as a means of political satire is seen in a purported translation from the Arabic, Milk for Babes, Meat for Strong Men, and Wine for Petitioners, probably written by W. Boles and published in 1731.[5] In 1735, Lord Lyttelton, in imitation of Montesquieu's Les Lettres Persanes, wrote the Persian Letters, which, under the pretense of being a translation from the Persian, criticize, through the figure of Selim, a Persian visiting London, the government and social life of England.[6] Goldsmith, it is interesting to note, borrowed this device for his Citizen of

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1 Ibid., p.344.
2 Ibid., p.203.
3 Ibid., pp.79-84.
4 Ibid., p.77.
5 Ibid., pp.201-203.
6 Ibid., p.178ff.

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the World.

William Collins continued the eastern tradition with the Persian Eclogues of 1742 and the Oriental Eclogues of 1757,[1] and from 1750 to 1760 Dr. Samuel Johnson, taking a hint from Addison and Steele, printed in The Rambler and The Idler artificial and pompously worded oriental tales of a didactic nature, and published in 1759 Rasselas, The Prince of Abyssinia, in which the plot, such as it is, is nominally oriental.[2] In 1757 Horace Walpole, following Lord Lyttelton, issued A Letter from Xo Ho, a Chinese Philosopher at London, to his friend Lien Chi at Peking, and in 1760 appeared Goldsmith's The Citizen of the World in the Public Ledger.[3]

At this time, Sir William Jones, a famous Orientalist whose Essay on the Poetry of the Eastern Nations Southey quotes in his notes to Thalaba[4], began his significant research,[5] but this scientific attitude toward the east by no means frightened into oblivion more creative and imaginative treatments of oriental themes: from April 13, 1767 to August 4, Laurence Sterne addressed a Bramine's Journal to Mrs. Eliza Draper in India,[6] a journal which has never been pub-

1 Ibid., pp.52-53.
2 Ibid., p.151f.
3 Ibid., p.283.
4 Works, vol.IV, p.118.
5 De Meester, "Oriental Influences in the English Literature of the Nineteenth Century", Humanistic Studies of the University of Kansas, vol.II, p.6.
6 Conant, The Oriental Tale in England, p.357.

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lished; in 1769 Smollett, in his History and Adventures of an Atom, under cover of satirizing the Japanese, directed criticism at England, and in 1773 appeared his Orientalist, A Volume of Tales After the Eastern Taste.[1] In 1770 Thomas Chatterton wrote his three African Eclogues, and twelve years later John Scott, combining learning and poetry, less successfully than Southey, drew materials from Sir William Jones and others for his Oriental Eclogues.[2] Clara Reeve, three years later, included in her Progress of Romance the tale "Charoba", translated in 1672 by J. Davies from the French of M. Vattier, who had made his version from the Arabic of Murtadi; "Charoba" served as the direct source for Walter Savage Landor's Gebir[3], a poem that greatly interested Southey while he was composing Thalaba.

In 1786 appeared the English version of the most famous Oriental tale of the eighteenth century, William Beckford's History of the Caliph Vathek, translated from the original French by Dr. Samuel Henley. Southey certainly read Vathek, for he borrowed from it Sarsar, the "Icy Wind of Death" mentioned in Thalaba,[4] and the figure of Eblis, to which Southey often refers in Thalaba,[5] was made familiar by the famous description of the Hall of Eblis in Vathek.[6] Perhaps

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1 Ibid., p.285.
2 Ibid., p.54.
3 Ibid., p.55.
4 Works, vol.IV, p.20.
5 Works, vol.IV, pp.54, 59, 312, 313, 434, 435.
6 De Meester, "Oriental Influences in the English Literature of the Nineteenth Century", Humanistic Studies of the University of Kansas, vol.II, p.30.

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it was Vathek that suggested to Southey one of his chief sources for eastern detail in Thalaba, D'Herbelot de Molainville's Bibliotèque orientale ou Dictionnaire universel, contenant généralement tout ce qui regards la connaissance des peuples de l'Orient, leurs histoires et traditions véritables ou fabuleuses, leurs religions, sectes et politique[1], a work which influenced Beckford and which Henley refers to in the notes to his translation.[2]

Certainly the finest poem of the Oriental tradition is Coleridge's Kubla Khan, composed in 1797. It is possible that Southey received his first interest in the east from Coleridge, whose romantic imagination and fantastic turn of mind seem to make him more naturally akin to the Oriental spirit than Southey. It will be remembered that, according to Coleridge's own statement, a reading in Purchas his Pilgrimes generated Kubla Khan. Southey, in his notes to Thalaba, refers to Purchas as well as to Hakluyt.[3] It seems probable that there is some connection here, that Coleridge not only moved Southey to seek poetic materials in the orient but even suggested another of Thalaba's sources.

At any rate, it is clear that Southey was turning up no new ground in Thalaba. Almost every name of renown in the eighteenth century, it seems, is connected in some way

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1 Paris, 1697. D'Herbelot's work, left unfinished by its author, was completed by Antoine Galland. Conant, Oriental Tale in England, p.300.

2 Works, vol.IV, pp.45-46, 267-268; pp.29,203,206.

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with the development of the eastern tradition. It was inevitable that Southey, always eager to emulate, should have tried his hand at the fashioning of an oriental tale.

His immediate inspiration for Thalaba was derived from one of the several French pseudo-translations from oriental languages that the popularity of the Arabian Nights had brought forth, the Suite des Mille et Une Nuits, Contes Arabes of Dom Chavis and M. Cazotte, which was rendered into English by Robert Heron in 1792, under the title Arabian Tales. Dom Chavis, a Syrian priest whose actual name was Al Kahin Diyunisius Shawish, came to Paris and there translated from an Arabian manuscript the fundamental substance of the Contes Arabes. He was aided by a French man of letters, M. Cazotte.[1] Their completed product, part translation and part their own invention,[2] was published in 1788-1789 in Le Cabinet des Fées ou Collection choisie des contes de fées et autres contes merveilleux.

In Heron's translation Southey read, in the "History of Maugraby the Magician", how a captive prince, Habed, after exciting adventures, had destroyed the Domdaniel, a submarine hall of evil spirits, whence Maugraby, the magician, was wont to convey slaves to his master Zatanai, or Satan, and how, after his victory over the powers of evil Habed married one of the slaves whom he had released, the Princess of Egypt.

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1 De Meester, "Oriental Influences in the English Literature of the Nineteenth Century", Anglistische Forschungen, vol. 46, pp.14-15.
2 Conant, The Oriental Tale in England, p.41.

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Southey freely acknowledges his indebtedness to the Arabian Tales for the main idea of Thalaba -- the destruction of the Domdaniel;[1] but he is quick to defend himself against the charge that his new poem is a mere patchwork of elements gathered from various sources: the structure of the tale is wholly original, and many of its episodes, so he asserts, have come solely from his imagination.[2] Certainly the moral purpose of Thalaba, the hero, is Southey's own invention (in the Arabian Tales the emphasis is placed on the element of adventure), and that moral purpose assumes a position of great significance in the poem.

The story of Thalaba, like that of all Southey's long poems, is intricate. The mighty and generous lord, Hodeirah, with all his race, except his wife and youngest son, has been slain by an unknown foe. Zeinab, the wife, flees with her only living son, Thalaba, into the desert, where, in an enchanted garden, she dies. Thalaba wishes to follow her, but the Angel of Death appears to announce:

> "Son of Hodeirah, thou art chosen forth
> To do the will of Heaven;
> To avenge thy father's death,
> The murder of thy race;
> To work the mightiest enterprise
> That mortal man hath wrought.
> Live! and Remember Destiny
> Hath marked thee from mankind!"[3]

1 Preface to the Fourth Edition of Thalaba, Works, vol.IV, p.xv.
2 Selections from the Letters of Robert Southey, vol.I, p.215.
3 Works, vol.IV, p.27.

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Thalaba, then, like all of Southey's heroes, has become the agent of God. What his act is to be is not clear until Southey, in Book II, depicts the Domdaniel with its devils assembled. The powers of darkness tremble, for destiny has decreed that one of Hodeirah's blood shall destroy them. Okba, the spirit sent to avert this doom by killing Hodeirah and all his kin, has not been wholly successful, for Thalaba still lives. Khawla, a fierce enchantress, charms Hodeirah's corpse to life, and, whipping it with a viper, demands the hiding-place of Thalaba; but Hodeirah utters the name of God, and the snake, darting its fangs into his face, sends him back to the dead. The mysterious fire which, symbolic of the coming destruction of evil, burns unquenchable in the Domdaniel, moves to the corpse and burns it; only the sword of Hodeirah resists the flame, which encircles it in protection. Abdaldar, a cunning servant of Eblis, the Mohammedan Satan, is chosen to seek out Thalaba. He finds him in the humble tent of Moath, who, with his beautiful daughter Oneiza, has given the boy shelter. While Thalaba, with his benefactors, kneels in prayer, Abdaldar rises to strike him with a dagger, but a simoon passes, blowing above the prostrate forms of the devout but killing the magician who stands above them.

By the power of the magic ring which he takes from Abdaldar's finger, Thalaba summons a demon, who tells him of the Domdaniel and of his father's murder. Thalaba, conscious of his purpose, lives with Moath and Oneiza, whom he loves,

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until he has grown to manhood, and a sign from Heaven bids him depart on his mission. In the desert his mother's spirit commands him to go to Babylon and there learn, from the angels Haruth and Maruth, what talisman is required for his task. Lobaba, a Domdaniel magician disguised as an old man, meets Thalaba in the wilderness and, like Milton's Satan in Paradise Regained, tempts Thalaba to use his magic ring to secure drink and comfort; but Thalaba depends on Providence alone and refuses to use the charm. When a whirlwind sends columns of burning sand toward them, Lobaba summons a chariot from Domdaniel; but the whirlwind, leaving Thalaba untouched, lifts the chariot and dashes the magician to death.

In the ruined city of Bagdad, Thalaba meets a warrior, Mohareb, who, in reality, is another magician of the Domdaniel. The two seek the cave of Haruth and Maruth, angels who, traitors to God's trust, are doomed to suffer in this cave and to answer all queries, good or evil, put to them. After combating successfully, with Mohareb's help, the grisly horrors that guard the cave, Thalaba enters the vault of the angels. But Mohareb, upon hearing Thalaba's request of the angels, realizes that he has accompanied, not a fellow-spirit in evil, but "some camel-kneed prayer-monger"[1] through the cave. The magic ring saves Thalaba from Mohareb's scimiter, but in the crisis Thalaba voluntarily surrenders the aid of magic and relies only on his physical strength and his righteousness to overcome evil. He throws the ring into the abyss,

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1 Ibid., p.95.

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struggles with Mohareb on the brink, and then thrusts him over. Again Thalaba asks the angels for the talisman. At his words, their forms grow visible, and they assume their pristine radiance as they answer him:

> "Son of Hodeirah! thou hast proved it here;
> The Talisman is Faith."[1]

Outside the cave Thalaba finds a beautiful horse, which bears him to a valley closed by a great iron gate. Through the gate he passes to another pair of tall iron doors which open, at the sounding of the horn that hangs beside them, into a plateau surrounded by great walls of rock and rich in flowers and heavy scents, terraced palaces and gold pavilions. In a glittering pleasure-palace he is entertained by Aloadin, lord of this mock-Paradise, which claims the souls of those who accept its sensual delights. Thalaba, unsuspecting, sits at the feast of damned souls, but he politely refuses the tempting offers of his host. When a troupe of dancing girls

> Exposed their harlot limbs,
> Which moved, in every wanton gesture skilled,[2]

a vision of Oneiza, of "domestic joys", swims before his sight, and realizing the meaning of the feast he rushes from the place, only to find, in the grove outside, Oneiza pursued by a would-be ravisher. After Thalaba has killed her assailant Oneiza tells how she was stolen from her father's tent. Thalaba, armed with a club, and Oneiza, with bow and arrow, advance

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1 Ibid., p.198.
2 Ibid., p.232.

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now to kill Aloadin and find their way out of his garden. But Aloadin is protected by a giant-bird, and is proof against Thalaba's strength until Oneiza sends an arrow into the bird's breast. Then darkness covers all, and the rocks that protect the plateau crumble, and in the valley below the two lovers find the Sultan of the Land, who, overjoyed that his foe Aloadin has at last been vanquished, makes Thalaba a prince of great wealth. In vain, Oneiza reminds him that pride and arrogance must not be his, that destiny has marked him from mankind. Thalaba forgets his divine purpose, rears a splendid palace, and invites the great lords and ladies to a sumptuous wedding-feast. But when the wedding guests are gone

> Who comes from the bridal chamber?..
> It is Azrael, the Angel of Death.[1]

For his sin of pride, God has taken Oneiza, on her wedding night, from Thalaba.

Like a madman Thalaba mourns for Oneiza in the tent of Moath, until the old man persuades him to set out once more, chastened and strengthened by grief, on his mission. In a cave in the wilderness Thalaba, a few days later, finds a beautiful silver-haired woman spinning. She asks him to hold the thread, and when he does so she spins him into captivity, for she is Maimuna, a sorceress of Domdaniel. She conveys him to the island of Mohareb, who -- so Thalaba believed -- had died in the cave of Haruth and Maruth. But the evil spirits

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1 Ibid., p.365.

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dare not kill Thalaba, for Mohareb's own life is destined to end with the young Arab's. Khawla, however, realizes that unless Thalaba dies the whole race of evil will die. Although she fashions an image of Thalaba from mandrake poison and manchinel wax, the fire will not melt the image. Then she commands her sister, the silver-haired Maimuna, to descend into the graves and collect the more potent wax of human corpses. But while Maimuna is in the graves the Leileth-ul-cadr comes, the night of supreme holiness when the waters of the sea become sweet and the firmament opens to show the glory of God, and all nature sends up a prayer of adoration. The holy calm and spiritual beauty of the night awake the soul in Maimuna, and the hope of pardon and salvation. She hurries to Thalaba, loosens the threads with her singing, and in the name of Allah demands that the spell of evil be broken. A whirlwind carries the two back to Maimuna's cave, but with her renunciation of evil Maimuna has become mortal, after she has already lived through centuries. As she falls to the ground, she smiles, certain of forgiveness, and whispers, "Turn my face to Mecca!"

Thalaba buries Maimuna in the snow and goes on his way. In an Arctic waste he finds a tropical garden, warmed by a fountain of fire, inhabited only by a lovely maiden, Laila, daughter of the Domdaniel magician and murderer of Thalaba's father, Okba, who, having learnt that his daughter must die by the hands of Thalaba, has imprisoned ~~his daughter~~ her in the garden set in snow. Here she has grown in pathetic loneliness,

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companied only by the cold shapes that her father conjures up for her amusement. She greets Thalaba with naive joy, for in him she finds a human being whom she may love. When Okba appears and finds Hodeirah's son in the garden, he resigns himself to the loss of his child and bids Thalaba strike quickly. The avenger refuses to kill the innocent, but Azrael, Angel of Death, ~~appears and~~ proclaims that she has come to receive Laila from the hands of Thalaba. Still Thalaba refuses, and the Angel warns that either Laila or he must die. While Thalaba prepares to surrender life, Okba, in his arrogance, draws his dagger and rushes at the youth. Laila steps between them, receives the blow, and sinks into Thalaba's arms,

> And Azrael, from the hands of Thalaba,
> Received her parting soul.[1]

It is seldom that Southey can ~~tell~~ relate a tragic story with the genuine feeling and the artistic brevity that show in the episode of Laila. Here he borrows something of Dante's skill and tells his tale with fine economy of word and surety of effect. Brief as Laila's appearance is, she remains, a lonely and pathetic victim of destiny, one of the unforgettable characters of the poem.

The soul of Laila rises into the air and changes into a green bird that leads Thalaba over the frozen wastes to the Simorg, the Bird of the Ages, the earliest of existing things, who bids Thalaba proceed northward to the Fountain of the Rock,

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1 Ibid., p.369.

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where he may wash away all worldly stains and thus prepare himself for the consummation of his mission. He bathes in the fountain, and finds a dog-sledge that carries him onward toward Domdaniel. On the last day of the journey -- the description of which must certainly have influenced Shelley in Alastor -- the green bird flies into his hands, reveals herself as Laila, and asks that he forget his vengeance on her father. Thalaba undergoes now the last stage of purification: he will give up his motive of revenge and thus make his work of destruction wholly impersonal and therefore pure.

He leaves the sledge and the dogs, who are enchanted and who await their deliverance through the destruction of evil, and enters a boat guided by a woman. She pilots him down ever broader streams to the ocean. Over the sea Thalaba and the woman journey, until they reach a cliff with a cavern-opening. It is the gate to Domdaniel, and here the woman leaves him. If he is the fated destroyer, then he will release her lover, who, for the sin of lying in her arms when duty called, is chained by fiery fetters on the brink of the abyss that hangs over Domdaniel. Thalaba proclaims that the destined hour has come by tearing the chains from Othatha and sending him to the woman who waits outside. And when Othatha asks the name of his deliverer, Thalaba pronounces that of God. He then leaps into a car borne over the precipice by four wings and is carried down the abyss. On the floor of Domdaniel, he bids the iron gates open, and finds inside them

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Mohareb and Khawla, armed to meet him. But beyond them he sees his father's sword in the fire, and, thrusting the magicians aside, he runs to the flame and grasps the sword. Domdaniel rocks. The living image of Eblis, composed of human flesh and bones and animated with human blood, totters on its foundation, before which rolls a great stone globe, a miniature of the world. When the sceptre of Eblis falls upon a spot on this globe, the corresponding spot on earth is visited by flood or earthquake; the other hand of Eblis is lifted above his head, holding the ocean up. Toward Eblis Thalaba fights his way through throngs of sorcerers. Okba confronts him, but the sword of Thalaba is not lifted against Laila's father. Repent! the destroyer cries, and join Laila in Paradise -- or if Paradise is not attainable, then there is Al-Araf, the purgatory of penitence! Thalaba, requested by the Voice of the Prophet to name his reward before he dies in fulfillment of his work, asks that the soul of Okba, his father's murderer, be saved from damnation. Then he leaps to the altar and plunges his sword into the heart of Eblis. The idol breaks, and the ocean falls on Domdaniel, destroying it entirely.

> In the same moment, at the gate
> Of Paradise, Oneiza's Houri form
> Welcomed her Husband to eternal bliss.[1]

It will be remembered that, during his schooling at Westminster, Southey formed the intention of illustrating, in

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1 Ibid., p.439.

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several heroic poems, the different forms of mythology. Madoc had, to a certain extent, depicted the religious mythology of the Aztecas and Hoamen. Thalaba, however, represents, in much greater detail, the mythology of Mohammedanism, and may stand, with The Curse of Kehama, which depicts the Hindu mythos, as the most complete fulfillment of the early promise. But it is apparent that Southey is less interested in the elements of Mohammedanism than in a problem common to all religions and mythologies, the problem of good and evil. Thalaba, then, may be called Southey's great moral epic, inasmuch as he deposited here, more richly than in any other of his creative writings, his moral ideas, just as in Joan of Arc he crystallized his early political prejudices. But it must not be supposed that, in Thalaba, idea assumes the obtrusive position it has in Joan of Arc: here Southey's truth comes more like the goddess and less like the captive dragged by her hair. In fact, the most cardinal point in Southey's moral system is not stated but poetized in the history of Thalaba's life: evil is to be overcome by that spirit of righteousness which, adopting faith as its talisman, dwells with evil, resisting all its blandishments; which casts self out of its being and works purely for the triumph of impersonal good; which develops sufficient magnanimity of spirit to forgive what it has come to destroy; which, when all is accomplished, attributes the victory to God alone.

The most potent weapon that evil possesses is cunning wisdom. Such wisdom has given to the sorcerers of Domdaniel

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that black magic with which they attempt to destroy Thalaba. Such wisdom Lobaba employs in the desert to seduce Thalaba from his purpose. Thus he attempts to persuade the young Arab into believing that God's parables warning men of wickedness are mere illusions:

> Things viewed at distance through the mist of fear
> By their distortion terrify and shock
> The abused sight.[1]

Artfully he leads Thalaba to the acceptance of the magic which evil offers: it is true

> That nothing in itself is good or evil,
> But only in its use.....[2]

Is the fire that burns on the heart evil because the same element may consume the home? Or is the iron that forms the plowshare to be foregone because the same material points the arrows of war? It is only the fear of evil that restricts man's power, and

> O what a glorious animal were Man
> Knew he but his own power, and, knowing, gave them
> Room for their growth and spread! The Horse obeys
> His guiding will; the patient Camel bears him
> Over the wastes of sand; the Pigeon wafts
> His bidding through the sky;... and with these triumphs
> He rests contented! ... with these ministers,...
> When he might awe the Elements, and make
> Myriads of Spirits serve him![3]

At first glance, the reader might form the conclusion that,

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1 Works, vol.IV, p.140.
2 Ibid., p.144.
3 Ibid., p.147.

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inasmuch as Lobaba, a representative of evil, utters these thoughts, Southey viewed with pious horror that advance of knowledge which, later in the century, created the cleft between science and religion. That such is not the case is proved by the fact that, at the time of Thalaba's composition, he enjoyed the close companionship of Sir Humphrey Davy,[1] in whose scientific investigations he took naive delight.[2] Southey is also eager to defend Dr. Beddoes, father of Thomas Lovell Beddoes and an early experimentalist in the treatment of consumptives, against the attacks directed at his eccentric prescriptions.[3] Moreover, in Thalaba itself, Southey intimates that if destiny guides our steps, knowledge makes the way easier to tread.[4] The conversation between Lobaba and Thalaba, then, must be interpreted in a larger sense; as an attempt, on the part of evil, to rationalize the acceptance of the seeming advantages that a life of evil offers.

If evil can tempt through the intellect, it can also tempt through the senses. Aloadin, in his earthly Paradise, offers a life of sensual delight, using as argument the fact that his joys are not promissory, as are the joys of Heaven, but actual and near at hand:

> "Children of Earth, I tempt ye not
> With the vain promise of a bliss unseen,
> With tales of a hereafter Heaven,
> Whence never Traveller hath returned!

1 Preface (1837) to Thalaba, Works, vol.IV, p.x.
2 Life and Correspondence, vol.II, p.20.
3 Ibid., pp.23-24, p.40.
4 Works, vol.IV, p.284.

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Have ye not tasted of the cup of joy
That in these groves of happiness
For ever over-mantling tempts
The ever-thirsty lip?"[1]

Southey, confident of Christian immortality, staked his chances of final happiness on a life hereafter, and always distrusted all other offers of joy.

Goodness has a native, unsophisticated strength that guards it from the temptations of evil. But if goodness should be overthrown -- so Southey mystically implies -- the evil that caused its death, having the nature of the bee that surrenders its own life when it stings, perishes with righteousness. Mohareb dares not kill Thalaba, for his own life is linked with that of the Destroyer.[2] Moreover, such is the divine scheme, evil is made to work the will of Heaven. When Thalaba draws on the magic ring of Mbdalaar, he says:

"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.
Blindly the wicked work
The righteous will of Heaven![3]

Southey does not accept, in Thalaba, the philosophical doctrine of good and evil as necessary properties that provide a nice balance in the moral world. Instead, he reiterates the thought drawn, in Madoc, from the Bardic "Triads": that evil is the imperfection that wisdom casts out, that

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1 Ibid., p.358.
2 Ibid., pp.212-213.
3 Ibid., p.314. The last two lines of the above quotation are repeated on page 321.

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when the soul knows evil it may banish it, establish goodness, and be safe.

> "..... who wilt not know,
> That in the Manhood of the World, whate'er
> Of folly mark'd its Infancy, of vice
> Sullied its Youth, ripe Wisdom shall cast off
> Stablish'd in good, and, knowing evil, safe."[1]

Thus evil is merely the result of moral ignorance, and he who has attained to sufficient wisdom to distinguish between good and evil is a righteous man.

Thalaba, in the accomplishing of his mission, must war against two elements: against the evil spirits of Domdaniel and against himself. It will be remembered that Thalaba is fit to destroy Domdaniel only when he has ruled self entirely out of his nature, when he has put away the personal motive of revenge, when he acts not at all as Thalaba, the son of the murdered Hodeirah, but as the pure spirit of God. Before he reaches this high point of impersonal action, he undergoes a severe chastisement of self.

After he has destroyed Aloadin and his earthly Paradise, Thalaba makes the fatal mistake of assuming worldly pride and material possession; and God punishes him by killing Oneiza on their wedding night. But from pride of self Thalaba goes to his second mistake, indulgence of self in wild grief. Southey felt so sure of the immortality of the soul that he believed abject grief for the dead pointed to a serious error in man's spiritual nature: a mourning for the dead body and

1 Ibid., p.316.

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a forgetting of the quick spirit. Thus Oneiza, her mortal part, appears nightly to Thalaba in the shape of a loathsome fiend to torment the mad husband. Moath, her father, cries out that this is not Oneiza, and Oneiza's own voice bids Thalaba drive his lance through the heart of the monster that his grief has conjured up. Thalaba stabs the fiend, and the pure soul of Oneiza appears to him, bidding him mourn no longer but set out on his quest.[1]

From Epictetus Southey had learned resignation and the truth that whatever God wills to happen takes place rightly. In his own life he practiced these Stoic and Christian doctrines with admirable moral strength -- when he lost his daughter Isabel;[2] when he left in the insane asylum his wife, whom he had loved for forty years;[3] and even when, in 1816, his son Herbert, in whom he had placed all his hopes, died, he could write "I am perfectly resigned, and do not give way to grief.[4]

The same fortitude, so harsh to self, prevails in Thalaba. Unrestrained grief arises from an inflation of the self, and does wrong to the ever-present spirit of the mourned one. Moreover, it is in ignorance that we cry out our resentment of sorrow, for sorrow is benevolent and gives form and direction to life.

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1 Ibid., pp.280-281.
2 Life and Correspondence, vol.V, p.253.
3 Ibid., vol.VI, p.246.
4 Ibid., vol.IV, p.160.

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"Repine not, O my Son!" the Old Man replied,
"That Heaven hath chasten'd three. Behold this vine,
I found it a wild tree, whose wanton strength
Had swoln into irregular twigs
And bold excrescences,
And spent itself in leaves and little rings,
So in the flourish of its outwardness
Wasting the sap and strength
That should have given forth fruit.
But when I pruned the plant,
Then it grew temperate in its vain expense
Of useless leaves, and knotted, as thou see'st
Into these full clear clusters, to repay
The hand that wisely wounded it.
Repine not, O my Son!
In wisdom and in mercy Heaven inflicts
Its painful remedies."[1]

Southey - and he draws attention to the fact in his notes[2] -- has here versified a passage from Bishop Taylor's Sermons, using much of Taylor's diction and borrowing the figure of the pruned tree from that source.

As may be suspected, the moral element in Thalaba is most conspicuous. The whole story, in fact, is little more than a moral allegory. And yet the motive of reform, so marked in Joan of Arc, is absent from Thalaba, for here Southey shows himself not as a moral amender but as a moral philosopher.

Another element that Thalaba displays in rich profusion is that of strange and colorful imagination. This quality is worthy of especial notice inasmuch as Southey depends, to a great extent, on this feature for his whole effect. If imagination allows rational explanation, it may be said to consist in a synthesis and re-creation of experiences

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1 Works, vol.IV, pp.283-284.
2 Ibid., p.305.

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gained either from books or from life itself. John Livingston Lowes, in The Road to Xanadu, has traced down those bits of experience in books that Coleridge assembled into his poetry. Such work of detection is not necessary in the case of Southey, for he painstakingly acknowledges, in the voluminous notes that he prepared for each of his longer pieces, his indebtedness for story, idea, figure, and even diction. A comparison of a book of Thalaba with its notes elucidates a striking fact.

In the fifth book of the poem, Thalaba visits the cave of Haruth and Maruth near the ruined city of Bagdad. Before the cave hangs a black cloud formed from the moisture sent up by a bitumen lake, whose springs generate black billows of liquid. Unearthly shrieks and groans issue from the cavern's mouth. Inside the cave's entrance, Zohak, from whose shoulders grow two snakes, their teeth ever biting him to satiate the hunger of his brain, stands guard. Mohareb, the evil warrior who accompanies Thalaba, takes from his wallet the shrivelled hand cut from a morderer who had died on the stake. In the hand he places a magic taper, and extends the terrible lamp to Zohak, who, beneath the spell, falls down motionless. The serpents, however, still retain their powers. Mohareb takes from his pack two human heads, still warm, and throws them to the snakes, who instantly begin to feed on them and thus allow Mohareb and Thalaba to pass. They enter a spacious vault in which the springs of the bitumen lake send up a fountain of

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pitch which rolls, like a river, over a precipice. Blue flames hover over the springs and send their light, in fiery curls, through the cave. Red and yellow sulphurous smoke floats through the chambers. Here Mohareb and Thalaba fight, the latter throwing his magic ring over the precipice, out of which a skinny hand rises to snatch the ring. And here Thalaba, victorious, sees Haruth and Maruth regain their lost radiance as they give him the talisman of faith.

Very little of this Dantean detail is Southey's own invention. The description of ruined Bagdad is from the Universal History, compiled from original authors (1736 to 1765), from which Southey also drew his description of the bituminous lake.[1] The picture of Zohak with the two serpents growing from his shoulders Southey found, in all its details, in D'Herbelot's Bibliothèque Oriental (1697).[2] The hand with the candle is the Hand of Glory described by Francis Grose in his Provincial Glossary and Popular Superstitions (1787), and the cessation of motion that the charm produces on Zohak is precisely the result which Grose attributes to the spell.[3] The return of lustre to the forms of Haruth and Maruth, two figures whom Southey found in D'Herbelot,[4] was suggested by Matthew Paris's description, in his Historia Major (1571), of Adam, who, as he beheld, in the vision of the future, the number of the elect increasing, recovered gradually the original

1 Ibid., pp.309-310.
2 Ibid., p.312.
3 Ibid., pp.313-314.
4 Ibid., p.159.

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garment of radiance.[1]

The details of wonder that Southey invented, then, for this passage of Thalaba, are few: the human heads with which Mohareb appeases the hunger of the serpents, the blue flames of the cavern (the sulphurous smoke is from the Universal History), and the hand that reaches out of the abyss. All other marvellous elements introduced in the passage have been borrowed.

The comparison drawn here is not meant to reveal Southey as a plagiarist: he has synthesized the various borrowed elements into a new creation, and the mere fact that he acknowledges his sources and even prints the sections of the original from which he drew his detail is proof of his honesty. Lowes can account much more fully for Coleridge's detail. But there is a striking difference between the methods of the two poets. Coleridge was unconscious of his sources, which he assimilated to such a degree that he could believe that the pictures he drew in his poetry had their origin only in his fancy; Southey never labored under that poetic delusion, but wrote his Oriental romance as the modern scholar writes a research paper, ever conscious of the originals from which he is assembling a re-creation. Here again Southey shows himself a scholar rather than a poet; there is nothing unconscious in his procedure; he works not from inspiration but from notes, apparently systematically arranged and faithfully documented.

What conclusion is to be drawn from this fact?

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1 Ibid., p.215.

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Certainly such a procedure derogates nothing from his merit as a poet, for his fame is to be measured not by the degree of inspiration he possessed but by the intrinsic worth of the poetry his method produced. Southey's procedure throws light on his temperament rather than on his poetry; his principal stock-in-trade was his intellect rather than his emotion, and his poetry is the result of intelligence rather than of romantic enthusiasm. In his attitude toward his work, then, Southey is more akin to the author of The Essay on Man than to the mystic dreamer of Kubla Khan; his imagination is no "vessel of divinity" but a systematized form of scholarship. A paradox, however, must be noted: if Southey's imagination may be explained on wholly rational grounds, it produced, in Thalaba, a species of wholly irrational poetry, a poetry that delights in the extraordinary, the weird, the miraculous. Here again Southey shows himself a strangely marginal spirit; as he combined, in his philosophy, the serenity of Epictetus with the zeal of Rousseau, he combined, in his poetic creation, the rational attitude of a neo-classicist with the misty vagaries of the romantic mind.

The romantic spirit in Thalaba is, of course, most conspicuous in the many passages that deal with the magical and the supernatural, and this supernatural element is, at once, the strong and the weak point of Thalaba. In such sections as the adventure in the cave of Haruth and Maruth and the spectacle of Laila's garden, lush with tropical fruits and

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gorgeous flowers, yet set in an Arctic waste of ice and snow, Southey draws wonder and admiration from the reader. But the tendency to obliterate the boundary between the credible and the incredible leads Southey to such ridiculous blunders as the description of the death of Abdaldar, who, standing erect, is smitten by the simoon that leaves the kneeling figures of Thalaba, Moath, and Oneiza untouched.[1] The account of the expeditious escape of Thalaba and Oneiza from the garden of Aloadin[2] causes the reader to smile at its childishness. But nothing in the poem is quite as ludicrous as the divine intervention that saves Thalaba in one of his more critical moments; when he is about to draw the magic ring from his finger and thus render himself vulnerable to the murderous Lobaba, a wasp stings the finger just above the ring, and the flesh swells so that Thalaba cannot remove the charm.[3] In these instances no magic web is spun; here Southey wields the bludgeon of crude and incredible statement rather than the ensorcelling wand of poetic fantasy.

The thaumaturgical element in Thalaba induces Southey to commit a second mistake in artistry. He is so eager to load every rift with sprites and jinnees that in Thalaba he neglects structure almost entirely, and allows the poem to pass through endless repetitions of spell and counter-spell. In Madoc the creator, after wrestling with his subject, emerged victorious,

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1 Ibid., p.64.
2 Ibid., pp.358-359.
3 Ibid., p.148.

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with his matter securely harnessed in strong, clear form. In Thalaba Southey is conquered by his subject-matter which, magic in nature and therefore having no substantial limit, extends itself into an infinity broken only arbitrarily by the poet's final weariness and abrupt cessation of his labors. Thalaba does not conclude; it simply stops.

Moreover, Southey is so hard pressed to invent different settings and changing colors for each repetition of his magical formula that he has no time to develop plausible character in his chief figures. Thalaba walks mechanically through enchanted gardens or through deserts haunted by good or evil spirits. He is righteous, brave, just, and loving, but he is not human, and -- a worse fault -- he never gives the impression of acting by his own will. He is ever the puppet, and now the evil magician and now Allah pulls the strings. Madoc, however often he attributes his strength to God, moves by his own volition, and his movement is always purposeful. Thalaba is ever willing to be moved, but he never wills movement, and he seems as bewildered as the reader at the complicated tangle of his destiny. Only in the closing pages, when he accomplishes his long-postponed act of destruction, does he assume the sublimity of character Southey intended for him. Oneiza is only a nominal human being, and Moath is a mere mouthpiece uttering Stoical philosophy. Laila's very real loneliness and her childlike naïveté recommend her as a credible individual. But, paradoxical as it may seem, the most human

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characters in the poem are the evil spirits - Maimuna, the sorceress who becomes conscious of her evil; Khawla, indomitably cruel and ingeniously sinful; Mohareb, crafty and spleenful; Lobaba, admirably dexterous in argument; and the suave and affected Aloadin.

Because Southey is so intent on creating an atmosphere of supernaturalism and orientalism, the most remarkable feature of Thalaba is description. In an attempt to give his story an ornate arabesque in keeping with its theme and locale, Southey writes with unwonted luxuriance of colorful and vivid detail.

"Here emerald columns o'er the marble courts
Shed their green rays, as when amid a shower
The sun shines loveliest on the vernal corn.
Here Shedad bade the sapphire floor be laid,
As though with feet divine
To tread on azure light,
Like the blue pavement of the firmament.
Here self-suspended hangs in air,
As its pure substance loathed material touch,
The living carbuncle;
Sun of the lofty dome,
.....

Here towered the palm, a silver trunk,
The fine gold net-work growing out
Loose from its rugged boughs,
Tall as the cedar of the mountain, here
Rose the gold branches, hung with emerald leaves,
Blossomed with pearls, and rich with ruby fruit."[1]

Southey reveals himself, in Thalaba, a master of sensuous description. His account of the feast of Aloadin reminds of nothing so much as the feast in Keats's Eve of St. Agnes, and it is possible that Keats was influenced by this passage:

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1 Ibid., pp.16-17.

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.....
For all fruits were there;
Water-melons rough of rind,
Whose pulp the thirsty lip
Dissolved into a draught;
Pistachios from the heavy-clustered trees
Of Malavert, or Haleb's fertile soil;
And Casbin's luscious grapes of amber hue,
.....
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.[1]

To this glittering and pungent orientalism Southey added, by using a peculiar metrical pattern, the interlaced lines and curves of Arabian architecture. Ordinarily he preferred blank verse to all other rhythms, but in Thalaba -- and later in Kehama -- he used a stanzaic form of irregular length, with lines of varying number of iambics, "because it suits the varied subject: it is the Arabesque ornament of an Arabian tale."[2] Despite Southey's assertion that "the dullest reader cannot distort it (the rhythm) into discord",[3] the poem gains little from the peculiarity of effect produced by this rhythmic pattern. It is evident, at times, that he is writing under strain, that his poetry, by inclination, seeks the blank-verse flow and is twisted into irregularity only by deliberate effort. Fluency and naturalness of verse would have done much to gloss over the tortuous windings of Thalaba's destiny, but

1 Ibid., p.231.
2 Preface to The Fourth Edition of Thalaba, Works, vol.IV, p.xv.
3 Ibid., p.xvi.

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the pattern that Southey adopted in this poem gives the impression of affectation, although he exerts all his powers to give music to his lines.

Southey's similes provide the surest test of his poetic expression. In Thalaba echoes of the bad taste evidenced in Joan of Arc and, to a much lesser degree, in Madoc, occur in such figures as that which he uses to describe the loving look that Oneiza fastens on Thalaba, -- such a look as

> The Mother Ostrich fixes on her egg,
> Till that intense affection
> Kindles its light of life,[1]

or as the figure that intrudes into the Oriental atmosphere the suggestion of blue-bells, king-cups, cowslips, the flowers of "the beautiful fields of England" in "the merry month of May".[2] But such lapses of artistic discretion occur much less frequently than passages of genuine poetic beauty. Fine delicacy is shown in the description of the wind of the Leileth-ul-cadr that drives the heavy mists before it,

> Thin as an infant's breath,
> Seen in the sunshine of an autumn frost.[3]

And Southey occasionally gains the simplicity and natural beauty that distinguish such modern poets as Robert Frost:

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1 Works, vol. IV, p.95.
2 Ibid., p.151.
3 Ibid., p.325.

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His hair floats straight in the stream of the wind
Like the weeds in the running brook.[1]

But the most attractive feature of Thalaba is its scope. Southey paints upon the largest canvas, boldly, and yet with a myriad of detail -- detail that so intrigues the attention of the artist that often the principal characters are overshadowed by their background. Yet by sheer magnitude Thalaba impresses, revealing as it does a mind of incredible breadth and variety -- a mind perhaps too large for the complete success of the poem it produced. Southey may have been right in thinking that no poem of equal originality had appeared in English since The Fairy Queen,[2] but perhaps the value of originality for its own sake is less than he deems it.

The Curse of Kehama

Southey's interest in the orient persisted through the composition of a companion-piece to Thalaba, The Curse of Kehama, an epic exploiting the Hindu mythology as Thalaba exhibited the Mohammedan. In his 1838 preface to Kehama he states that the poem was begun on May 1, 1801, at Lisbon. Its plan, however, had long before occupied his mind. On July 23 of the previous year he wrote to Wynn: "I have some distant view of manufacturing a Hindoo romance, wild as Thalaba." In the same letter he mentions plans for a Persian story based

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1 Ibid., p.398.
2 Selections from the Letters of Robert Southey, vol.I, pp. 215-216.
3 Life and Correspondence, vol.II, p.97.

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on the mythology of the Zend Avesta, in which a Persian prince, persecuted by the powers of darkness, reveals the latent nobility of his nature.[1] Evidently Southey transferred the persecution theme to the Hindu story of Kehama, and saved the idea -- that man reveals his essential nobility in time of dire distress - for Roderick, the Last of the Goths.

From Lisbon, on March 28, 1801, he wrote to Coleridge: "I have planned a Hindoo romance of original extravagance, and have christened it 'The Curse of Keradon'; but it were unwise to do anything here which were as well done in England; and indeed the easy business of hunting out everything to be seen has taken up no small portion of my time. I have ample materials for a volume of miscellaneous information; my work in England will be chiefly to arrange and tack together; here, I have been glutting, and go home to digest."[2] By this date, then, Southey had begun his first step in the composition of an extensive poem -- the initial task of long and painstaking research that preluded the writing of all his more elaborate pieces.

A month later he wrote to Wynn that the plan of The Curse of Keradon (his first title for the poem) had matured,[3] and in May he began actual composition. But if Thalaba was written almost continuously through the course of one year, The Curse of Kehama was destined to lie upon his hands a much

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1 Life and Correspondence, vol.II, p.97.
2 Ibid., p.136.
3 Selections from the Letters of Robert Southey, vol.I, p.147.

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longer time. No sooner had he begun it than questions of taste arose in his mind and dampened his initial inspiration. In June he wrote to Bedford that he still retained the early idea of exhibiting in heroic poetry the different forms of mythology; The Curse of Kehama would constitute a Hindu complement to Thalaba; he had already fixed the ground-plan of a Persian tale; in the future he would create a poem based on the Runic mythology.[1] But in August he was uncertain as to what his next venture would be; he hesitated between this plan and that, but he wrote to Bedford that very probably his next poem would be a romance, "in metre Thalabian, -- in mythology Hindoo, -- by name the Curse of Kehama".[2]

But Southey was forced to face an unpleasant fact: he could not earn a living for his family by writing long poems that the public would not buy. By November 30, 1801, only three hundred copies of Thalaba had been sold.[3] His generous friend, Rickman, came to his rescue with an appointment as private secretary to Mr. Corry, Chancellor of the Exchequer for Ireland, at a salary of about £300 per year, from which traveling expenses were to be deducted.[4] Southey accepted the position, and resided for a short time in Dublin. In the winter, however, his duties took him to London, where his wife accompanied him and his mother later joined him, to die there on January 5, 1803. Southey's duties as private

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1 Ibid., p.183.
2 Life and Correspondence, vol.II, p.159.
3 Ibid., p.177.
4 Ibid., p.163.

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secretary were none too heavy, but they served to distract him from his literary work. Altogether he considered his political appointment as "a foolish office and a good salary"[1], and when, in the spring of 1803, Corry suggested that, since there was scarcely enough public business to occupy the secretary's time, Southey should tutor his son, he resigned and moved back to Bristol.[2] His income now, with the exception of the £160 with which Wynn had pensioned him, depended on his work as a journeyman in literature. He had no time to indulge in such luxuries as poetic composition. In the spring and summer of 1803 he worked on an abridged translation of Amadis of Gaul, commissioned by Longman and Rees, on his History of Portugal, on his translation of The Chronicle of the Cid, and on a new edition of Chatterton's works, collaborating with Joseph Cottle in this last endeavor, the proceeds from which were to go to Chatterton's impoverished sister, Mrs. Newton, and her daughter.[3]

In the autumn he wished to set to work on Kehama, but he experienced trouble with his eyes that forbade extensive use of them;[4] and in the winter he resumed the much-hated task of reviewing. "I am reviewing for Longman, reviewing for Hamilton; translating, perhaps about again to versify for the Morning Post; drudge -- drudge -- drudge.

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1 Ibid., p.184.
2 Ibid.
3 Ibid., pp.184-186.
4 Ibid., p.194.

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Do you know Quarles's emblem of the soul that tries to fly, but is chained by the leg to earth?"[1]

The long struggle between necessary drudgery and poetic aspiration had begun in good earnest. In September, 1802, his first child, Margaret, was born, and brought added responsibility. He looked longingly toward a poetic immortality, but, unlike Coleridge, he could not sacrifice the comforts of his family to his desire for fame. It is to Southey's credit that he never struck the note of self-pity in those letters in which he discussed his situation. To Rickman, on January 30, 1803, he wrote: "Do not suspect me of querulousness; labour is my amusement, and nothing makes me growl, but that the kind of labour cannot be wholly my own choice; -- that I must lay aside old chronicles, and review modern poems; instead of composing from a full head, that I must write like a school-boy upon some idle theme on which nothing can be said or ought to be said."[2]

Joined to this external force of circumstance was a temperamental change within himself that removed him farther and farther from his youthful enthusiasm for poetic creation. His scholarly inclinations led him to try his hand at the writing of history, and this new occupation claimed the greater part of the time that he could steal from meaner labours. The years of Joan of Arc and Wat Tyler were far behind him.

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1 Ibid., p.199.
2 Ibid., p.200.

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The Peace of Amiens had brought him into entire agreement with England's policies,[1] and the erstwhile Liberal settled into the staunchest Toryism. He saw Rousseau now as a destructive influence[2], and Epictetus, sober and severe, as his guiding light.[3] It was natural, then, that a quiet work of reason, such as the writing of history, should agree more with his temperament than flights of fantastic poetizing. "But, in truth," he wrote to Bedford, "I will tell you that I am out of humour with Kehama, for half a hundred reasons: historical composition is a source of greater, and quieter, and more continuous pleasure; and that poem sometimes comes into my head with a -- shall I sit down to it? and this is so easily turned out again, that the want of inclination would make me half suspect a growing want of power, if some rhymes and poemets did not now and then come out and convince me to the contrary....."[4]

In the summer of 1803 his daughter Margaret died, and to escape sad associations Southey and his wife moved to Keswick, where Coleridge had taken residence. Here, in Greta Hall, Southey established a home in which he lived until the end of his life. Keswick, "perhaps the very finest single spot in England", provided an ideal environment for a poet: Greta Hall overlooked Keswick Lake; the Lake of Bassenthwaite lay in the distance; and, behind the Hall, Mount Skiddaw towered.

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1 Selections from the Letters of Robert Southey, vol.III, pp.319-320.
2 Ibid., vol.I, p.54.
3 Ibid., p.400. Life and Correspondence, vol.II, p.300, vol.III, p.144.
4 Ibid., vol.II, p.314.

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But strangely enough, the beauties of Keswick did not inspire Southey to poetry. With Coleridge he planned a spectacular venture -- "To give an account, chronologically arranged, of all the books in all the British languages, with biography, criticism, and connecting chapters, so as to form a connected history of English literature..."[1] This work, which was to be called the Bibliotheca Britannica, was never completed, but another extra-creative endeavor, Specimens of the Later English Poets, undertaken, in collaboration with Bedford, as a supplement to George Ellis's Specimens of the Early Poets, claimed his attention. Reviewing demanded much of his time, the revising and polishing of Madoc perhaps more. As a relaxation from heavier labors he began the Letters from England by Don Manuel Alvarez Espriella, a purported translation from the Spanish. All in all, he had little time for poetry -- and little inclination. History -- especially the history of Portugal -- had become his absorbing interest. In a letter to his brother Thomas Southey, dated September 13, 1804, he sketches a full program: "1. Hist. of Portugal, -- the European part, 3 vols. 2. Hist. of the Portuguese Empire in Asia, 2 or 3 vols. 3. Hist. of Brazil. 4. Hist. of the Jesuits in Japan. 5. Literary History of Spain and Portugal, 2 vols. 6. Hist. of Monachism."[2] Yet, in March, 1805, he writes that "If the sale of Madoc should prove that I can afford to write

1 Selections from the Letters of Robert Southey, vol.I, p.219.
2 Life and Correspondence, vol.II, pp.305-306.

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poetry, Kehama will not lie long unfinished. After lying fallow since the end of October, I feel prolific propensities that way..."[1] Unfortunately, Madoc, perhaps because of its high price,[2] sold but indifferently well, and although Southey did resume work on Kehama in 1806,[3] other projects -- his history of Portugal, the translation of The Chronicle of the Cid, Espriella's Letters, the editing of the Remains of Henry Kirke White, a poet whose early and uncelebrated death moved Southey to this work of kindness, and the translation of the Spanish romance Palmerin of England -- sapped his poetic energy. These, for the most part, were less labors of love than necessary measures. Wynn had secured for him, in the spring of 1807, a pension of £200,[4] but £200 since 1st Wynn's own annual gift of £160 had ceased 1st, were scarcely enough to give adequate support to his family. He felt half-ashamed of the fact that he had so neglected poetry, but, he writes, in the autumn of 1817, "drafts upon posterity will not pass for current expenses."[5]

In the spring of 1808 he evidently took up Kehama again, for he wished to show some sections that he had written to Sir Walter Scott,[6] whose acquaintance he had made in 1805. Scott, however, gave him less encouragement than Walter Savage Landor, whose kindness was the one factor that moved

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1 Ibid., p.317.
2 Ibid., p.338.
3 Ibid., vol.III, pp.27,44.
4 Selections from the Letters of Robert Southey, vol.II, pp. 2-3.
5 Life and Correspondence, vol.III, p.117.
6 Ibid., p.142.

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Southey to finish the poem. In the spring of 1808 he met Landor and told him of his "epic dream" to fashion a series of poems illustrative of the world's mythologies; he told him too how circumstance had intervened. "Write them," Landor replied, "as many as you will, and I will pay for the printing." "This stung me," Southey writes, "and I believe a strong desire to show him that if the time could any way be afforded, I cared nothing for present popularity or present emolument, but would willingly cast my bread upon the waters, has been the main, almost the only, motive, for my resuming an amusement which I had totally disused for the last three years."[1]

Southey, of course, declined Landor's offer to pay for the printing of Kehama, but the thought that there was at least one person of discernment in the world who wished him to take up again his career as an epic poet spurred him on to the completion of Kehama. Throughout the year he worked intermittently on the poem. In May he wrote to Landor: "I wish it had never been begun, because I like it too well to throw it behind the fire, and not well enough to complete it without the 'go on' of some one whose approbation is worth having."[2] Later in the month he devoted a whole letter to Kehama: he intends to complete it in a year; he will not use blank verse -- "There must be quicker, wilder movements; there must be a gorgeousness of ornament also -- eastern gem-work, and some-

1 Selections from the Letters of Robert Southey, vol.II, p.69.
2 Life and Correspondence, vol.III, p.143.

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times rhyme must be rattled upon rhyme, till the reader is half dizzy with the thundering echo. My motto must be, --

Ποικίλον εἶδος ἔχων, ὅτι ποικίλον ὕμνον ἀφύσσω.

This is not from any ambition of novelty, but from the nature and necessity of subject.[1] In June he borrows hours from sleep to spend on Kehama, and Landor's offer still rankles in his mind.[2] When his enthusiasm for Kehama wanes, he keeps his interest in poetry alive by planning another heroic poem on Pelayo of Spain[3] -- the poem that was to grow into Roderick. In August he converts a violent dream into one of the wildest scenes in Kehama.[4] By November 26, 1808, he is within seven sections of the end, and hopes to complete the poem before spring.[5] In February, 1809, he reports to Landor that Kehama is delayed by the illness of his children, his wife, and himself, but "another heat will finish the poem".[6] By April 23, 1809, only three sections remained to be composed,[7] but unfortunately distress once more descended on the Southey household and dispersed all thoughts of Kehama. Southey, himself in poor health, worried about the well-being of his son Herbert, who was never a strong child. Shortly after Herbert had recovered from a dangerous illness, Emma, a daughter born in 1808, suddenly fell sick, and, after two days, died on May 22, 1809.[8]

1 Ibid., p.145.
2 Selections from the Letters of Robert Southey, vol.II, p.69.
3 Ibid., p.79.
4 Life and Correspondence, vol.III, p.164.
5 Ibid., pp.196-197.
6 Ibid., p.217.
7 Ibid., p.228.
8 Ibid., p.233.

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Spring turned to summer, and still Kehama was unfinished. After recovering from an illness in July, Southey applied himself to the work of completing the poem, and finally, on November 25, 1809, he wrote to Thomas Southey: "I write to....tell you that I have this day finished Kehama, having written two hundred lines since yesterday morning. Huzza, Aballiboozobanganorribo![1] It is not often in his lifetime a man finishes a long poem, and as I have nobody to give me joy, I must give myself joy. 24 sections, 4844 lines; 200 or 300 more will probably be added in course of correction and transcription; all has been done before breakfast (since its resumption) except about 170 lines of the conclusion. Huzza! better than lying a-bed, Tom; and though I am not quite ready to begin another, I will rise as usual to-morrow, and work at the plans of Pelayo and Robin Hood."[2] It was characteristic of Southey that, after toiling for eight and a half years on Kehama, he should, on the morning following its completion, rise early to start a new poem of equal vastness.

The story of Kehama is Southey's own invention, but in this poem, as in those earlier, he used a number of works as sources for description of customs and manners, the religion and philosophy of the people he treated. Traveler's accounts (such as François Bernier's Voyages de M. Bernier, contenant la Description des Etats du Grand Mogol, de l'Indoustan, du Royaume de Cachemira, etc., 1670-1671, Pierre Sonnerat's

1 One of the mystagogical exclamations used in The Doctor, &.
2 Life and Correspondence, vol.III, p.367.

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Voyage aux Indes Orientales et à la Chine, 1774-1781, and Francis Buchanan's Journey from Madras through the Countries of the Mysore, Canara, and Malabar, 1807) supplied Southey with picturesque observations on Hindu life and culture. Historical works, among them Colonel Mark Wilks's Historical Sketches of the South of India, and Thomas Maurice's Ancient History of Hindostan, its Arts and Sciences, etc., furnished him descriptions of locale and acquainted him with the social institutions of India. The volumes of Asiatic Researches, filled with articles by Sir William Jones and published by the Bengal Asiatic Society, and the eastern poetry of Sir William Jones (the Hymn to Ganga, for instance) contributed information from which Southey drew allusion and detail. He derived his knowledge of Hindu religion and mythology partly from such European works as the Asiatic Researches, but his principal information on this subject came from study of Hindu literature itself -- the Bhagvat Geeta, the Veda, the Institutes of Menu, and the drama Sacontala, translated by Sir William Jones; the epic, Ramayana, translated by the Baptist missionaries of Serampore[1]; and the second great epic, Mahabharata, translated by Peter Wilkins.

When Southey composed The Curse of Kehama he fashioned a story of magnificent splendor to show the triumph of good over evil and the final immutability of the moral order.

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1 Only one volume of this translation was available to Southey. Notes to Kehama, Works, vol.VIII, p.365.

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With customary boldness he chose, as the background for his story, a mythology whose fundamental idea seemed hostile to any stabilized moral system; for in the religion of the Hindus, Southey informs us in his Original Preface to Kehama, "prayers, penances, and sacrifices, are supposed to possess an inherent and actual value, in no degree depending upon the disposition or motive of the person who performs them. They are drafts upon Heaven, for which the Gods cannot refuse payment. The worst men, bent upon the worst designs, have in this manner obtained power which has made them formidable to the Supreme Deities themselves, and rendered an Avatar, or Incarnation of Veeshnoo the Preserver, necessary."[1] It is the triumph of moral truth over this mythological mechanism that forms the principal substance of The Curse of Kehama.

Kehama, a mighty and villainous rajah, has availed himself of the aid of the gods, through rites and prayers, to obtain complete lordship over the earth. In the midst of his glory, however, Kehama is worsted by fate: his son Arvalan, lusting after the maiden Kailyal, is killed by the girl's father, Ladurlad. Kehama, in revenge, places a curse on Ladurlad:

> I charm thy life
> From the weapons of strife,
> From stone and 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,

1 Works, vol.VIII, p.xxiii.

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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 Kahama 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.[1]

With fire in his heart and brain, with thirst that must ever remain unslaked, with hunger that no food can satisfy, Ladurlad flees, accompanied by his daughter Kailyal, into the wilderness. While Kailyal sleeps, Ladurlad, unwilling that his daughter share his misery, steals away. The girl, waking, hastens to seek shelter in a temple of Pollear, Protector of Travelers; but even before the altar the ghost of Arvalan assumes substance and advances to attack Kailyal. Pollear, insulted by this violation of his sanctuary, catches up the ghost and hurls him over the forest, and Kailyal, rushing blindly into the wilderness, falls senseless.

A bright shape hovers over the form of Kailyal. It is Ereenia, an angel from the Swerga, the Paradise of Indra, God of the Elements. Ereenia, moved by pity, lifts the girl in his arms and bears her to the Tree of Life, beneath which sits Casyapa, the Father of the Immortals. Ereenia begs

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1 Ibid., pp.14-15.

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Casyapa to allow Kailyal to dwell in the Sacred Grove of the Swerga, but Casyapa reminds Ereenia that Kailyal has angered Kehama, who, in his might, threatens conquest of the Swerga itself, who even plans to enter Hell, dethrone Yamen, Lord of the Dead, force the drink of immortality from him, and release the accursed Asuras, the spirits of the damned. But the childlike innocence of Kailyal overcomes Casyapa's objection, and at Ereenia's command a Ship of Heaven carries Kailyal to the Swerga, where the Ganges has its mystic source. Although the gentle Indra welcomes Kailyal to his Paradise, the girl refuses to be separated from her father, and implores Ereenia to return her to earth. The angel reunites her with Ladurlad, and conducts them to Mount-Meru, earthly source of the Ganges, where, for the time being, they are safe from Kehama's wrath.

But Kehama has already begun his assault on the power of the gods. The Swerga will be his when he has succeeded in sacrificing a hundred sacred horses untouched by mortal man. And already the motto of the poem, "Curses, like chickens, come home to roost", has demonstrated itself. For when the hundredth steed had been driven before the altar, the hand of Ladurlad had reached out and touched its mane. When Kehama commanded his archers to shoot the man down, Ladurlad was proof against their arrows, for Kehama had denied Ladurlad the boon of death in the curse he had put upon him. Now, however, Kehama has again begun the rites and successfully completed them.

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Up rose the Rajah through the conquered sky,
To seize the Swerga for his proud abode;
Myriads of evil Genii round him fly,
As royally on wings of winds he rode,
And scaled high Heaven, triumphant like a God.[1]

Earth groans at this cataclysmic change in the government of the universe, and Ladurlad and Kailyal are forced to flee into the deep wilderness. There they live for a while in idyllic companionship with the wild animals --the elephant, tigress, and snake charmed by Kailyal's singing. But this harmony in pristine nature is disturbed when a wandering band of Yoguees steal the girl and carry her away to be the bride of the blood-thirsty idol, Jaga-Naut. The protecting angel, Ereenia, has been taken into captivity by the ghost of Arvalan, aided by an enchantress, Lorrinite, and has been chained in the submarine city of Baly. Now Kailyal, on the bridal bed of Jaga-Naut, is at the mercy of the lascivious Arvalan, who has gained access to the temple. To escape his embraces, she sets fire to the bed and awaits death, but Ladurlad, rendered immune to fire by Kehama's curse, strides through the flames and rescues his daughter.

It is their task now to free Ereenia, and again Kehama's curse proves beneficial; for the waters that have closed over the golden city of Baly shrink before Ladurlad's touch and allow his entrance to the sepulchre in which Ereenia, chained to the floor, is guarded by a monster. For seven days Ladurlad wrestles with the monster, and at last vanquishes

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1 Ibid., p.102.

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him, for Ladurlad cannot die. But when Ereenia and his saviour ascend from the sepulchres to the rocks above the submerged city, where Kailyal waits, Arvalan and Lorrinite seize the girl, and the Asuras, evil spirits attendant on the enchantress, surround Ladurlad and Ereenia. This, however, is the night on which the beloved giant Baly, who for his one sin of pride was, long ago, confined to Hell by Veeshnoo, is allowed to walk the earth. Baly, angered at the assault on innocence, stamps the earth. It opens, and Arvalan, Lorrinite, and their Asuras are precipitated into Hell.

Kehama, now lord of earth and of Indra's Swerga, drives down the sky to wreak vengeance on Ladurlad and Kailyal. But Kehama sees on Kailyal's brow a mystic sign that tells him she is destined to drink of the Amreeta, the juice of immortality. Since he too will claim the Amreeta after he has conquered Padalon, the Hindu Hell, he believes that Kailyal is his destined bride, and thus he spares her life, although he curses her with leprosy.

Ereenia, horrified at the impending union, conceives a desperate plan. He will visit the inaccessible Seeva and make direct appeal. When, long ago, Brama and Veeshnoo waged furious battle, Seeva built himself a fiery pillar; Veeshnoo he sent to find its base, and Veeshnoo traveled downward a thousand years and still did not discover the foundation. Brama, commanded to find its top, soared upward ten myriad years, and sought in vain. And thus Seeva, serene upon his

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pillar, had ended the dispute by parting the combatants. In a passage of wonderful imaginative sweep -- strongly reminiscent of Milton's expansive grandeur -- Southey describes Ereenia's journey to the remote Seeva. Through the seven earths and the surrounding Golden Firmament Ereenia soars upward and finally gains Mount Calasay, the silver mountain of Seeva. The peak of Calasay, lost in space, is gained by Ereenia's climbing seven ladders. On the top of the mountain a silver bell is suspended from the air, and beneath it a table, throwing out strange iridescent gleams, bears the celestial rose, in the center of which lies the sacred triangle, the purported residence of Seeva. None of this detail is Southey's own invention; he follows here the traditions concerning Seeva that he found in his sources. But he utilizes his borrowed detail with fine artistry to create a vivid impression of supernatural wonder.

Ereenia senses that the bell, the table, the rose, the triangle are mere symbols, no attribute of Seeva himself, who, being the all-containing mind, the ubiquitous, the essence of all divinity, is distributed over all creation. Ereenia cries out his supplication, springs up, and strikes the silver bell. Its reverberations cause the table, the rose, the mountain, and the bell itself to dissolve "as a morning dream", and "primal, essential, all-pervading Light" illuminates the chaos. The angel, unable to bear the sight of such splendor, falls through space, but a voice sounds within him:

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Go, ye who suffer, go to Yamen's throne.
He hath the remedy for every woe;
He setteth right whate'er is wrong below.[1]

To Yamen, Lord of Padalon, Ereenia bears Kailyal and Ladurlad. They pass over the surrounding gulf of fire in a car whose single wheel runs over a narrow rib of steel that spans the abyss. They pass through chambers of torture, in which damned souls cry out for Kehama to deliver them. Finally they reach Yamenpur, the city of Yamen. At his feet sits Baly, Judge of the Dead. Before them, three burning figures hold up three corners of a square golden throne. Behind them, in a dark cloud, stands the dread Queen Asyoruca, whose thousand arms reach out of the cloud to receive those whom Baly damns.

At the same moment that Ereenia petitions Yamen, Kehama begins his conquest of Padalon. He passes through each of the eight gates at the same time, confronts Yamen, fights with him, and conquers. He bids Kailyal prepare to sit with him on the vacant golden throne, and the three burning figures chant:

Come, Rajah! Man-God! Earth's Almighty Lord!
Kehama, come! we wait for thee too long![2]

Kehama demands the Amreeta-cup, and the sepulchre that is Yamen's throne opens. A hand proffers the cup. Kehama takes and drinks, but instead of immortality, fiery poison courses

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1 Ibid., p.165.
2 Ibid., p.201.

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through his veins; and the three figures -- the first hoarder of wealth, the first usurper of power, the first impious liar -- set up a fiendish cry:

> Come, Brother, come! they sung; too long
> Have we expected thee,
> Henceforth we bear no more
> The unequal weight; Come, Brother, we are Four![1]

Kehama, his body burning like red coals, lifts up the fourth corner of the throne, Yamen ascends to the Judgment-seat, and the moral order is restored. But Kailyal also is destined to drink of the Amreeta. Convinced that it is the will of Heaven, she resigns herself to Kehama's fate. But when the Amreeta enters her pure body, the flesh melts away and her radiant spirit is released. Kailyal has found immortality, and Ereenia, at last free to love her disembodied soul, flies with her toward the eternal bliss of the Swerga. Wistfully the soul of Kailyal reaches a hand downward toward her father, and Yamen, taking pity, gives Ladurlad, long tormented, the boon of death so that he may join his dead wife in paradise.

Despite the fact that Southey referred to Kehama as one of those epics designed to illustrate a mythology, Kehama -- even in its story -- does not faithfully represent the Hindu mythos, which, he believed, "of all false religions is the most monstrous in its fables, and the most fatal in its effects".[2] Moralist that he was, Southey could not give even

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1 Ibid., p.206.
2 Original Preface to Kehama, Works, vol.VIII, p.xxiii.

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artistic fidelity to a system of belief that he considered pernicious; therefore, when he approached the Hindu mythology, he resolved to point out its error rather than to portray it in a completely eastern spirit.

According to the Hindu scheme, Kehama -- as Southey well knew[1] -- should have been successful in his conquest of Padalon, for he had fulfilled all the rites necessary to such an accomplishment, and eastern fatalism is too stubborn to swerve from its course to allow poetic justice. After Kehama had become lord of Hell, the world would have been restored to its balance by an Avatar of Vishnu the Preserver. But Southey could not give even temporary credence to such an externalized form of justice. All his longer poems are sincere in the sense that he never adopts an artistic pose, but ever believes wholeheartedly what he writes. Therefore, Kehama must fall, not through the intervention of a god, but through the evil of his own character. Likewise, Kailyal's immortality is no gift of the gods but a natural consequence of her inherent piety. Moral order is regulated not by divine guardians but by instincts of good and evil within man himself. Such a belief is, of course, Christian rather than Brahmanic, and Southey attempts consistently to penetrate through the forms of Hindu mythology to the essential spirit, which, indeed, bears a common resemblance -- the resemblance of parent and child -- to the Christian religion. Thus he refuses to believe that Seeva,

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1 Ibid.

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whom he considers in Kehama the God of gods, has definite shape or has bodily residence in the celestial rose. Hindu mythology, he found, was at odds with Hindu philosophy, and, when it suited his purpose to do so, he ignored the former as vulgar superstition and used in its stead the latter, from which Christianity itself is partly derived. Thus Seeva is the

> ...all containing Mind,
> Thou who art every where![1]

And when Ereenia asks for Seeva's word, he hears a voice within himself.[2] This idea of an all-including God, not separate from man but within man, is opposed to the mythology that Southey apparently represents in Kehama; but it is wholly consistent with the thought of the Bhagvat Geeta, quoted in part by Southey in his notes:[3]

> Even I was even at first, not any other thing; that which exists, unperceived, supreme; afterwards I am that which is; and he who must remain, am I.
>
> .....
>
> As the great elements are in various beings entering, yet not entering, (that is, pervading, not destroying) thus am I in them, yet not in them.
>
> Even thus far may inquiry be made by him who seeks to know the principle of mind in union and separation, which must be everywhere, always.
>
> .....
>
> I am the creation and the dissolution of the whole universe. There is not anyhthing greater than I, and all things hang on me, even as precious gems upon a string. I am moisture in the water, light in the sun and moon, invocation in the Veds, sound in the firmament, human nature in mankind, sweet-

1 Works, vol.VIII, p.163.
2 Ibid., p.165.
3 Ibid., pp.317-318.

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> smelling savour in the earth, glory in the source
> of light; in all things I am life; and I am zeal
> in the zealous; and know, O Arjoon! that I am the
> eternal seed of all nature.

Throughout the poem Southey attempts to bring Hinduism into agreement with his own Christian beliefs. He cannot accept fatalism entirely, although, for purposes of plot, he must admit it to a certain extent. Kailyal, it is true, displays piety when she awaits

> The aweful will of Fate with equal mind.[1]

and the "secret and unerring pleasure" of Fate appoints all in Kehama[2]. But when the mighty rajah announces that Fate has destined Kailyal to be his bride, that, even though Kailyal's heart is repelled by the mere thought of such a union, destiny must be fulfilled, Ladurlad answers:

> ..... idly, Rajah, dost thou reason thus
> Of destiny! for though all other things
> Were subject to the starry influencings,
> And bowed submissive to thy tyranny,
> The virtuous heart and resolute mind are free.
> Thus in their wisdom did the Gods decree
> When they created man. Let come what will
> This is our rock of strength; in every will,
> Sorrow, oppression, pain and agony,
> The spirit of the good is unsubdued,
> And suffer, as they may, they triumph still.[3]

Fate, then, however powerful it may be, cannot coerce the virtuous will, which, in the event of evil destiny, may defy even as it suffers. But destiny -- at least, in The

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1 Ibid., p.182.
2 Ibid., p.191.
3 Ibid., p.156.

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Curse of Kehama -- is in agreement with God's goodness and therefore with the virtuous will, as man realizes when he finally understands the whole course of destiny. Limited vision is alone responsible for the belief that Fate favors the wicked. And the wicked are those who are deluded most by inscrutable Fate, which partially reveals itself only to baffle and blind them.[1] Thus Kehama suffers delusion when he believes that destiny is a partisan to his evil schemes; and when he works in accordance with what he believes to be servile destiny, he unwittingly acts as the agent of good. "Blindly the wicked work the will of Heaven." In this manner Southey reconciles his belief in free will with eastern determinism. The idea of Hindu mythology -- that a wicked man may, through prayers and penances, compel the gods to do his bidding -- is merely a vulgar deception; for the moral will of the universe is free from such pernicious fatalism and goes its righteous way unerringly.

It is vitally necessary for Southey to make this correction of Hindu mythology, for if Kehama's manipulation of destiny is valid, then there is no place in the ethical system for those virtues on which Southey heavily insists. These virtues are symbolized in the characters of the father and daughter, Ladurlad and Kailyal:

Beauty and Virtue
Fatherly cares and filial veneration,

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1 Ibid., p.167.

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Hearts which are proved and strengthened by affliction,
Manly resentment, fortitude and action,
Womanly goodness;
All with which Nature halloweth her daughters,
Tenderness, truth, and purity and meekness,
Piety, patience, faith and resignation,
Love and devotement.[1]

It is these virtues that are assailed by Kehama, the force of evil, and these are the virtues that formed Southey's core of ethical thought. The Curse of Kehama, then, is something more than a product of Southey's imagination: it is also an intensely personal confession of faith, and the conflict between Kehama on the one hand and of Ladurlad and his daughter on the other is essentially the struggle of worldly delusion with those ethical qualities that Southey guarded in his own soul. And the talisman in Kehama, as in Thalaba and in Southey's private life, is faith. Ereenia, beholding the strange revelations of Fate is

Amazed but undismayed, for in his heart
Faith, overcoming fear, maintained its power.[2]

By intensity of faith the angel penetrates the seven earths to the center of divinity itself.[3] Through all trials and desperate vexations Kailyal endures existence by faith's power, and when doubt enters her mind she recognizes it only as "imperfect nature's fault".[4] It is faith in divine righteousness that leads her to ignore the testimony of her eyes and drink of

1 Ibid., p.73.
2 Ibid., p.304.
3 Ibid., pp.161,163.
4 Ibid., p.117.

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the cup that had changed Kehama into a living flame, and through such faith she gains immortal bliss.[1]

Faith teaches her that virtue is secure from all the malign forces that assault it. Surely Milton's passage in Comus,

> Vertue may be assailed, but never hurt,
> Surprized by unjust force, but not enthralled,
> Yea even that which mischief meant most harm
> Shall in the happy trial prove most glory,[2]

was in Southey's mind when he wrote

> Fresh woes, O Maid divine,
> Fresh trials must be thine:
> And what must thou, Ladurlad, yet endure!
> But let your hearts be strong,
> And rise against all wrong,
> For Providence is just, and virtue is secure.[3]

Despite the seeming fact that earth is given over to the forces of evil, man must live in virtue and must trust that "God is still the good Man's friend":

> Whatever weal or woe betide,
> Turn never from the way of truth aside
> And leave the event, in holy hope, to Heaven.[4]

Virtue suffers under the cruel reign of evil, but such suffering, stoically endured,

> A resolute, unconquered fortitude,
> An agony repress, a will resigned,[5]

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1 Ibid., p.207.
2 The Student's Milton, p.58.
3 Works, vol.VIII, pp.97-98.
4 Ibid., p.99.
5 Ibid., p.107.

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is man's sincerest praise of God, and bears in itself a promise of final reward. True virtue never protests against the pain it suffers, but experiences that pain as a necessary torture of the soul, as a proof of faith and hardihood. And Southey, thrilled by the imagined calm with which his character, Ladurlad, endures the curse, cries out:

> O force of faith! O strength of virtuous will!
> Behold him in his endless martyrdom,
> Triumphant still!
> The Curse still burning in his heart and brain,
> And yet doth he remain
> Patient the while, and tranquil, and content!
> The pious soul hath framed unto itself
> A second nature, to exist in pain
> As in its own allotted element.[1]

Surely there is evident, in this rhapsodical joy in pain, the emotional fervor of the early Christian martyr.

Virtue is no product of the sophisticated mind, no acquisition of the cultivated being, but man's original part in the "perfect Diapason" that once existed between God and his highest creature. Kailyal, supreme in virtue, finds no hostility in nature, for even the wild beasts love her for her purity of soul:

> .....she seemed a thing
> Of Heaven's prime uncorrupted work, a child
> Of early nature undefiled,
> A daughter of the years of innocence.
> And therefore all things loved her. When she stood
> Beside the glassy pool, the fish, that flies
> Quick as an arrow from all other eyes,
> Hovered to gaze on her. The mother bird,

1 Ibid., p.108.

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When Kailyal's step she heard,
Sought not to tempt her from her secret nest,
But hastening to the dear retreat, would fly
To meet and welcome her benignant eye.[1]

The possession of such virtue enables a person to experience that idealistic love of which Southey dreamed. It is to be doubted if he ever found such love -- of souls perfectly mated and subtly complementing each other -- in Edith Fricker, for, although he tendered her dutiful affection, it is scarcely to be believed that Edith had sufficient greatness either of mind or spirit[2] to offer her husband a love equal to that of which he felt himself capable. And the union with Caroline Bowles, in the winter of his life, was all too brief for the development of such an affection. It may be that Southey, like Beethoven, valued perfect conjugal love so highly simply because it was unattainable to him. However this may be, Kehama contains the famous ode to love that is, perhaps, his finest single passage of verse:

They sin who tell us Love can die.
With life all other passions fly,
All others are but vanity.
In Heaven Ambition cannot dwell,
Nor Avarice in the vaults of Hell;
Earthly these passions of the Earth,
They perish where they have their birth;
But Love is indestructible.
Its holy flame for ever burneth,
From Heaven it came, to Heaven returneth;

1 Ibid., p.110.
2 It is significant that Southey seldom writes to his wife of his aspirations or exaltation or depression of spirit. His letters to Edith Southey, in contrast with those to Bedford, Wynn, Coleridge, and Thomas Southey, are filled with practical matters and expressions of domestic affection, but contain little else. In fact, Southey very evidently writes down to his wife.

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Too oft on Earth a troubled guest,
At times deceived, at times oppress,
It here is tried and purified,
Then hath in Heaven its perfect rest:
It soweth here with toil and care
But the harvest time of Love is there.[1]

The steadfast belief in love of this quality -- love that finds but inadequate expression of itself in domestic fidelity on earth and looks forward to a fuller fruition in Heaven -- explains the frequent (perhaps too frequent) occurrence of the domestic element in Southey's epic poetry. In Joan of Arc it appears in the soldiers' reminiscences of home; in Madoc it is artistically suppressed; in Thalaba it is represented by the idyllic family-life of Oneiza, Moath, and Thalaba; in Kehama it is displayed all too obtrusively in the repeated expressions of fidelity that pass between Ladurlad and Kailyal.

Such sentiment is in ill accord with the grand and fantastical effects that distinguish this poem even more than they do Thalaba or Madoc. Southey's obsession for the cataclysmic, evidenced in Madoc by volcanic eruption and flood and in Thalaba by crumbling mountain-walls and the falling of the ocean-floor upon Domdaniel, finds its most extreme expression in The Curse of Kehama: Kehama and his host conquer the Swerga, earth rocks, the ocean raves, and

Ten thousand/thousand lightnings round them fly;[2]

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1 Works, vol.VIII, p.78.
2 Ibid., p.103.

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Baly stamps his foot upon the ground, and earth yawns to reveal the fiery pits of Hell; Ereenia, on Calasay, sees the holy mountain drop into chaos; when Kehama rides through the gates of Padalon, the whole moral universe abruptly suffers convulsion, and as abruptly finds equilibrium again. The poem begins with the spectacle of Arvalan's funeral, lurid with flame and raucous with clashing cymbals, and continues through tableau after tableau of dazzling radiance and riotous color -- the golden city of Baly covered by the sea, the festival of Jaga-Naut, the silver mountain of Seeva, the flaming gulfs of Padalon -- to a conclusion in which divinity itself reveals its workings. All that is small, all that is probable, is rigorously excluded, and even the business of falling in love, certainly a private matter, is carried through by a god who, attended with full pageantry, soars down the sky to shoot, from a sugar-cane bow, arrows formed of living bees and tipped with aphrodisiacal flowers.

Yet, strange to say, it is this very quality of vast impossibility, this total emancipation from the laws of cause and effect, that gives Kehama its very real splendor and lifts it into the realm of unashamed glorification, the realm of myth rather than literature.

Roderick, The Last of the Goths

Kehama closes the series of long poems that were designed to illustrate various mythologies. Likewise, it marks

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the termination of that vein of wild fantasy that places Thalaba and Kehama beyond the limits of credibility. Tired of the purely poetic, of the mythological and the supernatural, Southey, who had become more and more absorbed in history, chose for his next subject a historical theme -- the Moorish invasion of Spain in the eighth century and the life of Roderick, the last Visigothic king.

Although Roderick, the Last of the Goths, marks the turn from the mythological to the historical, from the supernatural to the human, from "fancy" to "imagination", the poem had its inception -- in Southey's plans, at least -- as early as 1805. In July of that year he wrote to Miss Mary Barker, an Englishwoman whom he had met in Lisbon and who became a close friend[1], a criticism of Madoc and Thalaba: "Madoc' flourishes more than I had expected. It is a good poem, and on its present plan could not have been better; still I feel in myself powers which could have produced a better. Madoc himself is too philosophical a character to be quite fit for poetry; he may be admired and loved, but cannot be sympathized with, because he is never in that state of feeling and passion which excites sympathy. Here is the advantage which 'Thalaba' possesses, amid all that bustle of incident, that pantomimic change of

1 She later settled in Keswick, at Southey's urgent entreaty. She drew the illustrations for the first edition of Madoc, and formed with Southey a fine platonic friendship. Some of the most delightful letters that Southey wrote are addressed to Mary Barker, who is represented as the Bhow Begum in The Doctor. She and Caroline Bowles figure in his correspondence as the only women whom he accepts as intellectual equals.

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scenery, that world of wonders. Thalaba is for ever present, the single figure to whom everything relates; at first, the object of curiosity, then of hope, lastly of pity. The two poems are not subjects of comparison, but it is possible to give these advantages to the hero of a poem as dramatically true in its structure as 'Madoc', and this I have not done. I want you here, because I want to talk over a story which seems as if it would come to something -- that of Pelayo, the restorer or founder of the Spanish monarchy."[1] Southey, then, wished to write a poem that would combine the virtues of Madoc and Thalaba; the theme was to be the founding of the Spanish monarchy, the hero, Pelayo. As he developed the poem, however, he threw greater stress on Pelayo's predecessor, the dethroned Roderick, and the work finally took its title from his name.

For a long time Southey delayed the composition of Roderick. In June, 1808, he informed Coleridge that he was thinking about a poem "upon Pelayo, the restorer of Spain",[2] and in the following August he wrote to his brother Tom that he had arranged the opening of the poem, but would not begin composition until the completion of Kehama.[3] In November, Scott was apprised that the new poem would be written in blank verse and would have a higher tone than Madoc.[4] Southey also confided his plans to Landor, stating that he would not begin

1 Selections from the Letters of Robert Southey, vol.I, p.332.
2 Life and Correspondence, vol.III, p.151.
3 Ibid., pp.163-164.
4 Ibid., p.179.

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writing until his materials had settled into a satisfactory order and he had completed his study of Spanish topography.[1] A year later, on November 25, 1809, he finished Kehama, and arose the next morning to work at the plans for "Pelayo" and a projected poem based on the legend of Robin Hood.[2]

At about this time he made to Landor an interesting observation concerning verse, apropos of the new Spanish poem. Blank verse, he wrote, is the best medium for poetry that is excellent in itself, "but everything below excellence borrows something from rhyme". "Is it practicable," he asks, "to write the narrative generally in rhyme and throw it aside when the passion rises, and the subject will bear it out?"[3]

Finally, on December 2, 1809, Southey began the composition of Roderick, but by May of the following spring he had completed only the first canto. He was no longer the facile poet he had been once, nor did he obtain from the composition of poetry the exhilaration that he felt in his more youthful attempts. "Is it a mark of strength or weakness," he wrote to Landor, "of maturity or of incipient decay, that it is more delightful to me to compose history than poetry? not, perhaps, that I feel more pleasure in the act of composition, but that I go to it with more complacency as to an employment which suits my temperament. I am loth to ascribe this lack of inclination to any deficiency of power, and certainly am not conscious of any; still I have an ominous feeling

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1 Ibid., p.197.
2 Ibid., p.268.
3 Selections from the Letters of Robert Southey, vol.II, p.167.

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that there are poets enough in the world without me, and that my best chance of being remembered will be as an historian. A proof sheet of Kehama, or a second sight scene in Pelayo, disperses this cloud; such, however, is my habitual feeling. It did not use to be the case in those days when I thought of nothing but poetry, and lived, as it were, in an atmosphere of nitrous oxyde, -- in a state of perpetual excitement, which yet produced no exhaustion."[1]

It is significant that a historical event and not poetic inspiration spurred Southey on to the composition of Roderick. In May, 1808, Napoleon Bonaparte, whom Southey had come to contemn as a threat to liberty, forced Charles IV of Spain and his son Ferdinand to cede to him their rights to the Spanish throne. The Spanish people, less craven than their monarch, vigorously resisted the French, resorting to guerilla warfare in defense of their liberty. In 1809 Sir Arthur Wellesley, in command of British forces, set out from Portugal to force his way to Madrid and break the French power in Spain. Southey, approving both of Spanish resistance and British intervention, was not slow to see the parallel that the French invasion of 1808 offered to the Moorish conquest of the eighth century. The poem on which he was laboring showed the Spaniards rising in an heroic attempt to reclaim their country from the Moors. Might it not encourage a similar uprising against the French? If this poem were ready now, Southey wrote to Scott on May 11, 1810, it "might perhaps, in some

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1 Life and Correspondence, vol.III, p.283.

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degree, be a useful one".[1] But, despite the momentary spurt of enthusiasm, "Pelayo" progressed but slowly, although to the complete satisfaction of Southey.[2]

One of the most interesting facts concerning the composition of Roderick is that it was carried forward at the same time that Scott and Landor were composing respectively a metrical tale and a tragedy on the same subject.[3] The three poets worked independently, and the resulting three versions of the Roderick story differ rather widely. Southey praised Scott's tale and gave extravagant eulogy to Landor's play, but he envied the dispatch with which both of his contemporaries completed their work. For Southey, who was the first to conceive the idea of Roderick, was the last of the three to finish. Scott's Don Roderick was published in 1811 and Landor's Count Julian in 1812; but Southey's Roderick, the Last of the Goths did not appear until 1814.

One of the reasons for the long composition of Roderick is Southey's inability to work on one poem at a time. His strange procedure of finishing a long poem on one evening and beginning a second one the next morning has been noted. Not ambition but a peculiar demand of his mind accounts for this constant exercise of the creative faculty. His "mimosa

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1 Ibid., p.286.
2 Ibid., p.293.
3 A parallel to this case of three poets writing simultaneously on the same theme is provided in German literary history: at the same time that Kleist was composing the play Der zerbrochene Krug, Wieland the younger and Zschokke were writing a poem and a short story -- all three using the same plot.

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sensibility" -- which is merely William Taylor's name for Southey's psychic nervousness -- made it necessary for him to keep his mind ever occupied, lest it brood on unhealthy thoughts. The same desire to keep his mind clear of morbid reflection led him to work on two poems[1] simultaneously. Thus he wrote to Landor in February, 1811: "You wonder that I can think of two poems at once; it proceeds from weakness, not from strength. I could not stand the continuous excitement which you have gone through in your tragedy: in me it would not work itself off in tears; the tears would flow while in the act of composition, and would leave behind a throbbing head and a whole system in the highest state of nervous excitability, which would soon induce disease in one of its most fearful forms. From such a state I recovered in 1800 by going to Portugal, and suddenly changing climate, occupation, and all internal objects: and I have kept it off since by a good intellectual regimen."[2]

In a letter dated February 16, 1811, to Grosvenor Bedford, Southey indicated that his interest had shifted from Pelayo, the victorious restorer of Spain, to Roderick, the defeated king of the Goths, a change that finally made the poem a tragedy rather than an epic: "I have again taken to Pelayo, after a long interval, and the third section is nearly finished..... I am afraid that, having thus begun ab ovo, I

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1 Southey does not make clear what the second poem is. It may be Robin Hood, begun in 1824, but planned as early as 1809; or it may be Oliver Newman, begun in 1815, but planned in 1811. At this time he was also working on the Life of Nelson.
2 Life and Correspondence, vol.III, p.300.

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must change the title of the poem, and call it Spain restored, for Pelayo cannot appear till I have got on a thousand lines. If I cared about rules, this would be a fault; but the structure must depend upon the materials, and I have not too much of Roderick in the beginning, considering the part he has to play in the end."[1] The reading of Scott's Don Roderick and of sections of Landor's Count Julian -- Landor sent Southey each completed part of his tragedy for criticism -- somewhat encouraged him to go on with Roderick in the spring and summer of 1811. But in the winter he was distracted by plans for a new work, the history of religion in England and the defense of Anglicanism which he called The Book of the Church.[2] At this time a visitor at Keswick interested Southey a great deal. "Here is a young man at Keswick who acts upon me as my own ghost would do. He is just what I was in 1794..... At present he has got to the Pantheistic stage of philosophy, and, in the course of a week, I expect he will be a Berkleyan, for I have put him upon a course of Berkeley. It has surprised him a good deal to meet, for the first time in his life, with a man who perfectly understands him, and does him full justice. I tell him that all the difference between us is that he is nineteen, and I am thirty-seven; and I dare say it will not be very long before I shall succeed in convincing him that he may be a true philosopher, and do a great deal of good,

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1 Ibid., p.304.
2 Ibid., pp.320-321.

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with £6000 a year; the thought of which troubles him a great deal more at present than ever the want of sixpence (for I have known such a want) did me...."[1] But the young Shelley, with his bride Harriet Westbrook, left Keswick impervious to Southey's influence, and the acquaintanceship that resulted from this first meeting was not strong enough to prevent the ill-feeling that later developed between the two.

In the spring of 1812 Southey had little time for work on Roderick, for public affairs engrossed his attention. He was greatly distressed at the severe depression of 1812-1813, and he feared that conditions would become so acute that the poor, in self-defense, would rise up to kill the rich.[2] The murder of the reactionary Spencer Perceval moved him to tears, and the extreme conservatism of his attitude at this time is evident in his wish that the liberty of debate and the freedom of the press be temporarily suspended.[3] In the summer, however, he gained sufficient equanimity to take up Roderick again. In September he wrote to J. Neville White: ".... I have made some progress this summer in my poem, much to my satisfaction. It must be called "Roderick, the Last of the Goths", not "Pelayo", as was originally intended. It is very unlike anything attempted yet in prose or rhyme."[4] But work on the Life of Nelson, which was rapidly nearing completion, allowed him but little time for poetry, and by January, 1813,

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1 Ibid., pp.325-326.
2 Ibid., pp.334-335.
3 Ibid., p.342.
4 Selections from the Letters of Robert Southey, vol.II, p.294.

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he had not yet composed half of Roderick.[1]

For several months he made scarcely any advance, and when, in July, he announced that "'Roderick', which has long been aground, is just afloat again", a new distraction appeared. Henry James Pye, the Poet Laureate, died, and the honor was offered to Scott. Scott, for various reasons, declined, and recommended Southey. Because he had written "some good things in favour of the Spaniards", Southey was pleasing to the Prince Regent[2], and in September, 1813, after a few days of entertainment in London, he was installed as Poet Laureate. Although the honor of his new position was a subject of jest for Southey, he took its duties seriously: he immediately set about composing a Carmen Triumphale for the new year and an ode for the marriage of the Princess Charlotte. It was not until December that he found time for Roderick. He sent the completed books to the printer, and the proofing of the first part spurred him on to finishing the poem. He saw more merit in his work now, and he wrote to John King: "You will be pleased with the poem. It is deep tragedy throughout, but that kind of tragedy which elevates the mind instead of depressing it."[3]

In March, 1814, he divided his attention between his History of Brazil and Roderick, but by May Roderick had become his main occupation, and before the spring was out he had finished nineteen of the twenty-five books.[4] Finally, on July 14,

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1 Life and Correspondence, vol.IV, p.7.
2 Ibid., p.42.
3 Selections from the Letters of Robert Southey, vol.II, p.345.
4 Ibid., p.353.

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1814, nine years after the conception of the poem, Roderick, the Last of the Goths was finished; it was published in November, 1814. A French translation in prose was made by "M. B. de S." in 1820, and a second prose translation by M. le Chevalier in 1821. In 1823-24 Vrouwe Katharina Wilhelmina Bilderdijk rendered Roderick into Dutch verse.[1]

Southey expected no large financial return from the sale of Roderick, but he entertained a deep, and justified, conviction that it represented the best of his poetic powers. "I am neither sanguine about its early, nor doubtful about its ultimate, acceptation in the world. The passion is in a deeper tone than in any of my former works; I call it a tragic poem for this reason; and also that the reader may not expect the same busy and complicated action which the term heroic might seem to promise."[2] As he worked at Roderick, he felt age come upon him, and he knew that this was the last of his "Epic Dreams": "You have in Roderick," he wrote to Dr. Gooch, "the best which I have done, and, probably, the best that I shall do, which is rather a melancholy feeling for the author. My powers, I hope, are not yet verging upon decay, but I have no right to expect any increase or improvement, short as they are of what they might have been, and of what I might have hoped to make them. Perhaps I shall never venture upon another poem of equal extent, and in so deep a strain."[3]

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1 Preface (1838) to Roderick, Collected Works, vol.IX, pp.ix, xiv..
2 Life and Correspondence, vol.IV, p.83.
3 Ibid., p.90.

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It would be impossible to enumerate all the probable sources of Roderick, the Last of the Goths. Southey's interest in Spain dates from his first trip to Portugal in 1795. A year later he was composing Letters from Spain and Portugal, filled with observations on Spanish history and social customs. In 1800 he began collecting materials for a projected History of Portugal, a task that involved frequent notice of Spain's past, and in 1804 he selected a Spanish gentleman as the fictitious author of his Letters from England by Don Manuel Espriella. When he wrote the historical section of the Edinburgh Annual Register for 1809, he concentrated almost his entire attention on Spain. In addition to these endeavors, he had concerned himself with the old Spanish chronicles, such as that of the Cid. In short, for about fourteen years before Roderick was begun, Southey had been reading, thinking, and writing about Spanish history. One principal source for his treatment of the figure of Roderick may, however, be indicated -- the fanciful Crónica del Rey Don Rodrigo, published at Valladolid in 1527. The Chronicle, which is a kind of saint's legend, full of "rules of life", prayers, and proper penances, tells the history of the King with a marked religious bias, emphasizing especially his life as hermit after his disappearance from Covadonga, a life beset by the Devil's black magic and tempting apparitions. According to this chronicle, Roderick, in final penance for his sins, immures himself in a cavern with a two-headed serpent, who eats with one mouth at

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his heart, and with the other, at his "nature", until both the seat of his fatal passion and the instrument for the satisfaction of it are devoured, whereupon his soul ascends to God.

Southey has converted this crude piece of hagiography into a poem of fine human interest and emotional appeal, and, in Roderick, the Visigothic king appears, not as an incredible saint tormented by demons, but as a tragic human being tortured by conscience and seeking spiritual recovery.

The story of Roderick involves political complications. Before the poem begins, two royal Visigothic families, the house of Chindasuintho and that of Wamba, have been in deadly enmity. King Witiza, of the Wamba line, has murdered Favila, a son of old King Chindasuintho, urged on to the deed by Favila's wife, with whom he has had adulterous relations. Witiza has further incurred the hatred of the Chindasuintho line by putting out the eyes of Favila's brother, Theodofred. To strengthen his hold on the Visigothic throne, Witiza drove Pelayo, the son of Favila, into exile; but Roderick, the son of Theodofred, rose to avenge his house. He blinded Witiza, in retaliation for the cruelty inflicted on Theodofred, and seized the throne. Roderick successfully maintained his position for ten years, repelling both the Moors, who looked with eager eyes on Spain, and the Wamba faction, eager to secure the throne again. In an evil hour, however, Roderick, unhappily married to the worthless Egilona, fell passionately in love with Florinda, daughter of the powerful Visigothic

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lord, Count Julian, and violated her. Julian, mad for vengeance, turned traitor and opened Spain to the Moors.

The poem begins with a description of the fierce eight-days' defense that Roderick makes against the invaders. The knowledge that his sin has brought this visitation upon Spain torments his conscience, and when he perceives that the offspring of Witiza fight on the side of the Moors, and that victory is hopeless, he tries to find death in battle. But God will not allow this man to die, burdened as he is with guilt, and the mighty Roderick, realizing for the first time the magnitude of his trespass, is struck with fear: he is doomed to live because God will not receive him among the dead. He drops from his horse, puts aside his royal armor and sword, and dons the garment that he strips from a dead peasant.

The next morning the victorious Moors find the King's chariot, horse, and helmet beside the river, and surmise that Roderick lies among the Christians and Moors who clog the course of the stream. Pelayo now is the theoretical King of the Visigoths, but Pelayo is held captive in Cordoba, and the Moors, confident that there is none to oppose them, spread their power over Spain.

Meanwhile Roderick has begun his pilgrimage of atonement, the process of catharsis that will finally make him worthy of death, and it is with this pilgrimage that the poem is mainly concerned. For seven days, maddened by guilt, he wanders in the wilderness; on the eighth evening he comes upon a monastery, abandoned by all except one aged monk, Romano,

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who, wishing martyrdom, has remained to be killed by the Moors. But Romano believes that it is Heaven's will that he live long enough to secure the reconciliation of the dethroned King with God; he takes down the Virgin's image and accompanies Roderick in flight from the Moors.

For a year Roderick and Romano live in the wilderness, where Roderick, under the kindly ministration of the monk, regains some peace of mind. But the old man, weak in body and unable to endure the severity of the elements, dies. In solitude, Roderick's sense of his wretchedness deepens. He digs a grave, and waits for death. Even the sea-birds know his insignificance, for they disdain to fly at his approach. At night visions of his past life mock him: his marriage with the woman who could give him neither the love nor the son that he desired; his meeting with Florinda, "a spirit like his own", his pure love for her, his temptation, and his moment of weakness. Now temptation comes again, inviting him to find escape in suicide. He throws himself on Romano's grave and cries:

> I am too weak
> For solitude... too vile a wretch to bear
> This everlasting commune with myself.
> The Tempter hath assailed me; my own heart
> Is leagued with him; Despair hath laid the nets
> To take my soul, and Memory, like a ghost,
> Haunts me, and drives me to the toils. O saint,
> While I was blest with thee, the hermitage
> Was my sure haven! Look upon me still,
> For from thy heavenly mansion thou canst see
> The suppliant; look upon thy child in Christ.
> Is there no other way for penitence?
> I ask not martyrdom; for what am I
> That I should pray for triumphs, the fit meed
> Of a long life of holy works like thine;

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> Or how should I presumptuously aspire
> To wear the heavenly crown resigned by thee,
> For my poor sinful sake? Oh point me thou
> Some humblest, painfulest, severest path...
> Some new austerity, unheard of yet
> In Syrian fields of glory, or the sands
> Of holiest Egypt. Let me bind my brow
> With thorns, and barefoot seek Jerusalem,
> Tracking the way with blood; there day by day
> Inflict upon this guilty flesh the scourge,
> Drink vinegar and gall, and for my bed
> Hang with extended limbs upon the Cross,
> A mightly crucifixion!.. any thing
> Of action, difficulty, bodily pain,
> Labour, and outward suffering,.. any thing
> But a stillness and this dreadful solitude![1]

He falls into a sleep, and dreams that his mother, Rusilla, prays for mercy on his soul and, clothed in shining armor, supplicates her son and kinsmen to rescue Spain.

Heartened by this vision, Roderick journeys forth to seek his redemption. He passes through the town of Leyria, held by the Moors, and sees on every side the oppression of the invaders. He goes on his way, mistaken now for a mad beggar, now for a holy saint, never recognized as the King, and one night he enters the walls of Auria, filled with the corpses of Christians and Moors. A woman, the only survivor, asks him to help bury her child, husband, and parents, and when the work is done Adosinda tells him her story; how she had been spared from the slaughter at the behest of a Moorish chief who desired her; how, in the night, she, like Judith of Bethulia, took his own sword and struck off his head; how she came back to Auria to inter her dead and to vow that she will rouse the land against the impious invaders. Fired by

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1 Works, vol.IX, pp.16-17.

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the woman's zeal, Roderick cries that he too will dedicate himself to the cause, and at this instant the way of atonement is revealed to him: by securing his country's redemption, he may find redemption for himself; with the invaders' blood he may wash away his own sins.

The two part, Adosinda to enlist the vassals of her father's house, Roderick to journey to the monastery of St. Felix to confer with the abbot Adoar and with Urban, Archbishop of Toledo. The province of Asturias is still free, and the mountaineers need only a leader to incite them to spirited defense. Pelayo, Roderick asserts, is, by ancient right, the present King of Spain, and Odoar and Urban commission Roderick, who has assumed the name of Father Maccabee, to find Pelayo in Cordoba and reveal the plan to him. Before Roderick leaves the monastery, Urban consecrates him unto the Lord and bids him bring repentance and salvation to those who have renounced their faith and accepted the religion of the Moors. Thus the sinner in search of his own redemption has become the saviour who brings salvation to others.

On the way to Cordoba, Roderick, stopping for the night at an inn, hears himself cursed as the cause of Spain's ruin. Siverian, an old retainer of Roderick's, speaks in hot defense of the King, but fails to recognize him in the gaunt, emaciated figure that sits beside him. The next morning, on the road, Roderick kills a Moor who has insulted him. Siverian witnessing the deed, applauds it, and is enlisted in the cause

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by Roderick. Siverian too seeks Pelayo, to warn him that his sister Guisla, tainted by her mother's sin, is accepting the advances of the renegade Numacian, who holds the district of Gegio for the Moors.

Outside the walls of Cordoba Siverian and Roderick enter a mansion that contains the tombs of Theodofred, Roderick's father, and of the adulterous wife of Favila. Here Siverian tells how the young Roderick, after overthrowing Witiza, entered the house in triumph, passed terrible judgment on him, but spared his brother Orpas, who was a priest, and Witiza's children by Favila's wife, Sisibert and Ebba, in deference to Pelayo. As Siverian speaks, a tall figure, clad in sackcloth, barefooted, ashes on his head, confronts them. It is Pelayo, come to do penance for his mother. Roderick, still unrecognized, tells Pelayo of the planned uprising and announces to him that he has been chosen to be the restorer of Spain. In the tombs, fittingly enough, and strewn with penitential ashes, Pelayo accepts the "Crown of Thorns" that Spain offers him, and Roderick, once the proud monarch, falls upon his knees and kisses the hand of the new King. The first step of purification has been taken: Roderick has humbled himself.

Pelayo, however, is held captive by the Moors in Cordoba, and has given his word that, if allowed to visit his mother's grave, he will not attempt escape this night. He returns to Cordoba, determined to slip out of the city on the following evening. Florinda, the daughter of Julian, waits

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beside his gate and requests audience of him. She grieves for Roderick, whom she, like all the rest, believes dead; she feels intense shame for her father, who, maddened by Roderick's insult, has turned apostate and joined the Moors; but, worst of all, the priestly brother of Witiza, Orpas, who has renounced his faith and accepted Mohammedanism in order to gain high station among the Moors, wishes to marry her so that he may secure Julian's lands. She begs Pelayo to help her escape, and that night he takes her with him on his flight to the Asturian hills, where the loyal mountaineers wait to rally round him. On the road they are met by Roderick and Siverian. Florinda sees in Roderick only an old monk to whom she may make confession, and in the darkness she confides in him that she yielded to Roderick, returning his guilty passion, driving him to the rape that has branded him an arch-villain. Trembling with emotion, Roderick bids her pray for the fallen King, and Florinda gratefully kisses his hand.

On the way to the Asturian hills, Pelayo gathers his forces. Adosinda has gone before him and, with fiery words, has roused peasant and nobleman. In Count Pedro's territory the Spaniards, in a skirmish with the Moors, are victorious. After Pelayo has arrived at his castle, Adosinda and a band of men and women enter the gates with Moorish heads upon their saddle-horns; among the women are Guisla, unwillingly rescued from her renegade lover, and Rusilla, Roderick's mother. Roderick resolves to reveal himself to his mother,

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but when he finds her with Florinda, who has palliated his own offense by admitting her guilt in it, and when he sees that his mother has at last accepted his death with resignation, he cannot confess his identity. Only the old dog who lies at Rusilla's feet penetrates the disguise of Father Maccabee and follows him to the wood. There Roderick caresses the dog which alone links him, a penitent, with the sinner that he once was.

There Siverian tells him that Pelayo, upon hearing Florinda's story, has absolved Roderick of guilt and only wishes that the King were still alive so that he, Pelayo, might enlist his forces under him and restore him to his throne. Temptation again assails Roderick: he may again be King; he may again enjoy the love of his mother, his people, and even Florinda, for Egilona, his treacherous wife, has already married Abdalaziz, the Moorish Governor of Spain.

> Down, guilty thoughts!
> Firmly he said within his soul; lie still,
> Thou heart of flesh! I thought thou hadst been quelled,
> And quelled thou shalt be! Help me, O my God,
> That I may crucify this inward foe!
> Yea, thou hast helped me, Father! I am strong,
> O Saviour, in thy strength.[1]

The moment of weakness gone, Roderick, in the character of Father Maccabee, bids Siverian assemble the people so that they, on this day, may acclaim Pelayo their King. And Roderick's redemption advances nearer, for he ~~last~~ lets slip by the opportunity to regain his past glory. When his mother

1 Ibid., p.157.

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finally recognizes him and mentions the hope of his assuming again the kingship, he replies:

> Time passes on,
> The healing work of sorrow is complete;
> All vain desires have long been weeded out,
> All vain regrets subdued; the heart is dead,
> The soul is ripe and eager for her birth.[1]

Pelayo, meanwhile, ascending the Vale of Covadonga, reaches the mountain fastness where his wife, Gaudiosa, and his children, Favila and Hermesind, are in hiding. There follows a joyful reunion, described by Southey with his inordinate fondness for domestic scenes of protracted length. Pelayo brings his family down to his castle, and, amid the assembly of the host, is proclaimed King of Spain.

New hordes of invaders have come from Africa, and the Moors marshal their strength in preparation for a decisive battle that will insure Moorish dominion of Spain. Count Julian has been given high rank among them, but his position is threatened by the machinations of Orpas, the apostate priest, who, being denied Florinda's hand, now seeks to usurp Julian's place. Julian, however, pleads his cause before the Moorish chief, Abulcacem, who rules that, since Julian has done all he can, short of compulsion, to effect the marriage of Florinda and Orpas, he is to be released from his promise to the priest. Julian, brooding on his treachery and feeling his end approaching, sends a messenger to the Spaniards requesting that Florinda return to care for her father. The same mes-

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1 Ibid., p.177.

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senger carries the Moors' defiance to Pelayo:

> Repent and be forgiven!
> .....
> .....Is not the Earth the Lord's?
> And we, his chosen people, whom he sends
> To conquer and possess it in his name?[1]

Florinda comes to her father, but with her she brings, as Christian comforter, Father Maccabee; and by a spring in the forest Count Julian meets his hated enemy. Roderick, by irritating argument, attempts to provoke the Count into killing him and thus even up the score. But the Count is too conscious of his own guilt to strike the old man whom he knows only as a Christian priest.

Meanwhile a troop of the Moors, informed by the faithless Guisla that the Spanish may be trapped in the Vale of Covadonga, advance into the valley. But Pelayo's men, in hiding along the steep sides of the vale, roll great boulders down on the invaders. News of this defeat is brought back to the Moorish camp, and Julian, held in distrust by the Moors because of Orpas's insinuations, is assassinated. As he lies dying, he repents his treachery and asks Father Maccabee to receive him back in the Church. The priest now reveals himself as Roderick, and begs the forgiveness of the Count, who, with his last breath, calls Roderick friend. Florinda, weak and weary of life, has waited only for this moment, and now that it has come she cries, "O God!..... thou hast restored

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1 Ibid., p.187.

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me all.... All.. in one hour!" and dies in Roderick's arms.[1]

Roderick believes that he too is at last worthy of death, and he prepares to meet it as a king, in the midst of battle. He reclaims his splendid battle-charger, Orelio, from Orpas, whom he crushes beneath the horse's hooves; he takes Julian's sword, and leads the dead Count's forces over to the Spaniards. There, mounted on Orelio, he is recognized as the King, and the Spaniards, spirited by the return from the dead, ride forth to repel the advance of the Moorish army. Siverian cries out to Roderick that this will be his greatest victory, but the King replies:

> O good Siverian, happier victory
> Thy son hath now achieved... the victory
> Over the world, his sins and his despair.[2]

The Spaniards charge into battle. Roderick, "like a lover seeking death", executes full vengeance on the Moors, but he suddenly realizes that Heaven again has raised its shield over him; it is not given him to die, for further penance is demanded of him, and sadly he bows before Heaven's will.

The Moors are defeated, and the province of Asturia is made safe for the continuation of Christian rule in Spain. But on the next day no trace of Roderick can be found. Orelio, smeared with blood, stands upon the bank of the Sella; Julian's sword, clotted with blood, lies on the grass;

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1 Ibid., p.331.
2 Ibid., p.344.

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> ..... but where was he whose hand
> Had wielded it so well that glorious day?..
>
> Days, months, and years, and generations passed,
> And centuries held their course, before, far off
> Within a hermitage near Viseu's walls
> A humble tomb was found, which bore inscribed
> In ancient characters King Roderick's name.[1]

A consideration of even the plot alone of Roderick reveals this to be the most human of all Southey's long poems. Despite the wild, flashing lights that Coleridge admired in Thalaba and Kehama, Southey knew that in these narratives something was lacking, that in his attainment of the most reckless heights of fantasy he had lost a prime requisite of moving poetry -- human interest. In Roderick he sought to find again this element, and his emphasis on the human is so strong that the poem finally concerns itself with the psychology of drama rather than with the action of epic. In the second book of Roderick this interest in humanity is strikingly stated. The King, in solitude, yearns for the companionship of living things, the reassurance that he shares the inherent nobility of human beings. Even the timid sea-birds ignore him.

> But to lose
> His human station in the scale of things,..
> To see brute nature scorn him, and renounce
> Its homage to the human form divine;..
> Had then Almighty vengeance thus revealed
> His punishment, and was he fallen indeed
> Below fallen man, below redemption's reach,..
> Made lower than the beasts, and like the beasts
> To perish![2]

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1 Ibid., p.350.
2 Ibid., p.14.

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But it must not be supposed that Southey believed that man finds in the fear of wild things testimony to his supremacy. It will be remembered that, in Kehama, Kailyal's purity placed her in harmony with all the creatures of the forest; the same belief -- that man's highest nobility represents his erstwhile ideal condition in pristine nature -- is voiced by Roderick:

> As we put off
> The cares and passions of this fretful world,
> It may be too that we thus far approach
> To elder nature, and regain in part
> The privilege through sin in Eden lost.
> The timid hare soon learns that she may trust
> The solitary penitent, and birds
> Will light upon the hermit's harmless hand.[1]

This communion with birds and beasts, however, is not to be gained by man's loss of his human feeling but by the highest refinement of it.

In man's relation to his fellowmen, the truest manifestation of this high humanity is an almost infinite power of forgiving. Like the hero of Dostoevsky's Idiot, Southey believed that no grievance should ever outmeasure pardon. Count Julian, whose hatred of Roderick moved him to sacrifice honor itself to revenge, finally dies in Roderick's arms, calling him friend and seeking his forgiveness. Pelayo's adulterous mother, after having caused the death of his father and the disgrace of his house, cries, when dying, for pardon.

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1 Ibid., p.154.

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'Twas not in vain that on her absent son,
Pelayo's mother from the bed of death
Called for forgiveness, and in agony
Besought his prayers; all guilty as she was,
Sure he had not been human, if that cry
Had failed to pierce him.[1]

When Florinda confesses her guilt to Roderick, whom she knows now only as Father Maccabee, and when Roderick, in the grip of emotion, stands silent, she misinterprets his thoughts. He, like other men, is judging Roderick, and it is not within man's privilege to pass sentence.

Oh what are we,
Frail creatures as we are, that we should sit
In judgement man oh man! and what were we,
If the All-merciful should mete to us
With the same rigorous measure wherewithal
Sinner to sinner metes![2]

All men sin, and a sinner has no right to condemn the transgressions of others. God does not judge, but understands the dark motives for crime and forgives.

But God beholds
The secrets of the heart,.. therefore his name
Is Merciful.[3]

And man can do no better than emulate this virtue in God.

It is, however, man's privilege to judge himself, and the surest criterion of his moral dignity or baseness is his honest estimate of his own soul. In self-approval, well justified, he finds at the same time his greatest happiness

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1 Ibid., p.67.
2 Ibid., p.93.
3 Ibid.

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and his highest strength,[1] and when Roderick, on the battle-field, cries out that he has triumphed over the world, his sins and despair, he knows that his soul has found its ultimate nobility.

Southey ponders again, in Roderick, the problem of free will and determinism. It is evident that this is no topic for theoretical speculation on Southey's part, but a question with personal implications: one of the strong points of his faith was the belief that he was the master of his destiny. He wrote Kehama to show the falsity of eastern determinism, and a somewhat too glib assurance characterizes his treatment of the problem in that poem. But by the time of the composition of Roderick his perception of the evidence in human existence counter to a complete belief in freedom of will had brought a certain degree of confusion to his mind. He wonders if Roderick, in reviewing his rise and fall, his sins and penances, did not question the part that his own volition had played in the series of painful experiences.

> Did the auguries
> Which opened on thy spirit bring with them
> A perilous consolation, deadening heart
> And soul, yea worse than death,.. that thou through all
> Thy checquered way of life, evil and good,
> Thy errors and thy virtues, hadst but been
> The poor mere instrument of things ordained,..
> Doing or suffering, impotent alike
> To will or act,.. perpetually bemocked
> With semblance of volition, yet in all
> Blind worker of the ways of destiny![2]

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1 Ibid., pp.167,173.
2 Ibid., p.166.

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But in the next moment Roderick, "with faith elate", dismisses "that thought intolerable".[1] It should be noticed, however, that Southey no longer attempts to reason himself out of the dilemma, but relies on faith alone. This philosophical uncertainty resolving into belief by faith is more strikingly evident in the last words of Julian:

> Vain hope, if all the evil was ordained,
> And this wide wreck the will and work of Heaven,
> We but the poor occasion! Death will make
> All clear, and joining us in better worlds,
> Complete our union there![2]

The inadequacy of reason finds its complement in the all-sufficiency of faith; likewise, the perfection of the after-life makes amends for the faults of this. Like Coleridge and Wordsworth, Southey was struck by the mutability of earthly existence, the swift passage of beauty and goodness; but his belief in immortality was ever quicker than his critical perception of the scheme of things. Thus, when Rusilla reminds Roderick that he may recover his kingly grandeur, he replies:

> Dreams such as thine pass now
> Like evening's clouds before me; if I think
> How beautiful they seem, 'tis but to feel
> How soon they fade, how fast the night shuts in.
> But in that World to which my hopes look on,
> Time enters not, nor Mutability;
> Beauty and goodness are unfading there;
> Whatever there is given us to enjoy,
> That we enjoy for ever, still the same...[3]

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1 Ibid., p.167.
2 Ibid., p.230.
3 Ibid., p.176.

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How may the perfection of Heaven be reached by sinful man? Religion, Southey believes, is a sure aid, and by religion he does not mean merely the Christian faith. Roderick, in his conversation with Julian, agrees that, in a sense, all creeds lead to Heaven, that a special indulgence must be granted to those who through accident of birth, like the men who lived and died before Christ's coming, were not born "amid the light". But for the man who, offered the benefits of the enlightened faith, turns to darkness, there is scant hope unless he repent.[1] It is such darkness that leads the reason to believe

> Either in some freak of power
> This frame of things was fashioned, then cast off
> To take its own wild course, the sport of chance;
> Or the bad Spirit o'er the Good prevails,
> And in the eternal conflict hath arisen
> Lord of the ascendant![2]

It is true that there is evil in life, and we would be justified in thinking of God as a malign deity if there were no world but this. The "great stream of things", like a river, is pure at its source; only when it flows among men does it gather filth and show itself a thing of evil; but as it begins its return to its source, it loses its pollution, as the river is cleaned of its filth in "the wide world of waters".

> Good the beginning, good the end shall be,
> And transitory evil only makes
> The good end happier.[3]

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1 Ibid., pp.194-195.
2 Ibid., p.200.
3 Ibid., p.201.

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The same optimism characterizes Southey's view of individual character: the twisted can be made straight; guilt is effaced by repentance, suffering by death. The visitations of calamity do not obscure the soul but cause it to shine with a softer and richer beauty, just as a cloud, covering the moon, diffuses the beams to soft silver folds, and, passing, "leaves her in her light serene".[1]

But the merit of Roderick lies not in its idea but in its presentation of character, its effective use of incident, its description, and its truly fine verse. In the figure of the hero Southey created his most convincing character, -- a character who meets all of Aristotle's qualifications for the tragic hero; he is a man of high place who, through a flaw in his nature -- indiscreet passion --, comes to ruin; the punishment greatly exceeds the guilt, and Southey thus creates a condition in which his hero shows his finest points of character. With psychological truth Southey rounds out the suffering and greatness of Roderick -- on the battlefield, bewildered at the havoc he has caused; in the solitude of the wilderness, made desperate by pictures of the past, maddened with utter loneliness; on city streets, looking with beggar's eyes on possessions he once called his own; in the tavern, hearing his name cursed, yet scarcely identifying himself with that name. As his importance to the Spanish cause increases, his personality, his recognition of himself as a living being,

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1 Ibid., p.303.

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returns, and the keynote of his character, once imperial pride, is now humble piety. When Adosinda, among the ruins of Auria, gave him a monk's name, she also gave him a monk's nature, and the priest almost entirely usurps the kingly warrior, until in the final scene on the battlefield the two temperaments unite as two themes in music, and in contrapuntal glory Roderick, the soldier-saint, executes God's vengeance with the sword. It is such a consummation as Roderick desired, and with it he hoped to end his life. But it is not Heaven's plan to close his destiny with such magnificence, and Roderick reveals his nobility in resignation to God's decree that he go on living. The religious strain parts from the imperial one; the clash of arms subsides, and only the soft monotone of the cloister is left; and when that is gone too, there is the silence of spent passion that marks the close of high tragedy.

No less effective is the character of Count Julian, who, even more than Roderick, shows Southey's comprehension of the "dark secrets" of heart and mind. Earlier in his career Southey would have made a villain of Julian, for to the unpracticed eye the Count offers only foul treachery to faith and country. Perhaps Landor's treatment of Julian warned Southey that here was no man of base impulse but a tragic figure worthy of the subtlest understanding. It is the clash of rigid systems of honor that causes Julian's downfall in Southey's poem: Roderick violates Julian's daughter, and, to satisfy one kind of honor, Julian must seek vengeance; but his

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revenge causes him to sacrifice another honor -- his fidelity to country and religion. The shock of this spiritual collision makes him a somber, brooding figure, at odds with himself, the world, and destiny. He can secure peace with himself only through staunch adherence to his apostasy and complete hatred of Roderick; but, although his reason, sharpened to a razor edge, can find more than sufficient justification for his treachery, his emotion draws him back to the faith of his fathers; secretly and against his will he hopes for Spain's success, for the defeat of his own cause; and -- his final failure and tragic victory -- he dies loving the man for whose ruin he has cast off honor, for whom and himself -- he has tried to believe -- there is no room in Heaven or Hell.

The sublimity that Southey reached in Thalaba and Kehama through supernatural action he achieves, in the figures of Roderick and Julian, through natural character; but unfortunately it is in Roderick and Julian alone that this excellence shows itself -- the rest of the characters are, in comparison, painfully obvious. Romano, the monk, it is true, convinces by his simplicity and utter devotion to his faith, and Florinda, through sheer desolation of [illegible], arouses pity; but these are extremes of character that move not of their own volition but by the impetus that situation gives them. The other women, Rusilla, Gaudiosa, Guisla, Adosinda, are the merest types -- the first, of the "stout Roman matron"; the second, of the loving, heroic wife conventional in epic; the third, of the

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vicious, immoral woman; the fourth, of the inspired zealot, A Spanish Joan of Arc. Of the men, Pelayo, originally the hero of the piece, is a reduced version of Madoc and much less attractive; Siverian is nothing more than a stock character -- the usual feudal retainer with the familiar attribute of loyalty; Orpas is a villain, Simon pure, of melodrama breed; and Abulcacem, the Moorish chief, traces his lineage directly to The Siege of Rhodes. Yet, through the characters of Roderick and Julian, the poem is impressive as a record of human suffering and its fruits.

Southey reveals his dramatic power not only in presentation of character but also in the invention of strongly effective situations. Florinda vindicates Roderick to Roderick himself, whom she believes to be merely an old priest, and Roderick's enforced silence at this strange confession is truly moving. It is Roderick, the dethroned King in disguise, who first greets Pelayo as the new monarch in the tomb of Theodofred, and later, in the coronation ceremony, Roderick, as Father Maccabee, presents the kingly armor to Pelayo. Florinda, sorrowing for the lover whom she believes dead, asks Father Maccabee to pray for him. And -- most impressive of all -- Roderick, who caused Julian's apostasy, in the character of priest receives the dying Julian back in the Church; and Florinda finds happiness in her lover's arms only in the very moment of death. It is the use of this highest type of irony that provides poignant complement to the tragedy of character

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in Roderick.

Southey delayed the composition of Roderick until he had become familiar with the topography and general appearance of the localities that are featured in the poem. As a result, Roderick is rich in description of the Spanish landscape. It has been noticed that in his previous long poems Southey was attracted to the vast and the awful in nature; but in Roderick he shows himself to be a minute observer, percipient of the more delicate aspects and the quiet moods of the forest and stream:

> An arrow's flight above that mountain stream
> There was a little glade, where underneath
> A long smooth mossy stone a fountain rose.
> An oak grew near, and with its ample boughs
> O'ercanopied the spring; its fretted roots
> Emboss'd the bank, and on their tufted bark
> Grew plants which love the moisture and the shade;
> Short ferns, and longer leaves of wrinkled green
> Which bent toward the spring, and when the wind
> Made itself felt, just touch'd with gentle dip
> The glassy surface, ruffled ne'er but then,
> Save when a bubble rising from the depth
> Burst, and with faintest circles marked its place,
> Or if an insect skimmed it with its wing,
> Or when in heavier drops the gathered rain
> Fell from the oak's high bower. The mountain roe,
> When, having drank there, he would bound across,
> Drew up upon the bank his meeting feet,
> And put forth half his force. With silent lapse
> From thence through mossy banks the water stole,
> Then murmuring hastened to the glen below.
> Diana might have loved in that sweet spot
> To take her noontide rest; and when she stoopt
> Hot from the chase to drink, well pleased had seen
> Her own bright crescent, and the brighter face
> It crowned, reflected there.[1]

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1 Ibid., p.189.

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As this passage shows, Southey's blank verse in Roderick exhibits fine flexibility and musical quality. It readily adapts itself to every purpose of its maker. It can be delicately descriptive, or swell with Miltonic grandeur:

> Thou hast been busy, Death! this day, and yet
> But half thy work is done; the Gates of Hell
> Are thronged, yet twice ten thousand spirits more,
> Who from their warm and healthful tenements
> Fear no divorce, must ere the sun go down
> Enter the world of woe! the Gate of Heaven
> Is open, too, and Angels round the throne
> Of Mercy on their golden harps this day
> Shall sing the triumphs of Redeeming Love.[1]

The verse can rival Dryden's fine clarity, and serve as a fit instrument of philosophical argument, as is shown in the conversation of Count Julian and Roderick. In the battle scenes it takes on a stormy, tumultous character, and it loves to reach over the universe in collocations of exotic names; but when the necessity arises, it can focus down upon vivid detail: Julian is struck by the assassin --

> They raised him from the earth;
> He, knitting as they lifted him his brow,
> Drew in through open lips and teeth firm-closed
> His painful breath, and on the lance laid hand,
> Lest its long shaft should shake the mortal wound.[2]

But Southey's verse, analytically considered, is by no means perfect: his compromise between archaic and modern diction is frequently awkward; unnatural word-order and elaborate periods sometimes irritate the reader; and too often -- a

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1 Ibid., p.222.
2 Ibid., p.227.

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constant fault with the poet -- his inspiration wanes and he resorts to the use of the conventional phrases of the eighteenth century. It is in the whole effect that the virtue of Southey's poetry lies, and what is true of the versification is true of the poem itself. Viewed sectionally, Roderick is full of faults; viewed as a whole, it is an impressive piece of literature. And it is fitting that this should be the case, for a system of minor faults enclosed in a major excellence reflects life itself as Southey saw it. To retain his hard-won optimism he was forced to fix his eye on the long sweep of time and to set at naught the vulgarity of immediate details. Likewise, the reader, if he is to appreciate Roderick at all, must overlook a number of small deficiencies and concentrate his attention upon the spirit and magnitude of the whole.

Oliver Newman

Although Southey had confided to his friend Dr. Gooch that Roderick would be his last long poem,[1] two more epics, Oliver Newman, begun in 1815, and Robin Hood, in 1823, claimed a part of his attention in the latter quarter of his life. Robin Hood, written in collaboration with Caroline Bowles, who was to become his second wife, is a fragment of some 660 lines, and, aside from the history of its composition, is singularly devoid of interest. But Oliver Newman, another fragment more fully developed, is worthy of detailed consid-

1 He also intimated that A Tale of Paraguay would follow "as "a chaplet for the angel of death".

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eration, inasmuch as it reveals certain aspects of poetic talent and attitudes of intellect not evidenced in the preceding long poems.

Southey did not include Oliver Newman in the Poetical Works he published in 1837 and 1838, but it, with other verse remains, appeared posthumously, edited by his cousin Herbert Hill, in 1845, and was included in the American edition of his collected poems, published in 1864. Hill, speaking of the inception of this piece, quotes a passage from Southey's letter written in January, 1811, to William Taylor: "In reviewing 'Holmes's American Annals', I pointed out Philip's war as the proper subject for an Anglo-American 'Iliad'. I have now fallen in love with it myself; and am brooding over it, with the full intention of falling to work as soon as 'Pelayo' is completed. The main interest will fix upon Goffe, the regicide, for whom I invent a Quaker son; a new character, you will allow, for heroic poetry. This Oliver Goffe, however, is to be the hero."[1]

For a short while the new poem engrossed Southey's attention, and a month later he writes that he has "half mounted" the American subject.[2] But it was not until the early part of 1815 that he actually began composition. On February 3 of that year he writes that he has composed part of the first book in irregular rhyme which, alternating occasionally

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1 Poetical Works (American edition, Boston, 1864, vol.x, p. 351. See also Selections from the Letters of Robert Southey, vol.II, p.213.
2 Life and Correspondence, vol.III, p.398.

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with blank-verse dialogue, will be the principal meter. But presently he grows tired of the project. "The plan is sufficiently made out," he tells Landor, "but I have no longer that ardour of execution which I possessed twenty years ago. I have the disheartening conviction that my best is done, and that to add to the bulk of my works will not add to their estimation. Doubtless I shall go on with the poem and complete it if I live; but it will be to please others, not myself; and will be so long in progress, that in all likelihood I shall never begin another. You see I am not without those autumnal feelings which your stanza expresses, and yet the decline of life has delights of its own -- its autumnal odours and its sunset hues."[1] At the close of the year he was still working on the first book.[2] But as he had prophesied, his progress was slow and desultory, and nothing is more evident than that he has lost his early talent for facile versifying. Four years later, in 1819, he had reached only the third book,[3] and by 1821 only the sixth.[4]

It is difficult to trace the composition of the poem beyond that date, but between 1821 and 1839, when his mind failed, Southey wrote only about eight hundred additional lines, bringing the work only to the tenth of the projected twenty-one books. It is true that in December, 1824, he promised himself that after he had completed A Tale of Paraguay, the difficult stanza of which made unusual demands on his

1 Ibid., vol.IV, pp.101-103.
2 Selections from the Letters of Robert Southey, vol.III, p.8.
3 Ibid., p.130.
4 Ibid., p.230.

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powers, he would work regularly on Oliver Newman and complete it. But he did not reckon on the usual intrusions: family worries and deaths; short trips of travel; interest in social and political problems (he was returned to Parliament for the borough of Downton in 1826, but refused to sit[1]); the preparation of historical, ecclesiastical, and biographical pieces; duties as a reviewer and editor.

The poem as it stands, however, supplemented by a long passage in a letter to C. W. W. Wynn, gives some suggestion of what the completed work might have been. It begins, in the latter part of the seventeenth century, on board a ship bringing colonists from England to Massachusetts. The wife of an exiled Cavalier, seeking her husband in the New World, dies before the ship reaches port; and a young clergyman, Oliver Newman, impresses the passengers with his prayer at the burial services. To his care has been entrusted the dead woman's daughter, Annabel. Although all admire his sincerity and zeal, the Captain and Randolph, a skeptical Cavalier, think they discern a certain inflexibility in his character. He will not speak of his parentage, and his frank admiration for "the blind old traitor Milton" leads Randolph and the Captain to suspect that Newman belongs to the Quaker sect that (in its refusal to bend its religion to the demands of state) has already caused the Massachusetts colony much trouble. And if

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1 Life and Correspondence, volV, p.262. For his reasons for refusing, see The Correspondence of Robert Southey with Caroline Bowles, ed. by Edward Dowden, Dublin and London, 1881, p.108.

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Newman is a Quaker, then his incipient romance with the Cavalier's daughter, Annabel, will come to no good end.

A storm drives the ship off its course, and, until clearer weather comes, it lies in the harbor at Cape Cod. Oliver goes ashore, and, walking in the wilderness, speaks with Byronic melancholy of his secret destiny.

> "Thou Earth, receive me, from my native land
> An unoffending exile! Hear my claim!
> In search of wealth I have not sought thy shore,
> Nor covetous of fame,
> Nor treading in the ambitious steps of power;
> But hiding from the world a hapless name,
> And sacrificing all
> At holiest Duty's call,
> Thou barbarous Land, of thee I only crave,
> For those I love, concealment and a grave."[1]

The reader now guesses that what Randolph darkly hinted at is true: that Oliver Newman is the son of Colonel Goffe, the regicide, who at present is hiding with his father-in-law, Colonel Whalley, also a regicide, in Massachusetts.

Annabel meets Oliver in the forest and tells him of a pitiable spectacle that she has seen -- an Indian woman fettered to a door-post, her back waled and scored by beatings. Oliver, when he sees the mistreated Indian, is overcome with shame for his own countrymen, and buys the slave and her child so that he may send them back to their tribe.

The ship proceeds to Boston, where Oliver meets Leverett, Governor of Massachusetts and an old lover of Oliver's mother. Oliver speaks of his plan to find his father

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1 Works, (American edition), vol.X, pp.290-291.

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and grandfather, to make a home for them in the wilderness, and, having thus discharged his duty to man, serve God by guiding "the poor Indian in the way to Heaven". The Governor points out the obstacles that lie in Oliver's path -- his grandfather's extreme age, his father's stubborn adherence to the sect of Independents and belief in the Kingdom of the Saints, the barbarism of the Indians. But Oliver will not be dissuaded. So with Annabel, the Indian woman, and her son, he sets out. His first intention is to deliver Annabel to her father, who lives in the valley of the Connecticut. After a four days' journey, the little band reaches Willoby's home, and at this point the fragment ends. A letter to C. W. W. Wynn, dated December 15, 1814, tells what was to follow. Of Oliver we read:

> "His first business is to deliver Elizabeth[1] to her father. Proceeding then with the Indian woman and child, they find a wounded Mohawk lying among a party of his dead countrymen. By a piece of savage policy, Philip had waylaid and murdered a party of these Indians, and left them unscalped, that it might be believed the English had killed them, and this being discovered by one who escaped with life, was the main cause of his own destruction. By this Mohawk Oliver remains till he no longer requires assistance. He then proceeds to the woman's tribe, who are in alliance with Philip and his most powerful ally.
>
> A renegade, who lives among the savages, accuses Oliver of being a spy, insults him, and strikes him, which he bears with Quaker patience; and here he hears of the apparition of his father at Halfield, whither he sets out. On the way he falls in with a party of the same tribe, who are examining some booty which they have taken: they open a chest and find in it a dead body, which Oliver recognizes to be Whalley's, by the mutilated hand.

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1 The names Elizabeth and Stanley were in the published fragment changed to Annabel and Willoby.

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> Goffe, in his long captivity, has become a thorough fanatic, and is not very well pleased with the quiet principles of his son. Randolph, on the voyage, had suspected who this son might be by his Christian name, and, by watching him, had obtained a clue to Goffe's hiding-place. Stanley, the old cavalier, is sent to apprehend him, and he finds father and son. Stanley, however, offers to let them go, if Oliver will only declare that this person is not Goffe, which the Quaker will not do, and Randolph, soon afterwards arriving, identifies the regicide.
>
> On their way to the English settlements, the Indians surprise them; Goffe and Stanley escape, Randolph and Oliver are taken. On being brought to the encampment, the latter is recognized and welcomed, and the former condemned to the stake. Oliver obtains his life: they are then set at liberty, and depart.
>
> Goffe rallies some stragglers, makes head against the Indians, and takes some prisoners, whom they are about to dispose of in the usual summary way, when Oliver appears and obtains the disposal of them. He goes to the encampment, and Elizabeth is brought in by the renegade. Scenes ensue, in the course of which Oliver drops his nonresisting principles, and cuts down the renegade with a tomahawk, to the great delight of the Indians. The latter part of the story has not yet clearly developed itself. This tribe makes peace through Oliver's influence: the Mohawk whom he saved comes, at the head of his countrymen, to join the English; Philip is killed; Randolph promises secresy respecting the father, and solicits a grant of land for the son, which Leverett gladly bestows for his services; Stanley gives him his daughter, and the story concludes with a wedding."[1]

Because of the brevity of the fragment and the sketchiness of Southey's outline, it is difficult to say what ideas he meant to emphasize. It is probable, however, that the conflict of church and state, as exemplified by the Quaker's stubborn refusal to comply with the rule of the colony, was to be a major issue. One of Southey's chief criticisms of the

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1 Selections from the Letters of Robert Southey, vol.II, pp. 388-390.

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Catholic Church was the fact that it was a law unto itself, an institution which, with absolute control of its subjects, made demands on them that, at times, were counter to their duties as citizens of a state. It is apparent that he saw the same political inconvenience in any religious group, Catholic or Protestant, which held extreme tenets. At the conclusion of his Life of Wesley he expresses the hope that Methodism will cast off its extravagances, and it is apparent that, in Oliver Newman, he sees Puritanism as an intemperate religion. In January, 1811, when the poem was conceived, he informed Landor that, however noble the "high puritan principles" struck him, he could not help regretting the "stiff puritan manners" and intended to keep them out of sight in his projected work.[1] In the poem, however, he makes no attempt to gloze over this aspect of the puritan temperament, but rather subjects it to frequent criticism. When Oliver tells Leverett that he is a friend of Milton and Penn, the wise Governor answers:

> Milton's friendship
> Will neither hurt nor help thee in a land
> Where they, who stiffliest hold his errors, lift not
> Their thoughts above the earth to follow him,
> When his strong spirit mounts upon the wing,
> Beyond their grovelling vision. But well is it
> Thou hast not from Penn's dangerous fellowship
> Learnt his sectarian speech, and other follies
> Wherewith that formal informality
> Provokes the law. New England writes her statutes
> In blood against the Quakers. Thou hast 'scaped
> Their clownish and uncivil usages;
> But, if there be an inner taint, take heed
> To keep it hidden: openly I must not
> Allow the violation of our laws.[2]

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1 Life and Correspondence, vol.III, p.293.
2 Works (American edition), vol.X, p.314.

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But Oliver has too much of his mother's gentleness to subscribe to the more rigid and strife-provoking doctrines of his sect. He can see the flaws even in Milton's character; and his own temperament, despite Randolph's suspicions, is flexible even to the point of resignation. All in all, he shows himself to be the typical Southey hero, to have the Christian combination of strength and humility that distinguishes Thalaba and Roderick, even Madoc and Joan.

> Myself at least, I know, prepared to act
> Or suffer, with a soul for all events
> Resigned.[1]

But, prepared as he may be to act, he will not do so, for, unlike most of these people, he is passive and pacifist -- a Quaker. The two requisites of the Southey hero are willingness to fight for the good and willingness to endure with resignation any personal pain connected with such action. In the fragment, Newman lacks this nice balance of resignation with the will to act, and Southey seems to wish to restore the equilibrium. As the letter to Wynn shows, the poem, in its later books, would include an incident in which a renegade strikes Oliver and receives no retaliation. But later still, this same renegade was to capture Annabel and bring her to the Indian encampment, and at this provocation Oliver was to drop his "nonresisting principles", kill the renegade, and thus become an active force in the purging of the world's evil. Having found a balance in himself, Oliver (who by this time, no doubt, was to have tempered his father's fanaticism with

1 Ibid., p.313.

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Christian mildness) takes his place in the society of men. He is given a grant of land, marries Annabel, and settles down to a normal life. In the phrases of modern psychology, he has abandoned "private intelligence", the drive that once estranged him from his fellowmen, and has found his "sense of community". Although this analysis of Oliver's character is, by necessity, largely based on conjecture, it is probable that Southey's whole purpose was to make a criticism of fanatic, self-righteous idealism, -- to show that, after all, well-mannered cooperative living is not inconsistent with high principles. Such a purpose is in strong accord with the increasing social sense of his later years. A distinguishing mark of the earlier epic heroes is their feeling that they are not as other men. Thalaba, it will be remembered, was warned that he must work in solitude, and when he dared to seek earthly happiness with his bride, tragedy followed. But with Oliver Newman it is different: he finds his purpose only when he leaves solitude, when he loses the sense that he is a being apart and catches the rhythm of social life.

A word must be said about certain innovations of style in Oliver Newman. When Southey conceived the poem, he planned to make the irregular rhymed stanza, alternating occasionally with blank verse, the principal metrical form. When he wrote, however, the blank verse assumed greater importance. He used it for all the speeches of his characters, and this spoken, or dramatic, element soon overbalanced the

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narrative, for which he used the irregular stanza. As a result, Oliver Newman all but changes into a drama. This dramatic interest is not new to Southey. In 1794 he collaborated with Coleridge on a tragedy, The Fall of Robespierre, and in the same year he composed his blank revolutionary drama, Wat Tyler. In 1799 he was considering several subjects for the stage dramas,[1] and in Thalaba his dramatic interest appears in the few parts of the epic that are couched in dialogue form. Oliver Newman shows a genuine gift for this sort of writing. Its dialogue, in several instances, has a vigor and truth of expression that recalls the Elizabethans. When the Captain and Randolph speak of Newman's possible connection with the Independents, the Captain says:

> And we must needs admit, he hath not left
> His native country in that piggish mood
> Which neither will be led nor driven, but grunts
> And strives with stubborn neck and groundling snout,
> Struggling through mire and brake, to right and left,
> No matter where, so it can only take
> The way it should not go. One of that herd,
> Rather than read the service, would have seen
> The dead thrown overboard without a prayer.
>
> Randolph
>
> Yet he hath freaks and follies of opinion;
> The bubbles of a yeasty mind, that works
> As it would crack its vessel.
>
> Captain
>
> They are ever
> The sweetest nuts in which the maggot breeds.

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1 Life and Correspondence, vol.II, pp.5-7.

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Randolph

> But, once fly-stricken, what avails their sweetness?
> Only to feed a pampered grub, that leaves
> Nothing but dirt and hollowness behind it.[1]

Some of Shakespeare's delight in coining language is apparent in the following lines, spoken by Randolph in reference to Oliver's father and grandfather:

> Fifteen years
> They have hid among them the two regicides,
> Shifting from den to cover, as we found
> Where the scent lay. But, earth them as they will,
> I shall unkennel them, and from their holes
> Drag them to light and justice.[2]

One of the obvious flaws of Southey's epics is the apparent inability of his characters to speak as human beings. It is the more to be regretted, then, that in his late years, when he realized the value of simple, direct, and "unpoetic" speech, he should have lost interest in creative writing.

Robin Hood

The fragment Robin Hood may be dismissed with only a notice of the manner in which it was composed. Southey hit upon the subject early in his career, and by November, 1809, he was contemplating work on it, for when he wrote to his brother to tell him that Kehama was completed, he added that on the next morning he would occupy himself with the plans of

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1 Works (American edition), vol.X, pp.280-281.
2 Ibid., p.283.

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Pelayo and Robin Hood.[1] Apparently nothing more was done until November 4, 1823, when he wrote to Caroline Bowles, suggesting that they form "an intellectual union" for the "joint execution" of the poem.[2]

This woman, who figured so prominently in the last twenty-five years of Southey's life, first, as an understanding friend, and, later, for a brief tragic period, as an adoring wife, was born at Lymington, Hampshire, on December 6, 1786 or 1787 (she herself was unsure of the exact year[3]). Even in early childhood she found her main interest in books, and at the age of five, before she could write, made up rhymes and repeated them to her father. As an only child, she created a fantastic world of her own derived from Oriental fairy-tales and peopled by the pets who served as substitutes for real companions -- the toad, Princess Hemjunal; Chloe, a spaniel; Juba, the colt her father bought for her. The father, with whom she spent happy hours, died when Caroline was still very young, and she was reared under the care of her mother and an old bonne. Later, the isolation of her childhood was broken. She appeared in society, had several admirers, and was once engaged; but her mother disapproved of the match, and the girl obediently ended the attachment.

In 1816, Caroline lost her mother, and the next year,

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1 Life and Correspondence, vol.III, p.267.
2 Robin Hood: A Fragment by the late Robert Southey with Caroline Southey, With other Fragments and Poems, London, 1847; Preface (by Caroline Southey), pp.viii-ix.
3 Correspondence with Caroline Bowles, p.201. A good part of the information about Caroline Bowles' life has been drawn from Dowden's introduction to this correspondence.

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through the unscrupulous conduct of her guardian, was threatened with the loss of her home, Buckland Cottage. She turned to writing as a source of income, and, like many others, sent a sample of her skill, a metrical tale, to Southey for his criticism. He responded kindly, telling her how difficult is a writer's lot but encouraging her to try it. Luckily, she was not forced to await remuneration from this source, for her father's adopted son, now prospering in the East, came to her assistance with an annuity of £150 a year. To this she added the meagre proceeds from her published poems, the first of which was Ellen Fitzarthur, a metrical tale of an unmarried mother.

Much more significant than this modest career in literature was her epistolary friendship with Southey. For five years she corresponded with him. Then in June, 1820, she met him in London. Apparently she fell in love with him on the spot, for she later wrote: "... all that I had meant and wished to say was clean vanished, and ... I had only your charity (and penetration perhaps) to trust to for not setting me down as an unthankful idiot. It is not with me that 'out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh'."[1]

What this lonely woman saw in the famous and handsome Southey is easy to understand. On his part, the affection was, at first, only that which his kindness extended wherever it was needed; but the sprightliness and intelligence of her letters drew warmer responses from him. Her letters, however,

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1 Ibid., p.19.

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were not always cheerful; frequently they expressed a melancholy that had its source in a nervous disorder. Of this ailment which, at times, made life painful almost beyond endurance, Caroline writes that it caused "an almost total loss of memory, a confusion of ideas, a deprivation of all comprehensive power, with such a darkness of spirit as would, indeed, 'turn my day into night', were it not for the one heavenly ray that pierceth all darkness".[1] It was this distress, as much as her real charm and intelligence, that attracted Southey, who loved nothing more than an opportunity to lighten another's burdens.

In the autumn of 1823 Caroline Bowles visited the Southeys at Keswick. Mrs. Southey and the children liked her and persuaded her to prolong her visit. Shortly after she returned to Buckland Cottage, Southey wrote to her, suggesting that they collaborate on Robin Hood. It is obvious that the proposal had a psychiatric rather than a literary motive. He had found that if his own mind was kept full of new projects, it had no space for the gloomy thoughts that otherwise oppressed him. What better cure for Caroline Bowles' melancholy than the same remedy? What better counteractive to her feeling of futility than to work, on an equal basis, with a man whom she considered scarcely less than the most significant force in England? "Am I dreaming," he concludes his letter, "when I think that we may derive from this much high enjoyment, and that you may see in the prospect something which is

1 Ibid., p.28.
2 Ibid., p.42.

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worth living for?"[1] He could "pervert" literary criticism into a humanitarian but unmerited panegyric for a needy author; his attitude toward his own creative ability was as generous. If the occasion warranted, he could turn his powers from the uses of poetry and make them serve the ends of psychiatry. To Coleridge, with his genius, poetic creation was sacred, and he could never have invited an obscure friend to share in the making of a poem merely because that friend's mind demanded occupation. To Southey the poetic gift was also holy, but other things were holier; and if a poem lost and a human being gained, the sacrifice was justified. Such an attitude was not likely to advance his claim as a poet, although it might increase his worth as a man.

Caroline Bowles answered Southey's letter with expressions of deep gratitude. She understood that he was motivated only by a desire to make her in love with life, and she was willing to undertake the humblest portions of the work -- the very commas and semi-colons -- if she might form with him this intellectual union. But if the enterprise were engaged upon, she warned him, two obstacles would hinder its progress - her unstable health and her sense of inferior ability. Yet she was willing to place herself in his hands.[2]

The plan worked well enough at first. Southey contributed the plot, and arranged that Caroline might write of things she knew best -- forest scenery, women, and children.

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1 Ibid., p.42.
2 Ibid., pp.43-44.

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He undertook the more difficult task of depicting manners, describing battles, and controlling the general movement of the whole. He frequently visited Buckland, where he found it easy to write; and, after completing his daily stint of reviewing or editing, he walked beside her Shetland pony or sat by her quiet fireside, talking over what had been done on the poem, and planning what was yet to come. For Caroline the poem acquired fresh significance -- as a ring to unite her spiritually with the poet for all time.

Yet the work was never completed. "Accumulating engagements" and other hindrances prevented Southey from continuing his part, and the amorphous meter of Thalaba, in which the poem was begun, gave Caroline trouble. They frequently pledged themselves, however, to finish it some day when circumstances were more favorable.

In 1837 Mrs. Southey died after four years of insanity. In the next year Southey, now sixty-four, began to show signs of mental decline, and in his need he turned to Caroline, who in 1839 came to Keswick as his wife -- a willing sacrifice, inasmuch as she knew that the loss of his reason was imminent. Still, hope revived; a volume of short poems was planned; Robin Hood was to be taken up again. But the fiat went forth, and "all was in the dust".[1]

In 1847, Caroline, three years after Southey's death, and eight after his complete loss of mind, accomplished her

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1 Robin Hood, Preface (by Caroline Southey), p.xvi.

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purpose. She published the fragment of Robin Hood with shorter pieces by her husband and herself, a "wintry coronal", only the "scantlings" of a crown. Yet here is the culmination of a strange destiny, stranger than any Southey had ever conceived. When Caroline Bowles first came to know Southey, her hold on life was so tenuous that she was content with the mere assurance that he was her "well-wisher". When she fell in love with him, tragic impossibility only caused her to seek compensation in a different sort of union -- a spiritual association that, in the supposed endurance of his literary fame, would unite the two forever. Physical consummation came, ironically late; but still Caroline Bowles could find peace in the contemplation of an everlasting oneness with her "Master of the Spell". In 1847 she believed that, in publishing the poem which both had created, she had assured the permanence of this union -- a triumph over circumstance, madness, and death. In the sonnet that dedicates this volume to her husband's daughter, Edith May Warter, she asserts this permanence with the quiet vehemence of one who would bring the thing to pass by sheer iteration of the wish --

> And the two names shall live -- for they are one.[1]

Time was her worst enemy. She met Southey too late; she married him too late. And time, obscuring her husband's name and hence her own, destroying the union that was to last in "many an after-year", has finally defeated her.

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1 Ibid., p.v.

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The irony is intensified by the fact that Robin Hood is the least significant of all Southey's epic poetry. The fifteen brief sections of the fragment describe, in desultory fashion and generally uninspired verse, how the Lady Emma died in childbirth; how Lord William, to forget his grief, set out on a Crusade; how the new-born babe was reared by a nurse and a monk; how the boy, one day to be known as Robin Hood, looked up from his books when the huntsman's horn was heard, or listened with sparkling eyes to a martial tale. Here the fragment breaks off, but the letter in which Southey outlined the plot for Caroline supplies the remainder of the action. Robert, because of the neglect of Ranulph, his guardian, runs wild in the forest and forms close friendship with "inferior company". When Ranulph tries to effect a marriage between his daughter Aveline and Robin, the young earl refuses, because he knows Aveline to be in love with his friend, Gilbert, and he himself intends to marry the miller's daughter, Maid Marian. Ranulph commits Aveline to a convent and attempts to send away Marian, but Robin, with his comrades, rescues the two girls, and off they all go to the forest, where they live an idyllic pastoral life among the outlaws. When Ranulph, now a favorite of King John, attempts to capture Richard Coeur de Lion on his return from the continent, Robin saves Richard and is reinstated in his rank. But he resigns his station and wealth to Gilbert and Aveline, "choosing to pass his days always as king of the forest".[1]

1 The Correspondence of Robert Southey with Caroline Bowles, pp.45-46.

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It is evident that this, the last of Southey's epics, was to be a tale of pure adventure and romance, relatively free from the moral digressions of the other epics, similar in substance to the historical novels of Walter Scott, at this time in their first vogue. Southey was aware of this resemblance -- especially with Ivanhoe -- and he hastened to assure Caroline that his plan had been conceived ten years before Scott wrote any of his novels.[1] Still another resemblance should be noted: the combination of pastoral and martial elements recalls Joan of Arc, and the closing emphasis, placed on retreat into nature -- Robin Hood was to give up all worldly possession for a life in the forest -- shows the spirit of Rousseau, which had dominated the first epic, again asserting itself in the last.

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Conclusion

In the field of poetry it was the epic that most attracted Southey, and the course of his heroic verse, from its ambitious beginning in Joan of Arc to its inglorious close in Robin Hood, reveals, as has been seen, not only his changing fortunes and his shifting attitude toward poetry, but the development of his thought as well. It is for this reason that close attention has here been given to Southey's career as an epic writer. He believed that his talent was best suited

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1 Robin Hood, Preface, p. xi.

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to this kind of verse; in fact, he trusted that his epics would ensure his fame in future time, for on these he had concentrated the full strength of his powers. From his epics, then, the most significant conclusions regarding his intellectual and poetic temperament may be drawn.

First and foremost, Southey is a Christian poet. Joan of Arc fights for freedom, but all of her might is given her by heaven; and the land, once freed, is to be ruled by a king who acts only as the agent of the Christian God, for only in a state founded on religion can a people find happiness. Madoc is a missionary epic, and has for its whole action the conflict and final triumph of Christianity over a bloody paganism. Of all the epics, Thalaba is most free of Christian influence, and yet even here Christian sentiments are uttered by the characters, -- in one instance, it will be remembered, Southey paraphrased a passage from Bishop Taylor, -- and the reward that Thalaba asks for the destruction of Domdaniel is that his worst enemy be forgiven -- certainly a Christian rather than a Mohammedan request. In fact, the authenticity of the poem is destroyed by Southey's Christian bias: the houris of Paradise do not attract Thalaba, who condemns the very delights -- feasting and dallying with the black-eyed, musk-bodied Hûr Al Oyûn -- which he, as a Mohammedan, is to enjoy in heaven. Moreover, Southey represents Thalaba as choosing good and the demons as choosing evil, directly contrary to the Moslem doctrine of unconditional predestination.

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Finally, Thalaba wins Paradise which, according to Mohammed, allows admittance only by God's mercy -- but wins it in a Christian manner, that is, through good deeds. In The Curse of Kehama Southey's expressed purpose was to prove the falsity of Hinduism, and he uses all the Christian arguments to that end, making the poem, in effect, a Christian criticism of a pagan creed. Roderick has, for its text, Christ's paradox: "He that findeth his life shall lose it; and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it"; and the poem, finely representing this idea, is the profoundest piece of Christian writing that came from its writer's pen. The hero of Oliver Newman is a Protestant clergyman, and, as Kehama is a criticism of a pagan belief, the New England epic was to be a criticism of a Christian sect which, in mistaken fervor, had ruled out a fundamental Christian virtue, brotherly love. Robin Hood is, of course, too short to yield evidence of what its guiding ideology, if any, was to be, but the fragment clearly shows that Christian rites, at least, were to figure prominently.

The leading ideas that Southey expresses in his frequent passages of moral and theological reflection are freedom with a religious basis; God as the essence of love, power, and wisdom; the emancipation of the soul from the body; the victory of faith and righteousness over unbelief and evil; the necessity of resignation and the endurance of suffering; the freedom of the will; the plea for understanding and for-

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giveness among men; the conviction that man finds himself by denying self; an almost instinctive trust in immortality. All these are ultimately Christian in derivation, even though some may coincide with the thoughts of Rousseau, the early Welsh mystics, Epictetus, and the Mohammedan, Hindu, and Greek philosophers. Even this coincidence is significant, for it reveals that Southey took from these various philosophical and theological systems only those concepts that corresponded with his own Christian beliefs. Fundamentally, then, his poetry is Christian; at times, as in Madoc and Roderick, he expresses a tolerance of any religion that acknowledges one supreme creator who works for the good of man; but such tolerance he believes to be an inherent part of the Christian spirit.

The second distinguishing mark of Southey's epic poetry is its moral and religious seriousness, which is at once a fault and a virtue, a fault inasmuch as the frequent reflections often appear as intrusions, a virtue inasmuch as they often in themselves are fine passages of sincere and moving verse. For this practice of blending heroic narrative with moral and theological argument Southey had, it is true, sufficient precedent in English literature. Beowulf is heavily loaded with moral advice and pious sentiment, and the third, seventh, eighth, tenth and twelfth books of Paradise Lost give profound theological and ethical import to Milton's epic. But the large proportion of homily in Southey's verse

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becomes conspicuous when his poetry is compared with that of his contemporaries. In their narrative verse neither Coleridge, a much more philosophic man, nor Wordsworth, a more solemn one, gives as much space to ethical and religious conviction as does Southey. Wordsworth, it is true, usually founds his narrative on a moral principle, but in his best poems of this sort -- Michael and the tale of Margaret in The Excursion -- he allows the moral to remain in suspension, whereas Southey habitually precipitates it. Scott, although occasionally he may permit himself a few aphoristic couplets, is too engrossed with his story, with what Stevenson called "romantic love of action", to give elaborate attention to intellectual matters of any kind; and Landor, the most pagan spirit of them all, is more interested in the mere phenomenon of human conduct than in its evaluation.

A third quality that appears frequently in Southey's verse is sentimentality, if that word may be used to designate something other than the sensitive sufferings of The Man of Feeling or the harrowing pathos of Clarissa Harlowe. Southey is wont to place inordinate stress on domestic affection and to dwell too long on the bliss of connubial, parental, and filial love. The "flashbacks" to winsome wives and happy hearths in Joan of Arc, the separations and reunions of Thalaba and Oneiza, the sacrifices and counter-sacrifices of father and daughter in Kehama, the joyful homecoming of Pelayo, to which the entire sixteenth book of Roderick is dedicated --

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such episodes are treated with a lushness and general want of brevity that bring them within the province of sentimentalism. In Roderick Southey resorts even to the absurd bathos of having his hero embrace and weep upon a dog, the last vestige of his happy home. It is not that the cause of this emotionalism is out of all proportion to the expression of it, as is the case in Richardson's and Mackenzie's sentimentality, but that the ubiquity of such emotion is out of keeping with the epic spirit that Southey strives to maintain. The mere fact that he chooses to violate propriety in this manner is indicative of the close connection between his domestic life and his poetic creation.

These qualities of Southey's verse -- its Christian bias, its moral bent, and its sentimentalism -- proceed from his intellect and emotion. Two other qualities that are linked with his imagination and creative faculty, will now be noticed. The first is his love of story. One remembers not how he relates, as one does in the case of Coleridge, but what he relates, and for this reason plot is of singular importance in any study of his narrative poetry. In his letters he often speaks of "working on the plan" of a poem, and it is evident that he spent much time, preparatory to actual composition, in outlining effective plot. The result of this preliminary labor shows in the fine structure of story that all his epics possess, and the reader's last impression of Madoc or Thalaba or Kehama or Roderick is that here is a poet great in conception

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but inadequate in execution. On the strength of this statement, one is inclined to deny Southey the title of "literary artist", for it is the fashion, since English criticism discovered that Shakespeare's supremacy owes little to his borrowed plots, to give a poet scant praise for his story if he does not tell it in excellent verse, a refinement of criticism that fails to take into consideration the very real pleasure that the folk-ballads have given. But the facts, in the case of Southey, speak differently. His greatest epics impress; they leave the reader in a state of mind that differs not in quality but only in degree from that which Lear or Paradise Lost or Faust induces. Upon analysis, the reader finds that it has been chiefly the telling of the story that has affected him, and could he but imagine the same tale in beautiful verse he might deceive himself into thinking that he had read a work of art. The time may come when a great poet finds in Southey what Shakespeare found in the Italian novelle and the chronicles of Holinshed, but the two cases, if the event should ever come to pass, will not be strictly analogous: Shakespeare was forced to give new shape to the crude originals. Who borrows from Southey need alter little, for the raw material, taken from history or legend, has already been moulded into significant form. All this is not to say that his verse is negligible, for, if such were the case, a prose summary of plot would contain all the merit of the epics. But his story is always superior to the language in which it is told, and it is this

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discrepancy between matter and manner, idea and vehicle, conception and expression, that gives rise to the two opinions regarding the poet that every reader has.

The nature of Southey's plots indicates another quality of his creative faculty. It is the massive, the fantastic, the spectacular that attract him most. Often reality is too circumscribed for his imagination, and he is forced to overstep the boundaries of credibility and enter the realm of the sheer impossible. The epic, it is true, demands a large, impressive action, but neither the Odyssey nor Beowulf nor Paradise Lost, marvellous as their matter ~~might~~ may be, approaches the fabulous extremity of Thalaba or Kehama. This supernatural element manifests itself most strongly in his earlier epics, sounding modestly in the celestial signs and pageant of horrors in Joan of Arc, gathering volume in the effects of God's wrath in Madoc, swelling grandly in the spells and enchantments of Thalaba, and thundering, with all stops open, in Kehama, where Southey's imagination literally vaults from the height of heaven to the depth of hell. But here the supernatural strain concludes, because Southey has exhausted all its possibilities. Roderick has scarcely a single miracle to boast of, and Oliver Newman and Robin Hood are held close to earth. All the epics, however, — with the exception of the latter two fragments, which, if they had been completed, might not have been exceptions after all — contain the massive and the cataclysmic — battles and burnings in Joan of Arc, earthquake and racial

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upheaval in Madoc, the destruction of Domdaniel in Thalaba, the tottering of heaven and the conquest of hell in Kehama, the overthrow of a civilization and a religion in Roderick. When Southey turns from action to description, he seldom focusses on the minute or the dainty, as Wordsworth does in his poems on the daisy, the celandine, and the butterfly; he prefers rather to describe a pyramid of human skulls or an earthly paradise or Seeva's throne of light; and even in Roderick, where his talent is severely disciplined, it is the larger details of landscape that most often interest him.

This inclination toward the massive and the spectacular is the surest indication of the quality of Southey's imagination, and through it the real nature of his creative mind is best understood. He has generally been called a romanticist, and it is true that he is fond of the strange, the remote, of nature and emotionalism. But the most obvious element of his imagination -- this love of magnitude and sensational incongruities -- has little likeness to the traits of Wordsworth, Coleridge, Scott, or the younger romanticists. Coleridge, in The Rime of the Ancient Mariner, Shelley, in Prometheus Unbound, and Keats, in Hyperion, show a certain fondness for massive effect, but ~~neither~~ none of these betrays signs of the megalomania that gripped Southey. And nothing is more remote from his attitude than the gallant intrigue of Hernani, the drooping melancholy of Contemplations, or the blue-flower mistiness of Heinrich von Ofterdingen. So far as intellectual position is

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concerned, Southey may be called romantic in his youth, classical in his maturity; but if his creative bent is to be described properly, a third term is needed. In German criticism the adjective "baroque", free of the derogatory connotation it has in English usage, is applied to that type of mind which expresses in art a love of swelling grandeur and piles effect on effect in order to secure an impression of overwhelming power. The ordinary romantic strives toward the strange, but the baroque mind is content only when it reaches the terrible. The best exponent of the baroque in music is Bach, in art, Michelangelo, in literature, Milton; and it is with Milton that Southey, in imaginative tenor, has most kinship. Regarded as romantic, Southey's art seems absurd in its extremity; regarded as baroque, its purpose becomes clear, and it attains to new significance.

A conclusive judgment must now be passed on Southey as an epic poet, and here criticism comes to a dangerous pass. Is he to be condemned utterly for failing to produce great art in a form that only four men in English letters -- Spenser, Milton, Tennyson, and Morris -- have used with signal success? One is inclined to judge leniently because of the handicap that Southey placed on himself. And yet another fact must be faced: what poetic talent he did have was epic in its bent, and if he had had the genius of a true poet, his powers would have been revealed in Roderick or Madoc or Kehama. The simple truth is that these epics are not great. They impress, but

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they do not overwhelm; they promise, but they do not fully satisfy; they have pathos, tragedy, and terror, but they want beauty. And they finally lose their claim to art because their creator lacked the one requisite of the true poet -- genius. Yet the absence of this all-important element does not sufficiently explain the obscurity that has fallen upon him and his work. Poetry is a rarer gift than literary histories would lead us to believe, and if our taste for literature were confined to those works that possess true poetic beauty, English letters would offer meager fare indeed. And so long as Dryden and Thomson and Gray and their kind are given serious consideration in English criticism, Southey lies beneath an unmerited dust.

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IV. THE BALLADIST

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THE BALLADIST

As his long series of epics show, it was plot that most interested Southey. Since, however, an epic made onerous demands on his time and energy, he often turned to the ballad when he found a good story to versify. It might be supposed that his interest inthis form was generated by the narrative verse of Wordsworth and Coleridge, but his career as a balladist began earlier than theirs, in 1796, two years before the publication of the Lyrical Ballads. It was William Taylor's famous translation of Bürger's Lenore that turned his attention to this type of verse. The German poem impressed him and challenged emulation, for in 1799 he confided to Wynn: "I shall hardly be satisfied till I have got a ballad as good as 'Lenora'."[1]

The inspiration, however, did not come entirely from Taylor. In his early years Southey had read Bishop Percy's Reliques of Ancient English Poetry, and from this source he derived his notion of the folk-ballad, which he professedly imitated in his own pieces. Another of his early favorites was Chatterton, who confirmed his taste for the medieval and "Gothic".

Although Southey's career as a ballad writer began before 1798,[2] the Lake poets, especially Wordsworth, exercised

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1 Selections from the Letters of Robert Southey, vol.I, p.64.
2 It is possible that Southey did not read the first edition of Lyrical Ballads. He first mentions the book in 1801, and speaks of The Brothers and Michael, which appeared for the first time in the second edition of 1800.

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some influence on his pieces composed after that date. He himself was conscious of this similarity, but he attributed it not to the force of Wordsworth's verse but to the fact that both of them drew inspiration from a common source. "Now, with Wordsworth I have no intimacy; scarcely any acquaintance. In whatever we resemble each other, the resemblance has sprung, not, I believe, from chance, but because we have both studied poetry -- and indeed it is no light or easy task --, in the same school, -- in the works of nature, and in the heart of man."[1] William Haller, in his Early Life of Robert Southey, points out that the chief ~~point of~~ likeness is a common moral strain which the action of their ballads illustrates. Neither Wordsworth nor Southey is content to tell a story for its own sake -- as stories are told in the folk-ballads -- , but each must narrate with a didactic purpose; and of the two Southey is more given to sermonizing. But Haller also indicates an important difference between the two poets: "The study, however, and not, as with Wordsworth, the highway, was to be Southey's chief Parnassus, and most of his ballads are derived, not from his own experience, but from books."[2] The statement is undoubtedly true. Almost all of Southey's ballads are drawn from history and legend -- usually Spanish -- or from old anecdotes, such as the French fabliaux, Coryat's Crudities, or Mandeville's Travels; a few, such as The Cross Roads and The Surgeon's Warning, are founded on hearsay, one

1 Selections from the Letters of Robert Southey, vol.I, p.216.
2 Haller, Early Life of Robert Southey, p.233.

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of Wordsworth's chief sources; and the plots of only three of the thirty-six pieces printed in the Poetical Works are wholly original, - Jaspar, Lord William, and Cornelius Agrippa. In his ballads, more than in his epics, Southey is the scholarly versifier rather than the inventive creator.

With Coleridge Southey shares a fondness for the macabre, and the combination of horror and enchantment found in The Rime of the Ancient Mariner and Christabel appears also in St. Patrick's Purgatory and God's Judgment on a Wicked Bishop. But very few points of resemblance can be traced in the ballads of Southey and Scott. Scott, dominated by the spirit of the folk-ballad, seldom allows the moral strain to divert his narrative into a sermon; his genuine feeling for the archaic bears little similarity to Southey's reconstructed medievalism; and his simplicity of language and of effect in such pieces as Kinmont Willie is a virtue that Southey seldom attains. It is interesting to notice, in this connection, his estimate of Scott's ballads. In reference to the Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border, he wrote: "In all these modern ballads there is a modernism of thought and language -- turns, to me very perceptible and very unpleasant, the more so for its mixture with antique words -- polished steel and ~~rusted~~ rusted iron! This is the case in all Scott's ballads."[1] But despite the fact that Southey prided himself on being acutely conscious of verbal qualities and associations -- an Irish turn in the last

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1 Life and Correspondence, vol.II, pp.211-213.

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stanza of Mary, the Maid of the Inn annoyed him whenever he remembered it[1] -- his diction in only a very few cases has the consistency of Scott's.

Southey's career as a balladist really began in 1796 with Mary, the Maid of the Inn, but the greater part of the compositions of the first period were written in 1798 and 1799, during his residence at Bath, Westbury, and Bristol. The dominant themes of this first period are horror, crime, and madness, with frequent introduction of the supernatural. In Mary, the Maid of the Inn, a girl, too doughty for her own good, "takes a dare", enters a ruined abbey at night, and sees a murder committed there. The hat of the criminal rolls to her feet, and, picking it up, she flees. Back at the inn, she examines the hat, and, finding it to be her lover's, goes mad. Although Southey asserted that the ballad "does not half please me"[2], it is one of the best of his early attempts, its drastic treatment justified by the theme. Donica and Rudiger, also written in 1796, are studies in demonology, the first containing the familiar story of a spirit inhabiting a dead woman's body,[3] the second, a variant of the Lohengrin legend, telling of a soldier who must sacrifice his first-born to the evil spirit who has given him earthly happiness. Supernatural retribution is also the theme of Lord William, which Southey, in 1798, declared "certainly a good story", one that will,

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1 Selections from the Letters of Robert Southey, vol.I, p.73.
2 Ibid.
3 Southey later used this situation, which is similar to that in Scott's Glenfinlas, in Thalaba.

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"when corrected, make the best of my ballads".[1] Lord William kills his nephew and takes over the estate, but a flood threatens the castle and Lord William escapes in a boat rowed by a strange oarsman. A crying child, stranded on a rock, interrupts the flight, and the oarsman forces the lord to take the boy in his arms, whereupon the boat, with its occupants, sinks to the bottom of the sea. Likewise crime, with madness as its punishment, forms the substance of Jaspar, the story of a highwayman who, in sudden remorse, goes insane and refuses to move from the site of his last murder.

The most powerful ballad of this first group is The Cross Roads. Haller has rightly observed that here Southey uses a technique similar to that of Wordsworth, especially in the frame that surrounds the actual story, but his implication that the poem is "Wordsworth at his worst"[2] is scarcely justifiable. The story tells of a parish girl who, running away from hard service, takes refuge in a farmhouse owned by an evil man and his cruel mother. One day the girl's body is found hanging behind the stable door, and, since the coroner calls the death suicide, the girl is buried at the cross roads with a stake driven through her heart. Haller's analysis of the ballad as a narrative of "a maiden who has been betrayed by a wealthy sinner" and who "has hanged herself for shame"[3] is inaccurate and misses the point of the poem. The girl has not

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1 Life and Correspondence, vol.I, p.329.
2 Haller, Early Life of Robert Southey, p.222.
3 Ibid., p.223.

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committed suicide, despite the verdict of the coroner, who, like the rest of the neighbors, stands in awe of the evil farmer. She has been murdered, as the stanza describing the location of the stable clearly implies:

"It is a wild and lonesome place,
No hut or house is near;
Should one meet a murderer there alone,
'Twere vain to scream, and the dying groan
Would never reach mortal ear."[1]

And the relation of the girl to the murderer is not the hackneyed one that Haller makes it out to be. There is little in the poem to indicate that the girl has been the mistress of the man, but there is much to inspire the idea that the man and his mother are psychopathically cruel:

"A man of a bad name was he,
An evil life he led;
Passion made his dark face turn white,
And his grey eyes were large and light,
And in anger they grew red.

"The man was bad, the mother worse,
Bad fruit of evil stem;
'Twould make your hair to stand on end
If I should tell to you, my friend,
The things that were told of them!"[2]

No external reason is given for the murder the man commits, and the poem is the more powerful for its implication that there is no reason -- except in the twisted minds of the man and his mother. Over the farmhouse broods an atmosphere as strange and horrible as that of Wuthering Heights, and Southey

1 Works, vol.VI, p.54.
2 Ibid., p.53.

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wisely refrains from breaking the spell by giving motives or by describing action. Nothing is told outright, but all is suggested, as though the narrator himself did not dare penetrate to the true fact.

Another group of ballads composed in the first period strives for humorous effect. Richard Lovell Edgeworth, upon reading some of Southey's shorter narrative pieces, remarked: "Take my word for it, Sir, the bent of your genius is for comedy," a compliment which Southey accepted with dubious gratitude.[1] His claim to comic genius is as doubtful, although a few of his humorous ballads are successful enough to bring a smile to the reader's lips. The best of these is The Pious Painter, the tale of an artist who expressed religious feeling by painting Old Nick so ugly that children scream and the very imps of the air pause to do reverence. In revenge, the Devil causes the painter's scaffold to fall, but the Virgin in his picture reaches out from the canvas to save him, and while he dangles there he shakes his brushes at the retreating demon and cries:

"I'll paint thee more ugly than ever!"[2]

Southey added to this ballad an epilogue in which the Devil has his way. He traps the artist into painting fair Marguerite. The painter succumbs to temptation, but when the two are caught eloping, the artist is thrown into prison. The Devil now

1 Ibid., Preface, p.xi.
2 Ibid., p.64.

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offers the painter freedom if he will make a handsomer portrait; the bargain is stmuck, and the poem closes with Beelzebub smirking and leering so that the artist can catch all his charm of expression. The story is told with an impudent fluency and sparkle that well become the subject, and the versification is more melodious than is usually the case in Southey's ballads.

King Charlemain, in which an archbishop steals from a courtesan the magic ring that binds her to the emperor and is thereafter pursued by the king with amorous intent, is broadly humorous but lacks the finesse of The Pious Painter. The Well of St. Keyne, with its age-old story of the conflict between husband and wife for domestic mastery, is one of Southey's most popular pieces, but a better treatment of the same theme is found in St. Michael's Chair. A hen-pecked husband and his wife go to St. Michael's Church to give thanks for the husband's recovery from illness; but while he prays, she runs up to the top of the tower and sits in a seat so perilously placed that anyone who gains it may be assured of dominion over his mate. The bells ring, and their reverberations throw Rebecca from the chair. "Shall we toll for her poor soul?" the monks ask.

> "Toll at her burying," quoth Richard Penlake,
> "Toll at her burying," quoth he;
> "But don't disturb the ringers now
> In compliment to me."[1]

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1 Ibid., p.73.

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Many of Southey's ballads derive subject-matter from traditions and legends of the Catholic Church. Two humorous poems of this sort, in which Protestant unbelief expresses itself in open derision, are St. Romuald and St. Antidius, the Pope and the Devil. The former satirizes the monkish practice of self-denial -- in this case, sacrifice of decent sanitary measures -- and the infliction of such principles on others. Romuald is so pious that he considers washing his shirt a sinful luxury. He wears it until it decays on his body, and the smell of brimstone that clings to him from his frequent contests with the Devil increases the stench. Having succeeded so well in denying his own desires, he attempts to force his neighbors to do likewise and forbids them to eat the good things to which they are accustomed. One night, however, his modesty causes him to run away, for he has heard that the people so venerate him and so fear that he will leave his sainted bones in another locality that they intend to strangle him. In St. Antidius, the Pope and the Devil a subject of theological hair-splitting furnishes Southey with a theme. A Spanish legend tells how St. Antidius, hearing the Devil plan to catch the Pope in a deadly sin, grasped the demon's horns and rode him, as if he were a horse, to the Pope, who was thus given warning and time for confession. An ecclesiastic, Montenegro y Feyjoo, gravely speculated on the saint's use of the Devil -- "whether he made use of him as a wizard, by virtue of a compact, or by virtue of authority,

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having the permission of the Most High so to do."[1] Southey, delighted by this naive credulity, so pointed the legend that, in his ballad, it becomes a mockery of the Catholic worship of saints and belief in the myths that surround them. Both St. Romuald and St. Antidius demonstrate not only the obscure, bookish sources of Southey's plots but also the intellectual uses to which he frequently put his ballads.

It will be noticed that the humor in these poems is farcical and sometimes crude. Only rarely, as in The Pious Painter, is the sly touch of the true wit perceptible. Southey's comedy is never gentle, as is Lamb's, nor does it ever reside in character, as it frequently does in Burns' poetry. It is humor of situation that attracts him, and his treatment of it is usually extravagant. Such comedy is either a total success or a total failure, depending on cleverness of plot and perfect maintenance of thoroughgoing technique. Cornelius Agrippa and The King of the Crocodiles are examples of what results when situation lacks the completely comic turn and when treatment is not as clever as it might be. The first tells of an inept young man who, having unwittingly summoned the Devil by reading a magic book, has his heart torn out -- a tale without point and with very little wit, except the mechanical humor afforded by rocking-horse rhythms. The King of the Crocodiles, in which a woman, having seen her children eaten by crocodiles, revenges herself by stealing the babies of the crocodile-king,

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1 Quoted by Southey, Works, vol.VI, p.155.

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offends the more because Southey makes a half-hearted attempt to treat a gruesome subject humorously.

What conclusions are to be drawn regarding Southey as a humorist? First, he has very little humor, but much comedy -- if a distinction may be drawn between the ability to think humorously and an ability to see the incongruous in external things. For the amusement found in Southey's ballads derives from the incongruity apparent in the situation, not from his interpretation of it. The highest type of humor, such as that of Molière, takes an aspect of life commonly regarded as serious, penetrates to its true nature, and places upon it a value; the discrepancy between this evaluation and popular esteem is so great that the subject becomes ludicrous. Southey lacks entirely this faculty for discovering incongruity, and Mr. Edgeworth would have spoken more truly if he had said: "Take my word for it, Sir, the bent of your genius is for comedy, not humor." Secondly, Southey's comedy lacks the humanizing touch of amused sympathy. Burns, in his bitterest mood, in the high humor of such satire as Holy Willie's Prayer, never quite loses his love of human beings, even though he fiercely condemns them. Southey, not condemning at all, shows a remarkable lack of interest in the fools who are caught in a comic situation, for the situation in itself engrosses his attention. It is through concentration on story that he gives grandeur to his epics; it is this same emphasis on incident, with accompanying neglect of character, that gives low value to his humor.

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In addition to the themes of humor and of violence, a third subject -- heavenly intervention either to punish or to save -- appears frequently in Southey's early ballads. It is a commentary on his view of human nature and divine nature too that heaven more often levels penalties than bestows rewards. The most familiar ballad of this type is God's Judgement on a Wicked Bishop, in which Bishop Hatto, after refusing to open his over-full granaries to the starving poor, is pursued by rats to his tower on the Rhine, where his flesh is gnawed away and God's judgement thus made manifest. The ballad well deserves its popularity, for it is unusually forceful and contains two scenes of vivid detail -- the rats eating the Bishop's picture out of the frame and the cat going mad with fear. St. Gualberto, with a similar story, is less compact, less vivid, and hence less strong in its effect. The Inchcape Rock, which for some reason finds its way into most anthologies, somewhat varies the theme by substituting a wicked pirate for a wicked priest, but the spectacle of Sir Ralph tearing his hair as he sinks down to damnation seems pallid when compared with the very real horror of Bishop Hatto.

The most remarkable ballad of this group, however, is The Old Woman of Berkeley, in which Southey proves himself a master of the grotesque. The Surgeon's Warning, almost identical in story, was composed probably earlier in the same year, 1798, but The Old Woman of Berkeley is by far the better work. In strong, terse language it tells of a witch who, on

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her deathbed, requests that her coffin be chained in the church and that choristers sing hymns to protect her from the Devil. But on the third night after her death, the Fiend appears, bursts the coffin with his voice of thunder, and carries the body off on his fire-breathing horse. The witch's shrieks are heard for miles around,

> And children at rest at their mother's breast
> Started, and screamed with fear.[1]

In this ballad Southey combines the ghoulish elements of German romanticism -- represented in his mind by Bürger's Lenore --, the medieval terror of the Gothic romances, and the moralized superstition of Coleridge, all in their proper refinement -- the grotesque; and the poem almost deserves the praise that William Taylor gave it: "it is everything that a ballad should be -- old in the costume of the ideas, as well as of the style and meter -- in the very superstition of the days of yore -- perpetually climbing in interest, and indeed the best original English ballad we know of."[2]

The best of those pieces that show Heaven manifesting its benevolence is St. Patrick's Purgatory. A forecast of the strange, allegorical wanderings of Thalaba, it tells how the knight Sir Owen explored St. Patrick's Purgatory, struggled with the Devil, and through his faith in Christ gained the outer world again. Old Christoval's Advice, strongly reminis-

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1 Southey, Works, vol.VI, p.183.
2 Quoted by Haller, Early Life of Robert Southey, p.220.

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cent of Wordsworth, solemnly asserts Southey's doctrine of mercy and tolerance and illustrates it by showing how St. Isidro prevented a debtor from absconding by causing him to run in circles all night. The ballad is heavily moralistic, and Southey apparently was unaware of the comic possibilities of the story. The Rose, which shows heaven testifying to a maiden's innocence by causing roses to grow from the stake where she is to be burned, is well done, but no ballad, although Southey called it one. It is written in blank verse, and has the character of a short metrical tale.

Southey's first period of ballad writing, dating from 1796 to 1799 was his most prolific and his best. In 1800 he made his second trip to Portugal and began extensive research into Spanish and Portuguese history. The second period of the ballads, 1801 to 1803, is distinguished by the poet's preoccupation with Spanish historical themes. Previously he had drawn materials from Spanish ecclesiastical writers, and he had versified history in such poems as Henry V and the Hermit of Dreux -- an echo of Joan of Arc -- and The Battle of Blenheim, but it was not until 1801 that he turned to the secular history of Spain, which was to furnish themes for a number of ballads and for his finest epic, Roderick. In that year he composed Garci Ferrandez, a colorless tale of a betrayed husband and his revenge, none too interesting and lacking the simple forcefulness of the earlier ballads. It was followed by King Ramiro, which, in its combination of hostile kings and unfaithful queens, fore-

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casts Roderick. Gonzalo Hermiguez, in which a Christian lord takes a Moorish girl prisoner and converts her, likewise suggests Roderick, concerning as it does the struggle of the two religions. The truest ballad of the Spanish group, however, is Queen Orraca and the Five Martyrs of Morocco, which, unlike the others, uses the ballad-stanza and such ballad devices as repetition, interrogation, and supernaturalism. Its story is simple but dramatic: a queen, learning that whoever looks first on the bodies of five Moroccan martyrs will die, tries by strategy to cause her husband to view them, but accidentally comes upon them herself.

None of these pieces of the second period is as successful as the best of the first, nor do the ballads of Southey's later years, the third period, show improvement. Brough Bells, Queen Mary's Christening, Roprecht the Robber, and The Young Dragon, all written in 1828 and 1829, are more elaborate than Lord William or The Old Woman of Berkeley, but they lack the refreshing naiveté and spontaneity of the earlier ballads and show a greater departure from the orthodox ballad than do the Spanish tales. The quiet pastoralism and implicit moralism of Brough Bells, in which a farmer sells his cattle and buys bells for Brough church so that the whole countryside can hear his kine "crune" the glory of God, recalls Wordsworth. Queen Mary's Christening, a return to the Spanish theme, has the simple treatment and the stanzaic form of the ballad, but its subject -- how a queen named her son -- offers little of interest.

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Although Southey included them in the same volume with his ballads, Roprecht the Robber and The Young Dragon are really metrical tales and properly should be classed with A Tale of Paraguay, A Sinner Well Saved, and The Pilgrim to Compostella, which appear in the seventh volume of Southey's Poetical Works. Neither Roprecht the Robber nor The Young Dragon possesses any especial merit. The first tells of a highwayman who, when hanged, annoyingly disappears from the gallows and then appears again -- a mystery which is cleared only when an old man tells how he found him, inexpertly hanged, still living on the gallows, cut him down, took him home, and then hanged him again for stealing a horse. The ballad has ~~one~~ a satirical thrust at the Catholic Church: Roprecht cannot buy pardon from secular justice, but he can do so from the Church. The Young Dragon, however, is one whole satire on the efficacy of relics, and in this respect has close connection with The Pilgrim to Compostella. A pagan turns Christian when his daughter is to be sacrificed to a dragon. He steals a relic, the thumb of John the Baptist, and when the dragon approaches, he throws the relic down its throat. The holy morsel creates titanic indigestion in the pagan stomach of the dragon; a terrific explosion is heard, and the monster is no more.

Whether The Young Dragon be ballad or metrical tale, it has a trait common to most of Southey's ballads - a preference for the exaggerated, the violent, intended in such pieces as this and The Pious Painter to amuse, or in Mary, the Maid

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of the Inn and God's Judgement on a Wicked Bishop to terrify. Farcical comedy and flamboyant melodrama are the two qualities that appear most frequently, and both of these have their entire effect in extremity. The same delight in exaggerating, in making poetry an obvious untruth, noticeable in Madoc's feats of strength, in Thalaba's eerie journeys, in Ereenia's miraculous ascents and descents, is manifest in the ballads, where coffins are rent asunder by the Devil's voice, rats eat up a wicked bishop, and a dragon explodes in mid-air. The ballads, as well as the epics, are baroque in spirit. Likewise, the moral thread of the epics is woven into the shorter narratives: retribution is nowhere more certain than in ~~his~~ Southey's ballads. Lord William pays horribly for his crime of murder and usurpation; the old woman of Berkeley courts the Devil in life, and cannot escape him in death; and old Christoval must use up three stanzas to sermonize before he even begins his tale:

"If the debtor be poor," old Christoval said,
"Exact not too hardly thy due;
For he who preserves a poor man from want
May preserve him from wickedness too.

"If thy neighbor should sin," old Christoval said,
"Oh never unmerciful be;
But remember it is through the mercy of God
That thou art not as sinful as he.

"At sixty-and-seven the hope of Heaven
Is my comfort through God's good grace;
My summons, in truth, had I perished in youth
Must have been to a different place."[1]

Such moralizing is contrary to the nature of the

1 Works, vol.VI, pp.78-79.

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traditional ballad, and it is a quality seldom found in the best literary imitations of this form. It is true that The Rime of the Ancient Mariner has an ethical principle, but it is not moral in its very inception, as are the narrative poems of Southey. His fantastic imagination brings him close to Coleridge, but in the interpretation of his strange plots he more closely resembles Wordsworth. It is in this respect that he is the connecting link between the two Lake poets, and, doubtless, Wordsworth would have found in him a more congenial collaborator than Coleridge.

Southey, despite his assertions to the contrary, makes no real attempt to imitate the folk-ballad. At times he uses some of its characteristics -- the emphasis on the number three, the rhetoric of interrogation and repetition, the supernatural fulfillment of the prophecy, curse, or vow. But he never includes such familiar elements as the refrain, and often he does not even employ the traditional stanzaic form. The Rose, for instance, is composed in blank verse, Garci Ferrandez and King Ramiro in irregular rhymed stanzas, Bishop Bruno and Gonzalo Hermiguez in Hudibrastic couplets, St. Gualberto in a six-line stanza of Southey's own invention.

It is frequently said that Southey's ballads are the only living part of his work. The statement is true, and will probably remain true so long as Southey continues to live only in anthologies; for the epics cannot be printed in the few pages that an editor feels he may devote to Southey, and selected

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passages have little effect inasmuch as these long poems are impressive only in their entirety. The ballads, of course, can be reproduced in full, and the average reader's estimate of Southey is largely based on his short narrative pieces. This fact is the more unfortunate because ballad-writing was never a serious occupation with Southey. Most of these poems were written when he had a good deal of leisure, before that period during which any moment devoted to verse was a stolen moment; some were composed merely for the amusement of his children or his friends; none was given the long and loving care devoted to the epics after Joan of Arc. Because the ballads were composed as a thing of the moment, without particular planning, they possess a spontaneity and briskness that the epics lack. On the other hand, they give little suggestion of the profound ethical spirit, the grandeur of conception, the understanding of heroic and tragic character shown in Madoc and Roderick. To judge Southey solely by his ballads is to judge with insufficient evidence, but there is little hope that a wider and fairer judgment will ever become current.

In addition to epics and ballads, Southey wrote a third sort of narrative which he called the 'metrical tale' and which lies midway between the other two forms. Included in the seventh volume of his Poetical Works are three pieces of this type: A Tale of Paraguay, which was originally published separately in 1825; and All for Love, or A Sinner Well Saved

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and The Pilgrim to Compostella: Being the Legend of a Cock and a Hen, which were printed together in 1829.

Of these, A Tale of Paraguay, written in Spenserian stanzas and treating of the influence of the Jesuits in South America, is the longest, the most elaborate, and the dullest. It is, in a way, a by-product of Southey's historical writing; for, without doubt, his research into the settlement and colonization of the South American countries, which resulted in The History of Brazil, suggested the plot of this poem. That this is so is indicated by a passage in a letter to Sir Walter Scott, written on December 24, 1814, about the time at which A Tale of Paraguay was begun: "The concluding volume of my Brazil is in the press, and I am closely employed upon it. You will find in it some warfare of the old hardy character, the whole history of the Jesuits in Paraguay, and much curious information respecting the savages."[1]

Southey names as the direct source for this poem a Latin treatise, Historia de Abiponibus, equestri bellicosâque Paraguaina natione, by Martin Dobrizhoffer, and he quotes ten pages of the work to show how closely he has followed the original account. Dobrizhoffer, an Austrian Jesuit, was born in Styria in 1717. In 1748 he was sent to the missions of South America, and for eighteen years he lived among the Guaranis and the Abipones of Paraguay. When he returned to Europe, he wrote in Latin his book on the Paraguayan tribes,

1 Life and Correspondence, vol.IV, p.97. See also Selections from the Letters of Robert Southey, vol.II, p.386.

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issued at Vienna in 1783-1784 in three volumes; shortly after, a Professor Keil at the University of Pest published a German translation. The English version, An Account of the Abipones, an Equestrian People of Paraguay, published at London in 1822, was erroneously ascribed to Southey; actually it was the work of Coleridge's daughter Sara.[1] Since A Tale of Paraguay, however, was begun in 1814 and since Southey quotes from the Latin rather than the German version and in the poem itself makes allusion to the priest's garrulous Latin,[2] it is apparent that he used Dobrizhoffer's original account.

When Southey, on November 30, 1814, wrote a sober letter to Dr. Gooch asserting that Roderick was his best and perhaps his last long work, he concluded: "My next poem will be, 'A Tale of Paraguay', about a thousand lines only in length. Its object will be to plant the grave with flowers, and wreathe a chaplet for the angel of death."[3] The dedication to his daughter, Edith May, which prefaces the poem, expresses the same solemn idea:

> Take therefore now thy Father's latest lay,...
> Perhaps his last; ... and treasure in thine heart
> The feelings that its musing strains convey.
> A song it is of life's declining day,
> Yet meet for youth. Vain passions to excite,
> No strains of morbid sentiment I sing,
> Nor tell of idle loves with ill-spent breath;
> A reverent offering to the Grave I bring,
> And twine a garland for the brow of death.[4]

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1 Catholic Encyclopedia, ed. by Charles G. Herbermann et al., New York, 1909, vol.V, p.70.
2 Works, vol.VII, p.63.
3 Life and Correspondence, vol.IV, p.90.
4 Works, vol.VII, p.7.

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After the dedication appears a puzzling little proem in which Southey tells of Wellesley's triumph in Spain. Then, without transition, he reverts to an earlier day and relates how a debonair soldier -- apparently Loyola -- fell at Pampeluna with a shattered leg, how the leg healed into a deformity, and how the vain soldier once more submitted to an operation in the hope that his leg might be straightened to fit the fashionable court boots. From this point of departure Southey proceeds to speak vaguely of Jesuit missions in Ethiopia, Japan, California, and Paraguay. This proem seems to be a strained and unsuccessful attempt to introduce the reader into the Jesuit spirit of the narrative and to lead him gradually back to the period in which the action takes place. The transition having been thus awkwardly accomplished, Southey begins his story.

In the wilds of Paraguay a "feeble nation of Guarani race" has been so ravaged by typhoid that only two members are left alive, the young warrior Quiara and the girl Monnema. They live as man and wife, and Monnema gives birth to a son, whom they call Yeruti. For a while the three are happy in a domestic atmosphere rather too refined for their stage of civilization. But when the boy is five years old, his father goes one day in quest of game and does not return. Monnema, searching for him, finds

> Marks of a jaguar's feet, a broken spear and blood.[1]

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1 Ibid., p.32.

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Southey passes hurriedly over this tragedy, for his purpose is not

> to entertain
> The heart with useless grief; but as I may,
> Blend in my calm and meditative strain
> Consolatory thoughts, the balm for real pain;[1]

and with almost too tender a consideration for the reader's feelings, he continues his story. Monnema, left alone, lives for her son, but her difficult situation becomes even more embarrassing when she gives birth to a girl. Yeruti, however, is an able youth and manages to provide for his mother and his sister Mooma. The mother and her two children eke out an honest if hard existence, secure from the vices of civilization. But one day a band of traders penetrates the wilderness and discover the lonely dwelling. Believing that hostile savages infest the region, they appeal to the Jesuit mission, and Dobrizhoffer himself, with a small band of converts, sets out to investigate. Little did he know, Southey observes smugly, that a future poet of England would compose a song paying tribute to him

> And sinking deep in many an English breast,
> Foster that faith divine that keeps the heart at rest.[2]

Dobrizhoffer, guided by the wild bird-songs of Mooma, comes upon the little family. The mother tells her sad story, and Dobrizhoffer persuades her and her children to accompany

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1 Ibid., p.36.
2 Ibid., p.63.

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him back to civilization, where they may enjoy the blessings of Christianity.

In the town of St. Joachin the three savages are taught and cared for by the monks, but the sudden transition from the dense forest to the air of the city proves fatal. Monnema is the first to die, and is given Christian burial. Mooma weakens, and soon she too is dead. Yeruti is stricken, but recovers. He is not grieved by the loss of his mother and sister, for he believes, as they did, that death is a blessing. In the night a vision comes to him, in which Monnema and Mooma direct him to be baptized, so that he may join them. Dobrizhoffer performs the rite on the next day, and at sundown Yeruti lies upon his couch, cries, "Yes, I am ready now!" and dies.

For what reason did Southey write this rather pointless tale? His ostensible purpose was "to plant the grave with flowers, and wreathe a chaplet for the angel of death", and to this end he includes several verses expressing weariness of mortality, yearning for the quiet of death:

> Of death Yeruti deems
> Not as an ill, but as the last great good,
> Compared wherewith all other he esteems
> Transient and void: how then should thought intrude
> Of sorrow in his heart for their beatitude.
> .....
> Nor had he lost the dead; they were but gone
> Before him, whither he would shortly go.
> Their robes of glory they had first put on;
> He, cumbered with mortality, below
> Must yet abide awhile, content to know
> He should not wait in long expectance here.
> What cause then for repining, or for woe?
> Soon shall he join them in their heavenly sphere,
> And often, even now, he knew that they were near.[1]

1 Ibid., p.95.

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If this idea alone were incorporated in the poem, it might have been successful, even though one may wonder why Southey should choose three Paraguayan savages as the exemplars of his concept. But he confuses the issue by working into his flimsy plot a number of observations on human nature, God, original sin, slavery, and the Catholic Church. In the midst of a description of the wild life of Quiara and Monnema, he cries out, with Lord Clarendon,[1] in refutation of Hobbes:

> They who affirm all natural acts declare
> Self-love to be the ruler of the mind,
> Judge from their own mean hearts, and foully wrong mankind.[2]

Again, the reader is wrenched from the jungle home of Monnema to consider, in five stanzas, the nature of sin and God's connection with it. It is true, Southey says, that man is born with a mortal taint; yet we are the children of a merciful God, and they err who assert that God is angry at us because of this fatal heritage. If we are by nature peccable, the Lord, in his generosity, has surrounded us with redeeming love and has offered us a chance to overcome the fault of our birth. Man has a dual nature, prone to virtue as well as vice, and it is entirely within man's privilege to choose the way out of original sin into God's truth.[3] Monnema, the primitive mother, indoctrinates her children with the Christian teleology but thinly disguised as myth: they were created by the Great Spirit so that

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1 See Clarendon's Brief View and Survey of the Dangerous and Pernicious Errors to Church and State, in Mr. Hobbes's Book Entitled Leviathan, London, 1676, pp.13-14.
2 Works, vol.VII, p.39.
3 Ibid., p.40.

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they might lead good lives on earth; after death, a system of rewards and punishments will mete out justice, conferring the noxious forms of beasts and reptiles on them if they have sinned, sending them to the Land of Souls, governed by the Good Power, if they have been virtuous.[1]

Spain's dominion over Paraguay gives Southey an opportunity to denounce the ambition and greed that cause man to enslave his brothers -- an echo of the earlier Sonnets on the Slave Trade:

> O foul reproach! but not for Spain alone
> But for all lands that bear the Christian name!
> Where'er commercial slavery is known;
> O shall not Justice trumpet-tongued proclaim
> The foul reproach, the blank offense the same?
> Hear, guilty France! and thou, O England, hear!
> Thou who hast half redeemed thyself from shame,
> When slavery from thy realms shall disappear,
> Then from this guilt, and not till then, wilt thou be clear.[2]

Southey, consistently intolerant of Catholicism, condemning it now as a deterrent to Spanish and Portuguese progress, now as a popish influence in England, is constrained, in A Tale of Paraguay, to recognize some good in this evil. The missionary monks, however tyrannical the institution they represent, effect humanitarian reforms; they pray, and even though their ideas on prayer do not correspond with those of the Church of England, prayer is good in itself. Moreover, they believe in their dogma, and even misdirected faith refines the spirit:

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1 Ibid., p.45.
2 Ibid., p.60.

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It was a land of priestcraft, but the Priest
Believed himself the fables that he taught:
Corrupt their forms, and yet those forms at least
Preserved a salutary faith that wrought,
Maugre the alloy, the saving end it sought.
Benevolence had gained such empire there,
That even superstition had been brought
An aspect of humanity to wear,
And make the weal of man its first and only care.[1]

The irrelevance of these several ideas to the fable of the poem is emphasized by the frequent outcropping of the noble-savage theme, stated with a factitious romanticism that demonstrates Southey's remoteness from his subject. In the civilized world one finds, so he believes, the real barbarism: the political rule of force, commercial oppression, the covert enmity of human beings in their mad pursuit of selfish gain.

Far happier the Guaranis' humble race,
With whom in dutiful contentment wise,
The gentle virtues had their dwelling place.
With them the dear domestic charities
Sustained no blight from fortune; natural ties
There suffered no divorcement, save alone
That which in course of nature might arise;
No artificial wants and ills were known;
But there they dwelt as if the world were all their own.[2]

Although the "dear domestic charities" of the jungle people might move the reader to smile, the passage and others like it are of special interest inasmuch as they indicate the persistence of Rousseau's influence on Southey long after the English poet had denounced the French romantic as a destructive thinker.

A Tale of Paraguay is a bleak, puritanical poem, almost devoid of poetic adornment. Here Southey meant to conform

1 Ibid., p.80.
2 Ibid., p.81.

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to a theory stated, in somewhat paradoxical terms, in his Commonplace Book: "Poetical ornaments. These are not enough. If the groundwork be bad, they are like the rich colouring of a dauber's picture, like the jewels that bedizen a clumsy church-idol. To lard a good story with prettinesses, were like peri-wigging and powdering the Apollo Belvedere -- and dressing the Venus of Florence in a hoop."[1] Such a theory, when practiced by a great writer, is, of course, sound enough; but Southey lacked genius, and in this special case he lacked one of his own conditions -- a good story. Furthermore, the form in which the poem is written -- the Spenserian stanza -- scarcely conduces to its success. Never a concise writer, he is moved by the mechanical demands of the stanza to an irritating verbosity, and the medieval and classical associations that the form has for English readers is not at all in agreement with the primitive background of the subject. But the poem makes little attempt to achieve any unity of effect. In an atmosphere which Southey meant to be as wild and virginal as that of Green Mansions, moral and theological ideas intrude with ludicrous incongruity; and artificial phrasing,

And now as blithe as birds in vernal bower,[2]

serves further to destroy the illusion of truth. It was his boast that in this narrative he conscientiously adhered to historical fact, but it is this very scrupulousness that operates

1 Southey's Commonplace Book, Fourth Series, Original Memoranda, Etc. ed. by his son-in-law, John Wood Warter, London, 1851, p.358.
2 Works, vol.VII, p.70.

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against the poem's veracity. In Madoc, in Thalaba, in Kehama, even in the semi-historical Joan of Arc and Roderick, the omnipresence of imagination, creating an interior world of poetic truth, leads the reader to accept what he finds; but the rigid exterior truth of A Tale of Paraguay, casting no spell on the reader, leaves his critical sense free to detect amazing falsehoods of an aesthetic nature. Thus Southey has fallen into the very pit that, in his Preface, he informed the reader he would avoid:[1] his story founded on fact has, in reality, foundered on it.

Unlike A Tale of Paraguay, the metrical tale All for Love, or A Sinner Well Saved is based on a dubious fact—an anecdote in Heribert Rosweyde's Historiae Eremiticae, published in 1615, which tells of a miracle ascribed to the great theological controversialist and defender of the Oriental Church, Saint Basil the Great, Bishop of Caesarea in the fourth century.[2] The anecdote, as well as the biography of St. Basil in which it originally occurred, Southey attributes to St. Amphilochius, Bishop of Iconium, a contemporary of St. Basil. In the ninth century Cardinal Ursus translated Amphilochius's life of Basil into Latin, and it was this Latin version that Rosweyde, ecclesiastical antiquarian and compiler of the seventeenth century, inserted in his Lives of the Fathers in the Desert.[3]

Southey follows his recondite source rather closely.

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1 Ibid., p.xiii.
2 Catholic Encyclopedia, vol.II, pp.330-333.
3 Works, vol.VII, p.149.

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All for Love, published first in 1829 but probably written late in the preceding year,[1] has as its locale Caesarea of the fourth century. Eleëmon, the young freedman of a wealthy citizen, is in love with his master's daughter, who has announced that she will enter a convent. Eleëmon desperately invokes the aid of Satan, and, in exchange for a contract deeding over his soul to the Devil, he is promised wealth, happiness, and Cyra for his wife. Cyra, on the eve of her entrance into the nunnery, has a vision of Eleëmon standing beside her at the marriage altar, and she believes now that God intends her to enjoy earthly happiness as the wife of Eleëmon. Despite the scandal that she knows her action will occasion, she announces in church the next day that God has directed her to stay in the world and become Eleëmon's bride. Propertius, convinced of his daughter's piety, consents to the marriage and handsomely endows his freedman.

For twelve years Eleëmon and Cyra live happily. Children are born to them. They prosper. But after the death of Propertius, Eleëmon remembers his pact with Satan, and Cyra, worried by her husband's gloom, has a second vision. Her dead father appears before her and warns:

> .....
> "Let not thy husband rest,
> Till he hath washed away with tears
> The red spot from his breast!"[2]

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1 On December 29, 1828, Southey makes allusion to the poem, apparently completed, in a letter to Bedford, Life and Correspondence, vol.V, p.341.

2 Works, vol.VII, p.184.

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Waking, she looks at her husband's breast and sees the red spot that marks the place from which he drew blood to sign the pact. She rouses him, and he confesses all.

Cyra takes her husband to the Bishop, Saint Basil, who, on hearing the story, decides that Eleëmon must wrestle with Satan in the holy relic-room of the church. For a day and a night Eleëmon fights for his soul. When he finally comes from the relic-room, his hair has turned white, but he has won: he has been able to kiss the cross:

"All, all, to Thee, my Lord
And Saviour, I confess!
And I know that Thou canst cleanse me
From all unrighteousness!

I have turned away from my sin,
In Thee do I put my trust,
To such Thou hast promised forgiveness,
And Thou art faithful and just!"[1]

But when Eleëmon weeps with joy on Cyra's shoulder, the mocking voice of Satan sounds above them, saying that he still holds Eleëmon by bond, that he will claim him before the whole church congregation. Basil defiantly accepts this challenge. He calls all his people to worship, but while ten thousand voices sing a hymn, the shadow of Satan falls across the door. Satan exhibits the bond and claims Eleëmon's soul, but Basil is as wily a lawyer as the Devil himself and declares that the bond is null and void for two reasons: first, it was framed with fraudulent intent and therefore cannot be pleaded in the courts; second, the bond was signed by Eleëmon unmarried,

1 Ibid., p.197.

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and when he, with the Devil's consent, married Cyra, he gave himself in matrimony; therefore the Devil cannot claim him now, for he belongs to another. And even if these considerations were not valid, God's Covenant of Grace nullifies any bond of evil. The Devil, worsted, flings the contract at Eleëmon's feet and flees in anger and shame ~~for~~ at having been surpassed in his own calling.

This tale, really a prolonged ballad written in irregular balladic stanzas, is unimportant from both the aesthetic and ideological points of view, and Southey himself "feared it was a very meagre jejune performance."[1] Only two moral reflections appear in the poem -- that passion is the chief means by which evil ensnares men and that God's power of forgiveness has no limit if the sinner be penitent. Some aesthetic merit is discernible in the description of the wedding ceremony, which is executed in an eastern spirit more subdued than that in Thalaba and Kehama; in the depiction of Eleëmon wrestling with Satan, which is medieval in atmosphere; and in the dramatic conclusion, which mingles solemnity and humor rather skilfully. The links between these three principal scenes are, on the whole, without interest and unnecessarily long; and the irregularity of line and stanza contributes nothing to the success of the poem. But it is a mistake to judge this tale too severely, for Southey did not regard it as an earnest effort and probably spent little time on its composition. "And after all," he wrote to Henry Taylor, who criticized the worldliness of the

1 Correspondence with Caroline Bowles, p.142.

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Bishop's methods, "the poem is only a sportive exercise of art, an extravaganza or capriccio to amuse myself and others."[1]

The Pilgrim to Compostella: Being the Legend of a Cock and a Hen is the shortest and most interesting of the three tales. Here again Southey draws subject-matter from a legend of the Catholic Church. Although he remarks, in a short prefatory note to the poem, that Bishop Simon Patrick of Ely tells the story of the cock and the hen in his Parable of the Pilgrim,[2] published in 1664, Southey regards the Acta Sanctorum, the great hagiographical collection begun by Rosweyde and continued to the present day, as his direct source. The Pilgrim to Compostella was published with All for Love in 1829, but was completed as early as September, 1828, for at that time Southey wrote to Bedford telling him of the Roman Catholic "prejudice" that hindered the printing of the poem.[3]

Like A Tale of Paraguay, The Pilgrim to Compostella is encumbered with prefatory pieces: a prelude which, in a Christmas atmosphere, asks old Robin Gray for a cock and bull story and which announces the miracle of the cock and the hen -- much the same thing to Southey; and an introduction which scoffs at Catholic pilgrimages, raises the Duke of Wellington a plane higher than St. James of Compostella, and charges the Roman Church with trickery. These preliminaries over, Southey tells, with mock-seriousness, the legend of the cock and the hen.

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1 Life and Correspondence, vol.VI, p.30.
2 Works, vol.VII, p.261.
3 Selections from the Letters of Robert Southey, vol.IV, pp. 116-117.

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Three pilgrims to Compostella, husband, wife, and son, took lodging one night in La Calzada. The lustful daughter of the inn-keeper "behaved like Potiphar's wife" with Pierre, the son, and because he spurned her she hid a silver cup in his wallet so that she might accuse him of theft. Taken before the Alcade, Pierre is declared guilty and sentenced to be hanged. At the gallows Pierre begs his parents to continue to Compostella and not to grieve for him:

"Twas a short way to Heaven," he said,
"Though not the pleasantest."[1]

Eight weeks later the father and mother, having done homage to Santiago, returned to La Calzada. They went to the gallows on which their son was hanged and -- marvelous to see - they found him still alive. He bade them tell the Alcade that Santiago had wrought this miracle. When the parents related the story to the Alcade, he was just sitting down to a dinner of two roast fowls, a cock and a hen. He smiled scornfully and said that he would as easily believe that his two roast fowls would come to life. In corroboration of the story, the fowls rose up:

The Cock would have crowed if he could;
To cackle the hen had a wish;
And they both slipt about in the gravy
Before they got out of the dish.
.....
The heads saw their way to the bodies,
In they came from the yard without check,
And each took its own proper station,
To the very great joy of the neck.[2]

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1 Works, vol.VII, p.253.
2 Ibid., pp.256-257.

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The people of La Calzada, inspired by this second miracle of Santiago, made a great procession, of which the cock and the hen were the most conspicuous part. The knife that had cut off their heads and the spit on which they were cooked were regarded as relics, and the people fought wildly to dip their fingers in the sacred gravy. The procession moved to the gallows, where Pierre was gently "unhanged" and allowed to continue his pilgrimage. The inn-keeper's daughter confessed her sin, and so she was put in a convent and made a nun. The Alcade never again ate fowl or custard, and when garlic tempted him to taste an omelet he hurried to a priest for absolution. The cock and the hen were given to the Church of Santiago.

At their dedication the Corporation
A fund for their keep supplied;
And after following the Saint and his banners,
This Cock and Hen were so changed in their manners,
That the Priests were edified.
.....
The ways of ordinary fowls
You must know they had clean forsaken;
And if every Cock and Hen in Spain
Had their examples taken,
Why then ... the Spaniards would have had
No eggs to eat with bacon.[1]

It will be noticed that these three metrical tales are derived from Catholic tradition and are intimately concerned with the practices of the Church. In 1828 the question of Catholic emancipation in England and Ireland aroused a great deal of agitation. Southey, ever disapproving of the Catholic Church and fearing its influence on the British state,

1 Ibid., p.264.

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wrote for the Quarterly Review papers on the Roman Catholics and their demands, and received royal approbation of his sentiments, although his strong statement of his stand drew him into controversy. It may be assumed that All for Love and The Pilgrim to Compostella, composed in this year, and A Tale of Paraguay, begun much earlier but completed at this time, owe much of their hostility toward Catholicism to this national issue. A Tale of Paraguay inveighs against the greed of the Church the while it grudgingly gives praise to the missionary monks; All for Love nearly turns to satire in its closing pages, when the Bishop employs highly questionable methods to save Eleëmon's soul; and The Pilgrim to Compostella frankly adopts the spirit of lampoonery. The Catholic practice of making pilgrimages to a shrine where tickets are given

> To clear all toll gates on the way
> Between the Churchyard and Heaven!

is freely satirized, as are other methods of the Church to "cheat Old Nick". Southey scoffs at the miracles of the Church in the ridiculous story of the cock and the hen, and, in the account of the procession, derides the gullibility of Catholic subjects. Convents, he implies, are simply shelters for immoral women; and the churchmen themselves are not above reproach, for when the cock and the hen behaved with the utmost decorum, the "Priests were edified". Relic-selling is also attacked. The feathers of the sacred cock and hen are sold,

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1 Ibid., p.249.

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and, when a million have been purchased, a million more are placed on sale,

> For however great were the demand,
> So great would be the supply.[1]

The Pilgrim to Compostella is an uneven piece of work. Its qualities of the grotesque are striking, and its wit at times approaches that of Heine; but slipshod awkwardness too often follows close on deft satire. Neither this nor All for Love nor A Tale of Paraguay, is, from the aesthetic point of view, important, but all three are of interest for their revelation of Southey's deep-seated religious prejudice.

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[1] Ibid., p.267.

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V. THE POET LAUREATE

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THE POET LAUREATE

It will be remembered that Southey possessed "that last infirmity of noble minds", a greed for fame. As he saw others bow to public applause and receive the wages of popularity, he contented himself with the assurance that recognition of his real worth was reserved for posterity. When he became Laureate of England he believed that he had been given a foretaste of "that meed divine", and he gloried in the thought that hereafter he would be associated with a line of great names.[1] Ironically, his laureate poetry has not advanced his fame, but has rather helped to obscure it.

When he joined the ranks of Laureates in 1813, Southey did not enter distinguished company. Jonson, for whom the office was created by Charles I in 1617, and Dryden, who was first given the title "Laureate", have lasting renown, it is true; and if, as Walter Hamilton suggests,[2] such court poets as Chaucer, Spenser, Daniel, and Drayton be added to the list as Laureates in fact though not in name, the series gains lustre. But properly the Laureateship begins auspiciously with Jonson, continues with Davenant and Dryden, and drops to partial obscurity with a succession of second- and third-rate writers like Shadwell, Tate, Rowe, Eusden, Cibber, Whitehead, and Thomas Warton.

With Henry James Pye, Southey's immediate predecessor,

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1 See the Proem to The Lay of the Laureate, Works, vol.X, p.141.
2 Notes and queries, eighth series, vol.III, Jan.-June, 1893, pp.89-90.

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the office became a target of public contempt. This poetaster had begun his literary career, at the age of seventeen, with an Ode on the Birthday of the Prince of Wales. Even then, it would seem, his eye was fixed on a court appointment. He continued his poetic endeavor in three pedestrian efforts that represent the worse side of the eighteenth century, Beauty, a Poetical Essay, in 1766, The Progress of Refinement, in 1783, and Amusement: a Poetical Essay, in 1790. When, in the latter year, he was made Poet Laureate, it was clear to the public that not even the bad taste and general ignorance of George III could be held to account for the unmerited elevation. Pye had sat in the Commons in 1784 and had supported Pitt, who, when Warton died in 1790, repaid the favor by inducting Pye into office.[1] The appointment aroused a storm of public protest, sharply voiced in the anonymous Epistle to the Poet Laureate. But Pye pursued his serene way, grinding out birthday odes for the King and New Year's odes for the nation with a regularity that ceased only when George III lost his mind and could no longer be congratulated for his wisdom and patriotism. When Pye died in 1813, there was some talk of abolishing the Laureateship, but the post was offered to Southey, and he accepted it.

The manner in which Southey received the appointment is not at all clear. Popular opinion holds that the office was first rendered to Scott, that Scott refused it and threw

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1 Dictionary of National Biography, ed. by Sidney Lee, New York, 1896, vol.XLVII, pp.68-70.

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it in Southey's way.[1] Scott himself believed that this was the true state of things; but Southey's letters reveal that the Prince Regent was something of a double-dealer, and that generosity lay on Southey's side rather than on Scott's.

The story is complicated. On August 24, 1813, Scott wrote to his friend and business-partner, James Ballantyne: "An odd thing has happened. I have a letter, by order of the Prince Regent, offering me the laureateship in the most flattering terms. Were I my own man, as you call it, I would refuse this offer (with all gratitude); but, as I am situated, £300 or £400 a year is not to be sneezed at upon a point of poetical honor -- and it makes me a better man to that extent.[2] It should be noticed, in passing, that Scott greatly overestimated the stipend, which, since Jonson's time, had been fixed at £100 plus a tierce of canary wine; Pye had commuted the latter emolument to a sum of £26, but the total sum, by Southey's time, had been reduced by taxes to only £90.

The flattering offer to which Scott alludes had been sent him, on August 18, 1813, by J. S. Clarke, the Royal Librarian, who, according to his own words, had recommended Scott as Laureate to the Prince and had been answered that a letter offering the post to Scott had already been dispatched.[3] There is no evidence that Scott received this first letter which the

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1 This also is the impression given by W. Forbes Gray, The Poets Laureate of England, London, 1914, p.221.
2 John Gibson Lockhart, Memoirs of Sir Walter Scott, London, 1910, vol.II, p.285.
3 Ibid., p.290.

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Prince mentioned to Clarke, but on August 31 the Marquis of Hertford sent to Scott a formal notice of the Prince's wish that he be Laureate.

In the meantime Scott had given the matter serious consideration. On August 25 he had written the Duke of Buccleuch for advice and had outlined his reasons for not wishing the appointment: "I have a very flattering offer from the Prince Regent of his own free motion, to make me poet laureate; I am very much embarrassed by it. I am, on the one hand, afraid of giving offence where no one would willingly offend ..... on the other hand, the office is a ridiculous one somehow or other -- ,,, I should be well quizzed,-- yet that I should not mind. My real feeling of reluctance lies deeper -- it is that, favoured as I have been by the public, I should be considered, with some justice, I fear, as engrossing a petty emolument which might do real service to some poorer brother of the Muses... I should make but a bad courtier, and an ode-maker is described by Pope as a poet out of his way or out of his senses."[1] Bubbleuch replied that he would be mortified to see Scott "hold a situation which, by the general concurrence of the world, is stamped ridiculous."[2] And so Scott, partly because he held two other governmental offices,[3] partly because he disdained the Laureateship, sent a gentle refusal to the Marquis of Hereford.

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1 Ibid., p.287.
2 Ibid., p.288.
3 In 1799 he was appointed sheriff-depute of Selkirkshire at a salary of £300; in 1813, clerk of session, at £1300.

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Shortly afterward Scott wrote to Southey, offering to use his influence to get the office for him, should he wish it. Somewhat hypocritically, Scott declared that he himself did not scorn the position: "... -- otherwise how durst I mention it to you my elder brother in the muse? but from a sort of internal hope that they would give it to you, upon whom it would be so much more worthily conferred. For I am not such an ass as not to know that you are my better in poetry, though I have had (probably but for a time) the tide of popularity in my favour."[1]

Southey must have been more than a little surprised by this communication. When Pye died in August, Southey rather expected to succeed him. In the last days of August he went down to London, and on arriving there was told by Bedford that John Wilson Croker, Secretary to the Admiralty and powerful Tory politician, had mentioned Southey as the new Laureate.[2] This occurred, it should be noticed, before Southey received Scott's letter early in September.[3]

Southey called on Croker, and the latter asserted that he had taken the matter up with the Prince, who, observing that Southey had written "some good things in favour of the Spaniards", said that he intended him to have the Laureateship. When Croker informed Lord Liverpool of the Prince's "wishes",

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1 Lockhart, Memoirs of Sir Walter Scott, vol.II, pp.295-296
2 Southey's version of the affair is contained in a letter to Wynn, September 20, 1813, Life and Correspondence, vol.IV, pp.41-42.
3 In the preface to the third volume of his Poetical Works, 1837, Southey, for a reason explained later in this study, falsified matters by asserting that he saw Croker after he received Scott's letter.

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the lord was greatly embarrassed and revealed that Scott had been informed of his appointment on the preceding day (August 30). Croker returned to the Prince, who was greatly displeased at the turn of affairs and intimated that the offer had been made to Scott without his consent!

It is difficult to ascertain what is truth in this farrago of falsehood. It is certain that Scott received at least two formal offers, purporting to be written at the Prince's command, from two officers of the court, Librarian Clarke and the Marquis of Hertford. On the other hand, we have Southey's word -- and his word is unimpeachable -- that the Prince appeared to know nothing of these offers and had chosen Southey as Laureate. At any rate, the Prince tendered the Laureateship to Southey after it had been offered to Scott and before Scott's refusal was received. Croker, knowing Southey's friendship for Scott, requested the Prince to leave matters as they were. In due time, Scott's rejection reached the Marquis of Hertford, and the way was clear for Southey's acceptance.

More important than the Prince's deception (and it would seem the deception is his), is Southey's attitude toward the unpleasant situation. When he received Scott's letter, he might have replied, had he been less a man, with a crisp account of what had actually happened. But he allowed Scott to believe that his recommendation had been effective,[1] and he suppressed the fact that the Prince had asserted the offer to Scott had no royal sanction. In 1837, when Southey wrote

1 Life and Correspondence, vol.IV, p.46.

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a preface to the third volume of his Poetical Works, which contains the laureate odes, he maintained silence on this point, although he took pains to correct the newspaper account that he and Scott "met accidentally at the Prince Regent's levee, each in pursuit of his pretensions, and that some words which were not over-courteous on either side" passed between them.[1]

Scott's attitude is also commendable, but the fact remains that he offered Southey -- he thought, of course, that the post was his to offer -- a thing that he himself did not want. His statement to Southey, "If I had not been, like Dogberry, a fellow with two gowns already, I should have jumped at it like a cock at a gooseberry,"[2] is not entirely sincere, nor is his assertion that Southey deserves, more than he, the "honor" of being Laureate. The latter realized, quite as clearly as Scott, the odor which that word had in England. His motive for wishing the appointment was largely financial. He worried about what would happen to his family should he die. The £90 income from the Laureateship was not large, but it would suffice for a life-insurance policy for his family's benefit.[3] And so he was glad to accept the appointment. The fact that he would be "quizzed" meant little to him, for he was used to this form of attention.

For a month after the notice of his preferment Southey waited in London for his induction into office. He

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1 Works, vol.III, Preface, pp.xi-xii.
2 Life and Correspondence, vol.IV, p.40.
3 Ibid., p.49.

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visited the actress, Miss Booth, who intoned Mary, the Maid of the Inn for him and asked him to instruct her in what and how to recite. He dined at Holland House, where he met Byron, "a man whom in voice, manner, and countenance I liked very much more than his character or his writings had given me reason to expect".[1] He had "a very pleasant dinner" at Madame de Staël's in cosmopolitan company. Finally, on November 4, after seeing much red tape unreeled and after enduring slighting treatment from court officials, Southey was given the oath by a gentleman usher, "a worthy sort of fat old man in a wig and bag and a snuff-coloured full dress suit with cut steel buttons and a sword".[2] Immediately after, he wrote to Edith:

> I have something to tell you, which you will not be sorry at,
> 'Tis that I am sworn in to the office of Laureat.
> The oath that I took there could be nothing wrong in,
> 'Twas to do all the duties to the dignity belonging.
> Keep this, I pray you, as a precious gem,
> For this is the Laureat's first poem.[3]

Despite ~~this~~ the tone of levity, Southey regarded his laureate duties seriously. He had informed Croker that he would not compose odes "as boys write exercises, at stated times and upon stated subjects", but would celebrate great occasions only when he felt inclined to do so.[4] Since Shadwell's time,

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1 Byron's account of the meeting has the same mixture of praise and disapproval: "Yesterday, at Holland House, I was introduced to Southey, the best looking bard I have seen for some time. To have that poet's head and shoulders I would almost have written his Sapphics. He is certainly a prepossessing-looking person to look at, and a man of talent and all that, and -- there is his eulogy." Quoted by C. C. Southey, Life and Correspondence, vol. IV, p.44.
2 Life and Correspondence, vol. IV, p.45.
3 Ibid.
4 Ibid., p.40.

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it had been the custom for the Laureate to produce a New Year's ode annually. Fortunately for tradition, Southey was strongly inclined to celebrate the New Year's Day of 1814. He had always hated Napoleon, who since 1803 had been a serious menace to England, defeating Austria, attacking Great Britain in Egypt, and establishing his power in France. It became clear to Southey that Napoleon wished to include England among his conquests, and when, in May, 1804, Napoleon assumed the title Emperor of the French and thus negated, in Southey's eyes, the purpose of the French Revolution, the English poet regarded the self-seeking tyrant as a menace to civilization. Southey's sharp hatred of Napoleon, which almost became an obsession, is evidenced by a dream that he records on November 8, 1804: "I was in Bonaparte's palace, where some sort of contest was taking place between him and Sir Sidney Smith, who came to me for a knife to cut something which prevented him from drawing his sword. Bonaparte struck me; I had an axe in my hand; he saw that I was half inclined to cut him down, and attempted to kill me. I struck him with the axe, and brought him down, and dragged him out into a public hall, not being yet dead, and there beheaded him. This is the first time I ever killed him in self-defence, though I have more than once done it upon the pure principle of tyrannicide."[1] As Napoleon humiliated Prussia and oppressed Spain, England's peril increased, but at this point a change is noticeable in Southey's attitude. He attempts to disguise his fear of Napoleon as contempt.

1 Correspondence with Caroline Bowles, p.367.

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This is his attitude in the lamentable March to Moscow, one of its author's most offensive poems. His attempt to jeer at Napoleon's heroic failure throws discredit only on himself, and beneath the surface of hysterical satire the reader perceives the real emotion of the poem -- relieved fright.

The March to Moscow was written in the early part of 1813, not long after the half-crazed remnant of the Grand Army crawled across the Niemen to tell its tale of defeat and starvation. In England hope ran high, and when Bonaparte's campaign of 1813 ended disastrously at Leipzig, in October, the complete downfall of Napoleon seemed at hand. Southey, of course, felt the urge to express his joy and relief in verse, and fortunately his subject was a national as well as a personal one. Therefore, in the tradition of the Poets Laureate, he had an ode, Carmen Triumphale, ready for the New Year. He remarks on this coincidence of desire and duty in the first stanza of the song:

> In happy hour doth he receive
> The Laurel, meed of famous Bards of yore,
> Which Dryden and diviner Spenser wore..
> In happy hour, and well may he rejoice,
> Whose earliest task must be
> To raise the exultant hymn for victory,
> And join a nation's joy with harp and voice,
> Pouring the strain of triumph on the wind,
> Glory to God, his song, Deliverance for Mankind![1]

It should be noticed that the Battle at Leipzig, which inspired this ode, was won by the Prussians, Russians, and Austrians

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1 Works, vol.III, p.181.

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without the aid of Great Britain.[1] Southey rejoices for all nations,

> But most for thee,
> Who hast so nobly filled thy part assigned,
> O England! O my glorious native land!
> For thou in evil days didst stand
> Against leagued Europe all in arms arrayed,
> Single and undismayed,
> Thy hope in Heaven and in thine own right hand.
> Now are thy virtuous efforts overpaid,
> Thy generous counsels now their guerdon find,
> Glory to God! Deliverance for Mankind![2]

Here jingoism is evident. The young revolutionary of Wat Tyler, who rained condemnation on England's head, has become an extravagant patriot. It is true that England effectively blocked Napoleon's effort to build up France's sea-power and that at times, notably in 1801 after the Treaty of Lunéville, Great Britain stood alone in opposition to Bonaparte. But the English nation, as a whole, had never engaged with the conqueror himself, or felt his strength, or striven against him hopelessly, as had Prussia, Austria, Russia, and Italy; and for Southey to say of England that

> Alone she fought the battles of mankind[3]

is absurd. The ode, it is true, gives credit to "the heroic Spaniard", "regenerate Portugal", "the awakened Muscovite," "Austria from her painful trance awake", Germany, "land of the virtuous and the wise", and Holland with its "Martyrs of Free-

1 Friedrich M. Kircheisen, Napoleon der Erste, Sein Leben und seine Zeit, Munich, 1934, vol.9, p.363ff.
2 Works, vol.III, pp.181-182.
3 Ibid., p.182.

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dom"; yet pre-eminently the Carmen Triumphale, inspired by the Battle of Leipzig, eulogizes England, a country which had no share in that victory.

When Southey composed the ode he forcibly expressed his conception of Napoleon's character and motives. But the publisher, John Rickman, upon receipt of the manuscript, advised the expurgation of five stanzas denouncing the Corsican as a remorseless, godless, cunning murderer. "I am not sure," Rickman wrote, "that you do not forget that office (the Laureateship) imposes upon a man many restraints besides the one day's bag and sword at Carlton House. Put the case that, through the mediation of Austria, we make peace with Bonaparte, and he becomes, of course, a friendly power; -- can you stay in office this Carmen remaining on record?"[1]

Southey omitted the five stanzas, and sent the poem to Croker, who immediately demanded that a few remaining passages attacking Napoleon be withdrawn. Southey conceded, but frankly expressed his irritation to his friends, asserting that the omission had spoiled the ode. But he wrote to the Reverend Herbert Hill that he intended to satisfy his conscience by forming the rejected parts into a new poem and publishing it in The Courier "before it becomes a libelous offence to call murder and tyranny by their proper names".[2] The five stanzas, plus four new ones of the same vituperative nature, appeared anonymously in The Courier and were included in the Poetical Works under the title, Ode, Written During the Nego-

1 Life and Correspondence, vol.IV, p.52.
2 Ibid., p.54.

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ciations with Buonaparte, in January, 1814. This poem may be compared with Milton's sonnet On the late Massacher in Piemont, for Southey's ode has Milton's force of language, sonorous roll of cadence, and flaming indignation.

> Who counsels peace at this momentous hour,
> When God hath given deliverance to the oppressed,
> And to the injured power?
> Who counsels peace, when Vengeance like a flood
> Rolls on, no longer now to be repressed;
> When innocent blood
> From the four corners of the world cries out
> For justice upon one accursed head;
> When Freedom hath her holy banners spread
> Over all nations, now in one just cause
> United; when with one sublime accord
> Europe throws off the yoke abhorred,
> And Loyalty and Faith and Ancient Laws
> Follow the avenging sword![1]

His experience with Rickman and Croker causes Southey to speak more sharply of England in one of the four new stanzas:

> Woe, woe to England! woe and endless shame,
> If this heroic land,
> False to her feelings and unspotted fame,
> Hold out the olive to the Tyrant's hand![2]

The portrait of Napoleon, however untrue it may be, demonstrates the powerful expression of which Southey is capable when he speaks from the heart:

> Bold man and bad,
> Remorseless, godless, full of fraud and lies,
> And black with murders and with perjuries,
> Himself in Hell's whole panoply he clad;
> No law but his own headstrong will he knew,
> No counsellor but his own wicked heart.

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1 Works, vol.III, p.215.
2 Ibid.

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From evil thus portentous strength he drew,
And trampled under foot all human ties,
All holy laws, all natural charities.[1]

In this ode Southey reveals his true feelings regarding Napoleon. He had tried to convince himself and England that the conqueror was a mere usurper, intent on self-aggrandizement and therefore worthy of contempt. The Edinburgh Review had challenged any man to consider Napoleon's career "without trembling every inch of him", and Southey had replied: "... I would venture to observe that trembling has been usually supposed to be a symptom of feebleness, and that the case in point has certainly not belied the received opinion."[2] But in the ode Southey drops his pretense of superiority: Napoleon is no "miserable wretch" but a monster outside the ken of human understanding, the fiend that terrified Southey in his dreams. He had made it a principle to pardon the failings of human nature; it was his hope that no man, however depraved, was beyond redemption. He could ~~not~~ forgive even the arch-apostate Count Julian. But Napoleon he excepted, because the Corsican was no human being at all. Sooner the Ethiopian shall change his color and the leopard lose his spots than this man repent.[3] Therefore, it is our holy duty to wipe this "barbarian" from the face of the earth.

In all respects the best of the short non-narrative poems, the Ode, Written During the Negociations with Buonaparte

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1 Ibid., p.217.
2 Ibid., p.193.
3 Ibid., p.216.

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represents a return to the fiery manner of Southey's early verse, to the dynamic expression of Wat Tyler. The ode serves to show that Southey's youthful extravagance was not killed but merely suppressed by the discipline he set upon it. This extravagance was partially diverted into the limitless fantasy of the epics, but a good deal of it remained a part of his personal feelings, awaiting only a legitimate opportunity for expression.

The rest of Southey's occasional poetry seems tame in comparison with this anonymous outburst of the Laureate. Despite his stipulation that he would write odes only when he was moved to, Croker made it clear that he was expected to be moved at least once a year, in time to write a New Year's poem. Southey, the man of duty, did what was demanded of him, even though he protested that his laureate tasks had become "odeous" to him. Charles Cuthbert Southey, his son and editor of the Life and Correspondence, commenting on the letters of 1820-1834, writes: "But in addition to all his other manifold employments, the Laureateship was an inconvenient tax upon his time, and a considerable one upon his ingenuity. The regular task-work was still required, and he was at the same time too desirous of rendering the Laurel more honourable than it had been, to be content with merely those common-place compositions; which no one could hold more cheaply than he did himself, often designating them as 'simply good for nothing', and declaring 'that next to getting rid of the task which the

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Laureateship imposed upon him, of writing stated verses at stated times, the best thing he could do was to avoid publishing them except on his own choice and his own time'."[1] Southey did manage to keep these odes out of print. The Gentleman's Magazine and The Annual Register, which regularly published laureate pieces, contain only the Carmen Triumphale of 1814.[2] Moreover, as Edmund Kemper Broadus points out in his account of The Laureateship, Southey apparently attempted to prevent court-performance of his official poems, which he wrote merely to satisfy the nominal requirements of his station.[3] But several odes obviously written in his laureate capacity -- not for the New Year or the King's birthday, but for the propagation of Southey's own political views -- are included in the Poetical Works. None of these has the merit of the poem on Napoleon. The Ode, Written During the War with America, 1814, is filled with the flagrant patriotism of the Carmen Triumphale and tries to justify one of the patent wrongs of England's history. The final stanza, aggressively nationalistic, frankly encourages imperialism and strikes the same note sounded in Germany prior to the Great War:

> Train up thy children, England, in the ways
> Of righteousness, and feed them with the bread
> Of wholesome doctrine. Send thy swarms abroad!
> Send forth thy humanizing arts,
> Thy stirring enterprize,

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1 Life and Correspondence, vol.V, p.7.
2 Edmund Kemper Broadus, The Laureateship, A Study of the Office of Poet Laureate in England, With Some Account of the Poets, Oxford, 1921, p.171.
3 Ibid.

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Thy liberal polity, thy Gospel light!
Illume the dark idolator,
Reclaim the savage! O thou Ocean Queen![1]

Carmina Aulica, celebrating the meeting of the allied sovereigns in England in 1814, is nothing more than a collection of tributes to the Prince Regent, Tsar Alexander I, and King Frederick William IV of Prussia, all of them monotonously alike in absurd praise of the benevolence and courage of the allies and glib denunciation of the murderous tyrant, Napoleon. The Ode on the Battle of Algiers, 1818, the Ode Written After the King's Visit to Ireland, 1821, the Ode Written After the King's Visit to Scotland, 1822, and the Ode for St. George's Day, 1820, in which the patron saint is linked with the Brunswick Georges, laud over and over the glory of England and the wisdom of her monarch, mere lip-service were it not for the fact that Southey staunchly believed his eulogy to be just. Two odes, written in 1819 and 1820 and published under the title The Warning Voice, possess more originality. The first, championing the conservative attitude as vehemently as Shelley condemns it,[2] identifies the goddess of the Liberals with the Whore of Revelations. The second borrows fiends from Thalaba and Kehama to represent the Liberal leaders who scatter lies, horrors, obscenities, blasphemies, and treasons over England, and a Tutelary Angel to supplicate mercy and another chance

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1 Works, vol.III, p.238.
2 In such political poems of 1819 as Lines Written During the Castlereagh Administration, The Mask of Anarchy, Song to the Men of England, and England in 1819.

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from the Lord.

Three elegiac poems, Funeral Song for the Princess Charlotte of Wales, 1817, Ode on the Death of Queen Charlotte, 1818, and Ode on the Portrait of Bishop Heber, 1830, may also be placed among Southey's laureate pieces, although the last is a tribute to a personal friend. Heber, a representative of the Anglican Church and a missionary in India, offered Southey occasion for singing the worth of the national religion and showing how imperialism and Anglican enlightenment might go hand in hand. Characteristically, Southey praises Queen Charlotte for her charity. her "Household Virtues", her "Domestic Purity", and her fertility, and is sore beset in attempting to eulogize a person of no distinction.

The Funeral Song, for the Princess Charlotte of Wales is the best of these three elegies. It should be considered in connection with The Lay of the Laureate, an epithalamion for the Princess, who, in May, 1816, became the unwilling bride of Prince Leopold of Saxe-Coburg. This long and elaborate nuptial song celebrates, in its Proem, not the Princess Charlotte but the Laureate himself. Southey tells how in his early youth he gainsaid material success and wealth for the thornier path that leads to fame in posterity. This, he tells himself, was destined at your very birth,

> Then when the sacred Sisters for their own
> Baptized thee in the springs of Helicon.[1]

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1 Works, vol.X, p.139.

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Confident of his divine powers, he has since worked in solitude, now with history, now with fantasy, his eye fixed ever upon the promised joy of future renown. Even now he has a foretaste of the veneration his name shall someday receive, for he has been given the laureate garland that divinest Spenser, learned Drayton, thoughtful Ben, and gentle Daniel wore. He recounts the occasions on which he has glorified England in verse and announces that he will now sing a marriage-hymn, just as Spenser did.

In the poem itself he dreams of a magnificent marriage festival. In a spacious hall hung with the trophies of the late war with France and decorated with the portraits and busts of England's heroes, sit a royal bridegroom and his bride, guarded by Honour and Faith. To majestic music a "heavenly company" enters, led by Britannia, who advises Charlotte, future Queen of England, to follow in her father's footsteps, love peace, and maintain England's sea-power. Next, Experience, "a comely Sage", delivers the volume of the nation's laws and usages to the royal pair. Then the Angel of the English Church, accompanied by Edward "the spotless Tudor", Cranmer, Latimer, and the victims of "the hateful Henry" and "the bloody Queen", speaks to the Princess, exhorting her to preserve the English Church, to follow the wisdom of "great Eliza", to beware the Whore of the fierce beast (evidently Catholicism), to suppress "the stern Sectarian" and the "dark Atheist". The Angel passes on, but a second radiant figure approaches

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to supplicate that war be waged against "bestial Ignorance", that education and culture be brought to the lowly. At this, ten thousand children cry out "Save, or we perish!" Then two figures from The Faerie Queene, Speranza and Charissa, representative of "the charms of perfect womanhood", point out that many empires of darkness, in the Orient, the Australian Isles, and Africa, are still left on earth. England must bring the light to these dark places and bear the white man's burden, for

> To England is the Eastern empire given,
> And hers the sceptre of the circling main.[1]

Speranza, worked up to a high pitch, cries out that England shall carry the holy name of the Lord throughout the world. And God clinches her imperialistic argument with a miracle: the heavens open, and the cross is seen shining brighter than the sun. But suddenly the splendor dims. A shadowy form approaches the Princess, promises her that if she rule wisely he will repay her, and announces:

> "My name is DEATH: THE LAST BEST FRIEND AM I!

In an Epilogue, however, Southey apologizes for introducing the sombre strain and assures the Princess of his good wishes.

In this medley of Chaucer, Spenser, and Southey, all at their worst, the Laureate manages to praise everything and everyone, including himself, connected with the regime. De-

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1 Ibid., p.166.
2 Ibid., p.167.

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spite the bad taste of the Proem in eulogizing its author, despite the censure[1] and parody[2] that were visited on Southey for this reason, these opening stanzas are the only good parts of the piece. The introduction of Death at the conclusion of the nuptial hymn has propriety inasmuch as the Princess Charlotte died the following year, but this propriety is merely accidental, for Southey, instead of peering into the destiny of the Princess, was thinking of his own son Herbert, who died in the same month in which the poem was completed. All in all, Southey underestimated his talent when he declared this to be "by far the best" of his minor poems.[3]

Southey had enough of the showman in him to take advantage of coincidence and place the Funeral Song for the Princess Charlotte immediately after the "prophetic" Lay in his Poetical Works. This elegy, simple and sincere where the Lay is heavily allegorical and forced, is among the best of Southey's laureate verse. England had set its hope on Charlotte, who as the only child of the Prince Regent, seemed destined to rule. When she died of child-birth, in the early hours of November 6, 1817, all England was shocked, and grief was general. Southey, who apparently felt for her the same love that Chaucer bore for the Duchess Blanche, thought that he perceived in the public lamentation an occasional strain

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1 Life and Correspondence, vol.IV, pp.183-184.
2 The Proem was parodied in The Examiner (Selections from the Letters of Robert Southey, vol.III, p.24.
3 Ibid., p.26.

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of "fulsome canting";[1] it is possible that he made his dirge simple in order to offset this hypocrisy. The ornate medievalism of Chaucer and Spenser gives way to the classical lucidity of Landor, from whom Southey even borrows a poetic effect:

> Ye whose relics rest around,
> Tenants of this funeral ground;
> Even in your immortal spheres,
> What fresh yearnings will ye feel,
> When this earthly guest appears![2]

Allusion, used awkwardly in the Lay, contributes greatly to the success of the Funeral Song. The poet speaks of Charlotte lying among the monarchs buried in Windsor, and entrusts her to the care of saintly Henry IV and gentle Jane Seymour. The personal element enters only in the last four lines of the elegy and is fittingly restrained:

> One who reverently, for thee,
> Raised the strain of bridal verse,
> Flower of Brunswick, mournfully
> Lays a garland on thy herse.[3]

But despite the fact that the Funeral Song for the Princess Charlotte is a worthy effort, the daughter of the Regent will be known, not in Southey's verse but in the opening pages of Strachey's Queen Victoria. In Strachey's work Charlotte is a willful and tragically frustrated human being; in Southey's she is only the theme of a laureate poem.

The Lay of the Laureate was Southey's first ambitious

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1 Life and Correspondence, vol.IV, p.287.
2 Works, vol.X, p.185. Compare these lines with Landor's epitaph Dirce.
3 Ibid., p.188.

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production during this period. The Poet's Pilgrimage to Waterloo, equally pretentious, is of greater importance because here he deals finally with the French Revolution and Napoleon, attempts to test his philosophical attitude with doubt, and crystallizes his extravagantly patriotic feelings. When, on June 24, 1815, the news of the victory at Waterloo reached England, Southey had more occasion than most to rejoice. A large part of the English people, encouraged by the Edinburgh Review, had loudly protested that the war with France was futile, that no force could stop the certain conquest of Bonaparte. Southey, in the words of his son, "never laid aside a firm belief that the Providence of God would put an end to Napoleon's wicked career, and that it was the office of Great Britain to be the principal instrument of that Providence".[1] He vigorously attacked the pessimistic spirit of the Edinburgh Review, urged that the war be carried on in the boldest way, and continually prophesied the final victory of England. Therefore, Waterloo was a fulfillment of his predictions and a justification of his pressing demands on the government. It was natural, then, that Southey should join the crowd of curious English who, in the fall of 1815, visited the battlefield in Belgium.

Three accounts of this tour were made by Southey: a minute journal, a number of descriptive letters addressed to his friends, and the poem Pilgrimage to Waterloo. The letters, always charming, are reproduced in verse in the poem's

1 Life and Correspondence, vol.IV, p.136.

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first part, which describes how the Laureate, with his wife and daughter, crossed to Ostend, journeyed through Bruges, Ghent, and Brussels, and wandered meditatively about Waterloo, giving tribute to the valiant dead -- especially the English. This first part of the poem, rich in scenic impression, has a certain charm; but later Southey deserts description for his well-loved but seldom successful allegory. His purpose is to expose "the gross material philosophy which has been the guiding principle of the French politicians, from Mirabeau to Buonaparte" and the righteous antithesis of faith in a just God, an immortal spirit, and the final triumph of good.

In a dream, the poet, stumbling with the rest of blind humanity on a dark plain, hears his name called from a great tower, which, built on sand, is surrounded by mouldering rubbish. He climbs to the top of the structure and is greeted by an old man who declares himself to be Wisdom, the child of Mother Earth, not the divine offspring of Heaven. Wisdom, who is really a sham, being only the voice of materialistic philosophy, proceeds to instruct the poet. The present only, he says, is of importance:

> Heedless of what hereafter may befall,
> Live while thou livest, for this life is all.[1]

Among men there is darkness everywhere, and dogmas that attempt to pierce this darkness are futile. The philosopher knows that pleasure is the aim, and the self is the spring, of all action;

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1 Works, vol.X, p.61.

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therefore he seeks his own profit without consideration of his fellow-men and without compunction. Why should men heed the voice of conscience?

> Knowing that as from nothing they began,
> To nothing they must needs return at length.[1]

The poet protests that this was Bonaparte's creed and that the tyrant has, after all, ended his course ingloriously. But Wisdom answers with an argument which, however fallacious it might have seemed to Southey, is attractive to the twentieth-century mind:

> Hath he not chosen well? the Old Man replied;
> Bravely he aimed at universal sway;
> And never earthly Chief was glorified
> Like this Napoleon in his prosperous day.
> All-ruling Fate itself hath not the power
> To alter what has been: and he has had his hour![2]

The poet indignantly contrasts the evilly active Napoleon with those who have shown heroism in the passive endurance of oppression, but Wisdom has only contempt for these. Yet when the poet declares that death is the true test and that wealth and power mean nothing whereas virtue and faith mean all at the final hour -- essentially the argument of the medieval morality Everyman --, Wisdom refuses to discuss the point further and proposes another subject of debate.

What good will come of the carnage at Waterloo? The beautiful star of the French Revolution has gone down in blood.

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1 Ibid., p.63.
2 Ibid., p.67.

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Where now are liberty, truth, and equality with the Bourbon back on the throne? How long will the peace won at Waterloo endure, and will war ever cease? Man at his core is rotten, and he limps through time without purpose and without guidance:

> Look where thou wilt, the history of man
> Is but a thorny maze, without a plan.[1]

Would it not be better, then, if the earth sank once more beneath the sea? -- for there is no salvation on earth for humanity, no place secure from the final destruction that comes ever nearer. Even England will not escape: her power will be undermined, and destiny will crush her. And, with this Parthian shot, Wisdom disappears. A tempest blows up. The tower shakes. A heavenly voice bids the poet leap from the tottering structure, and he is borne by the wind to the Sacred Hill, where the Goddess of Divine Reason appears. To her he pours out his woes. He had hoped that Waterloo would bring goodness back into the world, that Italy would free itself from Austria and the Pope, that tyranny would be ended in Spain, that Catholicism, "abhorred Idolatry", would go down in the confusion. But

> The golden cup she bears full to the brim
> Of her abominations as of yore!
> Her eyeballs with inebriate triumph swim;
> Tho drunk with righteous blood she thirsts for more,
> Eager to reassert her influence fell,
> And once again let loose the Dogs of Hell.[2]

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1 Ibid., p.73.
2 Ibid., p.78.

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And, worst of all, England stands in danger of anarchy, and thus it would seem that God cares nothing for the earth.

All this, the Goddess affirms, is the result of false Wisdom's suggestion. The truth is that man's way is not dark but lighted by Heaven if man only believes. The premise of all true thinking is that man is free and that God is good:

> These primal truths are rooted in thy heart:
> But these being rightly felt and understood,
> Should bring with them a hope, calm, constant, sure,
> Patient, and on the rock of faith secure.[1]

The Goddess, apparently feeling that this remark needs practical demonstration, leads the poet to a garden where the Rood of Man's Redemption is firmly planted in its bed of living rock. From the feet of the cross the Well of Life flows, and beside it grows the Tree of Knowledge. The poet eats of the tree's fruit, and its bitterness almost kills him. But he clasps the cross, drinks from the well, and rises a "renovated man", all bitterness gone. Looking now on the plain of life, he sees its darkness pierced by a steady ray from lost Eden, and this light also reveals the Angel of Death, no longer menacing, standing in the open gate of Heaven.

In the fourth part of the poem, entitled "The Hopes of Man", Southey recapitulates and enlarges the arguments of Divine Reason. If it be borne in mind that God is the beginning and end, all things resolve into a plan, and God's ways are justified. Man has free will, for otherwise all is mockery.

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1 Ibid., p.81.

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Man's knowledge of his weakness is strength, for it causes him to seek security in faith; and when death sets free the spirit, the weakness of the flesh is gone. Therefore, death should resolve all doubts. Fate is purposeful and just, and world-destiny, really an agent of God, works toward good, for nations, like men, fall or rise according to their deeds. Thus Egypt fell because it oppressed. Africa is barbarous because of its error and criminality. The Orient is enslaved because it is vicious. These countries were offered the Light, but they turned from it and therefore suffered degradation. Napoleon too abhorred the Light and tried to plunge the whole world in darkness; but at Waterloo, mainly through the agency of England, the Light was restored. The poet praises England, and the Goddess assures him that his eulogy is just:

> For of all ages and all parts of earth,
> To chuse thy time and place did Fate allow,
> Wise choice would be this England and this Now.[1]

Thus encouraged, the poet conceives a vision of the new England, a place of splendid cities and great commerce, of rich agricultural districts, of a comfortable, content people, of a youth well taught in earthly and divine knowledge. He sees British colonies established in the East and West, with idolatry and crime rooted out, social reforms effected, slavery abolished -- all by a wise, benevolent, and Tory government. This may be the future of England if she follow the course of righteousness. Inevitably, Southey returns to himself at

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1 Ibid., p.96.

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the [redacted] conclusion: if this be the fate of England, his private destiny is to

> Hold fast the faith which animates thy mind,
> And in thy songs proclaim the hopes of humankind.[1]

That this work, issued to the public in 1816, was designed by Southey to be a laureate production is proved by the last stanza of the proem, in which he asks the aid of the Muses so that he may sing worthily his country's praise and boldly bind around his temples the "laurel which my master Spenser wore". Among the laureate poems it enjoys the especial distinction of having extraordinarily facile versification, expression as strong in parts as that in the Ode Written During the Negociations with Buonaparte, and a reflective solemnity that happily refrains from becoming owlish. But the creaking framework of allegory on which the poem is constructed can scarcely be accounted a gain, and -- a more serious objection -- the quality of reasoning is as unsatisfactory here as it is in Roderick and A Tale of Paraguay, in which Southey tries to pass off emotional confiction as logical deduction. The arguments of Wisdom in The Pilgrimage to Waterloo are presented with a rational precision that demonstrates how clearly Southey saw external justification of doubt and pessimism. These arguments are answered for the reader in exactly the same manner that Southey answered them for himself; they are false because they are hostile to inward belief; Hobbes is wrong because Southey refuses to

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1 Ibid., p.105.

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believe that he is right. This habit of meeting reason with faith, without recognition of the inequality of the two, is irritating. Moreover, the twentieth-century reader is able to perceive in what measure Southey's prophetic faith was true -- to what extent Italy has freed herself, Spain has found peace, war has ended, and the light of England has spread to all other nations.

To the average reader the most familiar of Southey's laureate poems is The Vision of Judgment, [illegible] known, unfortunately, not through its own merits but through Byron's parody of it. Byron, more than any other, is responsible for the opprobrium which has been cast on Southey, whom many know only through the reference to him in English Bards and Scotch Reviewers, Don Juan, and the burlesque Vision of Judgment. It is unfortunate that Southey wrote his absurd piece of court flattery, which has very little intrinsic worth and which, through parody, has become the chief instrument of his undoing.

George III, whom Southey's Vision of Judgment was meant to immortalize, had several qualities that recommended him to the Laureate. Though he was ignorant, stubborn, and bigoted, he was also pious, home-loving, and possessed of a strong sense of duty. Moreover, he was anti-Liberal and anti-Catholic, and thus set against the two great "dangers" that Southey, in his mature years, believed to menace England. It may be assumed, then, that Southey, now a complete conservative, had a good deal of respect for the "old, mad, blind, despised, and

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dying king" that Shelley and other young Liberals detested so heartily. When George III died in 1820, after years of lunacy, Southey felt obliged to compose a poetic obituary. His letters hint, however, that the subject did not altogether appeal to him;[1] therefore, he decided to make the panegyric an excuse for a bold experiment in metrics, a thing that interested him greatly. Accordingly, he wrote The Vision of Judgment in hexameters, distinctly a mistake inasmuch as the dignity of the measure moved him to over-solemnize his subject matter.

It is evident that Southey was under Dante's influence when he wrote this poem. The blessed souls of Heaven sit in tier over tier, attired in radiant light, at the judgment; demons, enveloped in sulphurous clouds, clap their wings, hiss maledictions, and finally are carried off by a whirlwind. Milton too is remembered when the reader comes upon such lines as

> Round the cloud were the Orders of Heaven...Archangel and Angel,
> Principality, Cherub and Seraph, Thrones, Dominations,
> Virtues and Powers.[2]

The account of the routing of George III's slanderers is an obvious imitation of the fall of Satan in Paradise Lost:

> .....and the blast with lightning and thunder
> Vollying aright and aleft amid the accumulate blackness,
> Scattered its inmates accurst, and beyond the limits of ether

1 Selections from the Letters of Robert Southey, vol.III, p.189; Life and Correspondence, vol.V, p.52.
2 Works, vol.X, p.333.

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> Drove the hircine host obscene: they howling and groaning
> Fell precipitate down to their dolorous place of endurance,
> Then was the region clear; the arrowy flashes which reddened
> Through the foul thick throng, like sheeted argentry floating
> Now o'er the blue serene, diffused an innocuous splendor,
> In the infinite dying away. The roll of the thunder
> Ceased, and all sounds were hushed, till again from the gate adamantine
> Was the voice of the Angel heard through the silence of Heaven.'

In this synthetic sublimity, compound of Milton and Dante, George III is brought to judgment. His accusers come forward, the first being the "Lord of Misrule", intended to represent Charles James Fox.[2] Fox had made himself particularly obnoxious to George III by criticizing the Tory government, by approving the American and French Revolutions, and by introducing the Prince of Wales to the delights of debauchery. Southey represents Fox as a base profligate who has excited faction at home and insurrection abroad. When he is invited to accuse the King, there is nothing he can say, for in Heaven only just condemnations may be made. With him stands the nameless "libeller" of George III, the author of the Junius Letters -- unknown to Southey at this time but later identified as Sir Philip Francis. Because he would not show his face during life, Junius wears a torturing iron mask in death. He too is silent at the trial of the King, Southey's implication being that in Heaven no Whig is allowed to speak.

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1 Ibid., pp.325-326.
2 Broadus, The Laureateship, p.177.

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When the dumb detractors have been dismissed, the absolvers are asked to advance. Immediately there is a forward rush, not of Tories, as one might expect, but of former Whigs whose political principles have been corrected by association with the Blessed. Only one remains aloof. It is Washington, but George III finally wins even his admiration. Then, in a section entitled "The Beatification", the King, with a good deal of celestial claptrap, is given his final apotheosis. The "glorified Monarch" is placed along with Alfred the Great, Richard Coeur de Lion, Edward III, the Black Prince, the "matchless Eliza", the martyred Stuart, and -- through some strange lapse of consistency -- the Count of Nassau, seventeenth-century defender of the Netherlands. All of these feel joy each time they think of the Georgian age. The King is honored by the "elder worthies" of England, Bede, Roger Bacon, Wyclif, Chaucer, Cranmer, Lord Cecil, Spenser, Milton, Taylor, Marlborough, Newton, and Berkeley, as well as "the worthies of the Georgian age", General Wolfe, Handel, Reynolds, Hogarth, Wesley, Judge Mansfield, Burke, Hastings, Cowper, Nelson, and an unidentifiable "seaman who fell on the shores of Owhyhee".[1] It will be noticed that, in this list of worthies, the elder and the younger Pitt are conspicuous by their absence. The omission of the Earl of Chatham, who opposed George III's policy of increasing the crown's power, is understandable; but it

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1 "Leaving a lasting name, to humanity dear as to science", Works, vol.X, p.236.

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would seem that the younger Pitt was sufficiently reactionary to win the admiration even of Southey. In a separate section the poet pays tribute to "the young spirits", those cut down by death "in the morning of hope, in the blossom of virtue and genius".[1] After all of these have welcomed George, he is reunited with his family in Heaven.

Southey withheld the poem from publication a year because he believed the King's death was too recent to be made the "subject of a fiction".[2] It would have been better if he had withheld it permanently, but in January, 1821, his publisher Longman received the poem, prefaced by a dedicatory letter to George IV, assuring him that the "brightest portion of British history will be that which records the improvements, the works, and the achievements of the Georgian Age".[3] The King took notice of the eulogy "in the best-natured way possible" and called it a very beautiful poem.[4]

Others dealt less kindly with the Vision. When he was composing it, Southey anticipated censure of his attempt to adapt hexameter to the English language, and in his preface [redacted] he devoted a number of pages to an explanation of the way in which he had distributed trochees, spondees, and dactyls. The first four feet of the line, he wrote, have any convenient arrangement of dactyls and trochees; but the

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1 Ibid., p.238.
2 Selections from the Letters of Robert Southey, vol.III, p.189.
3 Works, vol.X, p.192.
4 Selections from the Letters of Robert Southey, vol.III, p.251.

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fifth foot is always a dactyl, "as exemplified in the name of Wellington", and the sixth always a trochee, "as exemplified in the name of Nelson".[1] It is barely possible that Southey chose this form in order to honor his two favorite heroes. At any rate, the verse reads with a pleasant smoothness; and it may be said that, in general, Southey's metrical experiment, so far as technique is concerned, is a successful one, although there were the inevitable fault-finders, the most severe of whom was the Reverend S. Tillbrook, Fellow of Peterhouse.[2]

But the damning criticism of the Vision was not directed specifically at its metre. Southey had anticipated from the Whigs censure of subject matter too, and he awaited it defiantly. "Pelt away, my boys, pelt away! if you were not busy at that work you would be about something more mischievous. Abusing me is like flogging a whipping-post."[3] But he created extra woe for himself when he included, in the preface, an indictment of immoral books and an attack on Byron's "Satanic School", with a warning to the King that he look to this evil in time:

> 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, to the consequences of which no limits can be assigned, and those consequences no after repentance in the writer can counteract. Whatever remorse of conscience he may feel when his hour

1 Works, vol.X, p.196.
2 In the 1838 preface to the Vision, Southey prints Tillbrook's objections and answers them. Works, vol.X, pp.vii-xxi.
3 Life and Correspondence, vol.V, p.61.

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> comes (and come it must!) will be of no avail. The poignancy of a death-bed repentance cannot cancel one copy of the thousands which are sent abroad; and as long as it continues to be read, so long is he the pandar of posterity, and so long is he heaping up guilt upon his soul in perpetual accumulation.
>
> These remarks are not more severe than the offence deserves, even when applied to those immoral writers who have not been conscious of any evil intention in their writings, who would acknowledge a little levity, a little warmth of colouring, and so forth, in that sort of language with which men gloss over their favourite vices, and deceive themselves. What then should be said of those for whom the thoughtlessness and inebriety of wanton youth can no longer be pleaded, but who have written in sober manhood with deliberate purpose? .. Men of diseased hearts and depraved imaginations, who, forming a system of opinions to suit their own unhappy course of conduct, have rebelled against the holiest ordinances of human society, and hating that revealed religion which, with all their efforts and bravadoes, they are unable entirely to disbelieve, labor to make others as miserable as themselves, by infecting them with a moral virus that eats into the soul! The school which they have set up may properly be called the Satanic school; for though their productions breathe the spirit of Belial in their lascivious parts, and the spirit of Moloch in those loathsome images of atrocities and horrors which they delight to represent, they are more especially characterized by a Satanic spirit of pride and audacious impiety, which still betrays the wretched feeling of hopelessness wherewith it is allied.[1]

That the statement referred specifically to Byron and his disciples is proved by Southey's remark to Rickman: "Then in the preface I have a passage, by no means weakly worded, which my worthy friends Lord Byron and Moore will take to themselves, as a set-off in part, against some obligations due to them."[2]

This quarrel with Byron had begun at an early date. In 1809 Byron had satirized Southey as a ballad-monger and a too prolific epic poet in English Bards and Scotch Reviewers;

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1 Works, vol.X, pp.204-206.
2 Selections from the Letters of Robert Southey, vol.III, p.232.

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but, as Edmund Kemper Broadus puts it, Southey had "found himself in such a plenitude of good company that he could afford to ignore Byron's youthful ridicule".[1] When the two met in London in 1813, only courtesies passed between them. As Byron became more notorious, Southey found his writings increasingly offensive, but never expressed public disapproval. Byron, Charles Cuthbert Southey asserts, cultivated an intense dislike for the Laureate, not on the basis of his poetry and prose, which Byron admired,[2] but because of political differences and a personal hostility. After all, the two were natural enemies, for each symbolized what the other despised most.

This natural animosity was increased by an unfortunate misunderstanding. The rumor reached Byron that the Laureate, on returning from his Continental tour of 1817, had spread a report that Byron and Shelley were living promiscuously with two sisters in Geneva.[3] Byron, cursing Southey as a liar and taking no pains to determine the true source of the slander, immediately sent off to his publisher Murray the vindictive Dedication of Don Juan, in which Southey is scored for his "apostasy" to Toryism, his laureate tributes, his soaring ambition, and his association with the Lakers. Although the Dedication was suppressed when Don Juan was anonymously published

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1 The Laureateship, p.178.
2 He believed Southey's talents to be "of the first order", his prose to be "perfect", his Nelson "beautiful". Thomas Moore, Letters and Journals of Lord Byron, London, 1860, p.203.
3 Southey contemptuously denies that he spread this rumor, Life and Correspondence, vol.V, p.350. E. C. Mayne, Byron, New York, 1913, asserts that the rumor has since been generally attributed to Brougham, vol.II, p.75n.

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in 1819, its existence and its savage attack on Southey were a matter of common knowledge.[1] Moreover, in the poem proper Byron refers to Southey as the "quaint and mouthy"[2], parodies his Lay of the Laureate,[3] jeers at his anti-jacobinism[4], reminds him of his radical youth and the "turncoat" attitude of his later years[5], and calls his perennial epics tedious[6]. Here too Southey found himself in good company: Wordsworth, Coleridge, Landor, and others have their share of abuse, and even Milton is slightingly mentioned.

But the combination of the charge of slander with the insulting passages in Don Juan was a little too much for Southey, and so, in the preface to The Vision of Judgment, he retaliated with an attack on Byron. The latter answered in an appendix to the tragedy The Two Foscari, published in December, 1821. Here, in effect, Byron calls Southey a liar, a turncoat, and a presumptuous ass, and publicly attributes to him the incest rumor.[7] On January 5, 1822, Southey wrote, for The Courier, a denial of Byron's charge that he had "scattered abroad calumnies" and urbanely stated that in Switzerland he "sought for no staler subject than St. Ursula".[8] Byron had called Southey a scribbler of all work; in this letter for The Courier the Laureate proceeded to inform Lord Byron what he

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1 Life and Correspondence, vol.V, p.69.
2 The Poetical Works of Lord Byron, Boston, 1868, vol.IX, p.127.
3 Ibid., p.135.
4 Ibid., p.257.
5 Ibid., p.267; vol.X, p.194.
6 Ibid., vol.IX, pp.268-269.
7 Poetical Works of Lord Byron, vol.III, pp.198-200.
8 Life and Correspondence, vol.V, pp.349-350.

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had not scribbled; he had never libelled his friends, begged their pardons, and then libelled them again; he had never abused literature to defame a man's character or hurt a woman; he had never written a book that he dared not acknowledge, he had never "manufactured furniture for the brothel". But what he had done was to hold up Byron and his school of literature to "public detestation, as enemies to the religion, the institutions, and the domestic morals of the country. I have given them a designation to which their founder and leader answers. I have sent a stone from my sling which has smitten their Goliath in the forehead. I have fastened his name upon the gibbet for reproach and ignominy, as long as it shall endure. Take it down who can!"[1] And the letter closed with a charitable suggestion that hereafter Lord Byron conduct his quarreling in rhyme so that his temper will "be obliged to keep tune". Medwin reports that Byron, on reading this letter, "looked perfectly awful; his colour changed almost prismatically; his lips were as pale as death".[2] But the concluding piece of advice must have given him grim amusement, for his parody of The Vision of Judgment was already half written -- in rhyme, of course. Byron had almost decided not to publish it, but Southey's letter made him hot for revenge, so hot that he even sent the Laureate, through Douglass Kinnaird, a challenge to a duel. Fortunately, Kinnaird never carried the challenge to

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1 Ibid., p.353.
2 Quoted by E. C. Mayne, Byron, vol.II, p.76.

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Southey,[1] and the dispute was allowed to remain on a literary level.[2] The next and most telling blow was Byron's. In The Liberal for October 15, 1822, his Vision of Judgment was published, and Southey became a laughing-stock for the Liberals of his own day and for the general reading public of future ages.

Southey's poem was fair material for parody, and even his most enthusiastic admirer must admit the justice and exquisite point of Byron's burlesque. After the fulsome eulogy of Southey, one welcomes the scathing appraisal of George III found in Byron's work:

> A better farmer ne'er brushed dew from lawn,
> A worse king never left a realm undone!
> He died -- but left his subject still behind,
> One half as mad -- and t'other no less blind.[3]

Likewise, Byron's irreverent attitude toward the rabidly Tory Heaven that Southey had solemnly presented may be appreciated. The comedy reaches its climax when Southey himself is borne to Heaven by Asmodeus and allowed to speak for George. But when he begins to read the hexameters of his Vision of Judgment devils, ghosts, and angels run for cover, and Saint Peter, irked beyond endurance, knocks Southey down to earth. In the confusion George slips into Heaven, and there Byron leaves him practising the hundredth psalm.

Southey never attempted to answer Byron's burlesque.

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1 Poetical Works of Lord Byron, vol.III, p.204.
2 See Southey's remarks on this challenge, Correspondence with Caroline Bowles, p.186.
3 Ibid., p.208.

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Even when, after the latter's death, Southey re-opened the controversy regarding the Satanic School, he sedulously avoided any mention of Byron's Vision of Judgment. Indeed, there was no answer to it, and Southey himself must have realized that his poem invited satire. Yet he scarcely could have foreseen that in future time, far from reaping a rich harvest of delayed fame, he would be known mainly as an object of Byron's ridicule.

In conclusion, we may ask to what degree did the laureateship further Southey's poetic reputation? The Ode Written During the Negociations with Buonaparte moved no less a critic than Lafcadio Hearne to mention Southey's name in the same sentence with Milton's, and there are passages in the Pilgrimage to Waterloo that deserve printing in any anthology of English verse. On the other hand, the reader is disgusted by the blaring jingoism of such odes as the Carmen Triumphale and by the grotesque hibouterie of The Lay of the Laureate; and the several tributes to George IV cause one to marvel how any poet of taste could write them, much less print them. On the whole, it must be said that whatever worth Southey possessed does not show conspicuously in his laureate poems.

Southey is commonly credited with having raised the dignity of the laureateship to such a level that poets like Wordsworth and Tennyson could accept the office without shame. And yet there is very little dignity in such a performance as The Vision of Judgment. One speculates on what sort of fame

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Southey would have today if he had refused the laureateship and worked quietly on at Keswick, prompted only by his own poetic impulse. He believed that when he accepted the position he was already treading in the footsteps of Spenser, but the laurel that he so proudly bound around his temples has proved to be "a garland briefer than a girl's".

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VI. THE BIOGRAPHER

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THE BIOGRAPHER

It has been observed how Southey, as he lost his youth, lost his desire to write poetry. Roderick, completed when he was forty, is the last of his "Epic Dreams" and the last tempered expression of his poetic energy. The pieces that followed, A Tale of Paraguay, Oliver Newman, Robin Hood, pathetically demonstrate the ebb of enthusiasm and the labored attempt to create when inspiration is gone.

Edward Dowden observes that Southey's translations of old romances, Amadis of Gaul, Palmerin of England, and The Cid, form a transition from his early poetic to his later prose period, and "serve to mark the progress of his mind from legend to history, and from the fantastic to the real".[1] They also serve to mark the extinction of that fire kindled by revolution, which, ineffectual to purify the world of its dross, burned the brighter in Southey's private world of grandiose imaginings. His mind had always been more scholarly than poetic, and when the youthful afflatus was spent, only scholarship was left. He devoted the latter part of his life to prose composition and dealt with realities, not fictions; with human beings, not gods and heroes.

Southey's industry in this later period is astonishing. He was a constant contributor to The Annual and The Quarterly Review, for which he wrote literary criticism as well as articles on current events. The religious, political, and

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1 Edward Dowden, Southey, English Men of Letters series, New York, n.d., p.187.

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social ideas that he had presented in his poetry he re-stated in such prose works as Colloquies on the Progress and Prospects of Society, The Book of the Church, Vindiciae Ecclesiae Anglicanae, and a collection of Essays, Political and Moral. Indulging his love for antiquarian research and factual chronicling, he finished two elaborate histories, one of Brazil, the other of the Peninsular War, and gathered a vast amount of material for two others, a History of Portugal and a History of the Monastic Orders. Linked with this historical interest was his fondness for biography, and he left behind him memoirs of Nelson, Wesley, Cowper, Bunyan, Cromwell, the Reverend Andrew Bell, the "uneducated poets", the British Admirals, as well as brief sketches of the English poets from Chaucer to Jonson. In addition, he did a good deal of editing, and composed a seven-volume, nondescript work called The Doctor, &.

It must be remembered that Southey made a living by the labor of his pen, to support his own family and that of Coleridge. Much of his prose was written hurriedly, at the instance of publishers, and is nothing but hack work. But some of it -- the biographies of Nelson, Wesley, and Cowper, the histories of Brazil and the Peninsular War, and The Doctor -- has moved so eminent a critic as Dowden to declare that Southey is at his best in prose.[1] Certainly these works are the finest that Southey produced in his later period, but that they represent the cream of his talent is doubtful.

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1 Ibid., p.192.

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The best known of these is the Life of Nelson, a tribute to the great naval hero whom Southey profoundly admired. The first intimation of a work about Nelson occurs in a letter to Grosvenor Bedford, written on November 13, 1805: "What a death is Nelson's! It seems to me one of the characteristics of the sublime that its whole force is never perceived at once. The more it is contemplated, the deeper is its effect. When the war began, I began an Ode, which almost I feel now disposed to complete.... Almost I could now venture, and try at a funeral hymn for Nelson."[1]

Southey continued to reflect on the aesthetic propriety of Nelson's life and death, for in March, 1806, he wrote to his brother Tom the same sentiment that a few months earlier he had addressed to Bedford. "Your feeling about Nelson is the right one. It was his proper death, the fit and worthy finish of such a life."[2]

It is apparent that Nelson's career appealed to Southey's artistic sense and suggested a subject for his pen. The form which the creative effort should take was influenced, no doubt, by a reviewing task given him by Gifford in December, 1809. The book was Stanier Clarke's[3] Life of Nelson, and Southey did not like it. He judged the work to be a mere compilation of papers, and no biography at all. Moreover, the work was

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1 Life and Correspondence, vol.II, p.353.
2 Selections from the Letters of Robert Southey, vol.I, p.361.
3 In 1813, Stanier Clarke was appointed official historiographer, a post to which Southey had aspired. Selections from the Letters of Robert Southey, vol.II, p.281.

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too bulky to read (the volume was five inches thick), and Southey set out to "condense its whole pith into about forty pages of the 'Quarterly'".[1]

The article on Clarke's book -- really a summary of its contents -- was published in the fifth number of the Quarterly Review. Murray, one of the editors, requested Southey to enlarge this article into a brief Life of Nelson,[2] a proposal that probably coincided with Southey's own secret desire, although he asserted that he would never have attempted the work of his own volition. It is evident that the subject of Nelson had been turning in his mind since 1805. His unfamiliarity with the navy and seamanship caused him to doubt his ability to execute such a work, but this indecision was ended by Murray's request. If he failed now, he could still his conscience by telling it that he had worked for Murray's £100.

The article published in the Quarterly Review served as a basis for Nelson, but an ambition to make his biography "clear and concise enough to become a manual for the young sailor"[3] moved Southey to study painstakingly not only every available source of information concerning the hero, but also the minutest details of navigation and the organization of the English navy. Thomas Southey, who, as Lieutenant on the Bellona, had participated in the Battle of Copenhagen and been promoted to a Captaincy in 1813, was a valued informant. A letter written to him on December 24, 1813, shows the exacting research

1 Ibid., p.180,185.
2 Life and Correspondence, vol.IV, p.17n.
3 Southey, Life of Nelson, Oxford Edition, London, 1911, p.12.

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that Southey's writing demanded: "All day I have been working to get into action at Copenhagen, and I would give one of my ears for your help. Brierly's chart stands me in good stead; and I have ransacked all my books to get the scene well before my eyes. Do send me as soon as you possibly can a letter of recollections upon the subject; things worthy of note before the battle, in, and after it, etc. How came your guns in the Bellona to be in such a state? Did you not tell me that the spires at Copenhagen have a sort of spiral staircase outside, or something of the kind? Tell me also the particulars about the man who shot Nelson, and whom Collingwood and somebody else, whose name I cannot remember, shot at the same time. Nelson's are all good battles for relation, which is not often the case with battles. For that of Copenhagen there is luckily a Dane's account to help me, written in English: it supplies me with a few fine circumstances not to be found elsewhere."[1] Again, on December 30, Southey wrote to his brother, asking question after question and lamenting that he is "such a sad lubber": "There is something ridiculous, and something like quackery in writing thus about what I so little understand. I walk among sea terms as a cat does in a china pantry, in bodily fear of doing mischief, and betraying myself; and yet there will come a good book of it, I verily believe."[2]

Southey worked on Nelson with his customary diligence. On February 1, 1813, little more than a year after the book's

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1 Selections from the Letters of Robert Southey, vol.II, pp. 312-313.
2 Ibid., pp.315-316.

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inception, it was completed. On the same day he wrote to the Reverend Herbert Hill: "This is a subject which I should never have dreamt of touching, if it had not been thrust upon me... but, if I have succeeded in making the narrative continuous and clear -- the very reverse of what is in the lives before me -- the materials are, in themselves, so full of character, so picturesque, and so sublime, that it cannot fail of being a good book."[1]

Whatever doubt there may be that Southey's Nelson is a good book in all respects, it certainly was a popular one. Byron, Southey's arch-enemy, bestowed lavish praise upon it, and even in our own day it has been called a work of art and named after Boswell's Johnson and Lockhart's Scott as the third greatest biography in English. Its popularity in Southey's time was due partly to the intense interest in Nelson, partly to the inadequacy of previous accounts of him. The inordinate importance given the book by modern critics must be attributed to confusion regarding the purposes of biography. For Southey's Life of Nelson is a satisfactory account of the events surrounding the hero's life but affords no illumination of his personality or of his times. Moreover, with the exception of two incidents, the work is frankly adulatory and lacks the hard detachment that the true biographer observes. The first lines assert that it was written with an ulterior purpose, a purpose not conducive to impartial revelation of character seen in its sum total of faults and virtues: "Many lives of

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1 Life and Correspondence, vol.IV, p.17.

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Nelson have been written: one is yet wanting, clear and concise enough to become a manual for the young sailor, which he may carry about with him, till he has treasured up the example in his memory and in his heart. In attempting such a work, I shall write the eulogy of our great naval Hero; for the best eulogy of Nelson is the faithful history of his actions: and the best history must be that which shall relate them most perspicuously."[1] In his attitude toward Nelson, Southey was the most ardent of admirers, and it has been suggested that in his Life of Nelson lies the beginning of the cult of hero-worship that Carlyle championed so vehemently. But Louis Cazamian has rightly objected that Southey infuses his hero-worship "too exclusively with the passion of nationality".[2]

Southey is prejudiced in England's favor, and as a consequence the biography is almost as jingoistic as are the laureate odes. British seamen and soldiers surpass all other in courage and skill. "Too much may, indeed, be exacted from them in a retreat; but set their face toward a foe, and there is nothing within the reach of human achievement which they cannot perform."[3] Nationalistic feeling causes him to write such a sentence as the following: "Often as the superiority of British courage has been proved against France upon the seas, it was never more conspicuous than in this decisive conflict."[4] As this statement implies, the reverse side of

1 Life of Nelson, p.12.
2 A History of English Literature (Modern Times), New York, 1935, p.1049.
3 Life of Nelson, p.75.
4 Ibid., p.306.

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Southey's patriotism was a contempt for England's enemies. America, which in his youth he considered the golden land of promise "where men's abilities would ensure respect" and whose struggle for freedom he had lauded, is now a collection of seditious foreigners who "had disregarded the ties of blood and language, when they acquired the independence which they had been led on to claim, unhappily for themselves, before they were fit for it..."[1] His scornful estimate of France is nothing new, but it is singularly out of place in this account of England's naval hero. Ever since The Battle of Maldon, courtesy to the foe has been one of the finer traditions of English literature, but Southey can find no instance of heroism, justice, or common civility among the French. They "have never acted a generous part in the history of the world".[2] They have committed such enormities that their purchase of Corsican sovereignty from Genoa appears but a speck on their befouled escutcheon.[3] Their officers are "graceless and godless"[4]; their soldiers use methods of warfare "which no other people have ever been wicked enough to employ".[5] Napoleon is given the usual treatment accorded him by Southey, who characterizes him as the "perfidious Corsican" and at one point stops his account of Nelson in order to remind the English that Napoleon cannot be loathed too much. Here Southey uses language which no true

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1 Ibid., p.44.
2 Ibid., pp.66-67.
3 Ibid., p.70.
4 Ibid., p.145.
5 Ibid., p.251.

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biographer would employ: "A romantic obscurity would have hung over the expedition to Egypt, and he would have escaped the perpetration of those crimes which have incarnadined his soul with a deeper dye than that of the purple for which he committed them; those acts of perfidy, midnight murder, usurpation, and remorseless tyranny, which have consigned his name to universal execration, now and for ever."[1] These are scarcely the words of a detached mind.

The picture drawn of Nelson is likewise colored by Southey's personality. The character thus depicted lacks all human complexity: Nelson is a good man and a great naval commander, but he is never quite convincing as a human being. The number of personal eccentricities with which such modern biographers as Strachey, Stephan Zweig, and Maurois, and such older writers as Boswell endow their characters, is absent from this work. The single personal detail that Southey gives of Nelson is that he pouted his lips when he was agitated.[2] Except for this, Southey's hero lacks those significant small-points of external appearance and habit that make Dr. Johnson, Marie Antoinette, and Queen Victoria convincingly real. In fact, Southey does not trouble to describe Nelson at all, except to imply that he was short in stature. This neglect proceeds from Southey's all-engrossing desire to give the <u>character</u> of Nelson. If the internal traits of the man were adequately presented, the reader could overlook the absence of external

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1 Ibid., p.131.
2 Ibid., p.21.

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ones, but here, too, Southey fails. His hero is no man of flesh and blood but a compendium of the moral "virtues" which Southey admired -- and possessed. The most prominent of these qualities, however, may be judged by the modern reader as something other than a virtue: Nelson, like Southey, worries inordinately about his fame. The same sentiment that Southey expressed time and again in his prefaces and proems Nelson reiterates: "One day or other I will have a long gazette to myself... I cannot, if I am in the field of glory, be kept out of sight..."[1] "Before this time to-morrow I shall have gained the peerage, or Westminster Abbey."[2] "I shall live, sir, to be envied! and to that point I shall always direct my course."[3] Southey emphasizes another trait of Nelson that is singularly like one of his own: persistence in the face of neglect. "I must still buffet," Nelson says, "the waves in search of -- what? Alas! that they called honour is now thought of no more... I have invariably laid down, and followed close, a plan of what ought to be uppermost in the breast of an officer, -- that it is much better to serve an ungrateful country, than to give up his own fame. A uniform course of honour and integrity seldom fails of bringing a man to the goal of fame at last."[4]

Linked with this persistence in Nelson is a never-failing sense of duty, again one of Southey's own characteristics. Much is made of the point that Nelson, despite the

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1 Ibid., p.104.
2 Ibid., p.135; cf. p. 109.
3 Ibid., p.48.
4 Ibid., p.56; cf. pp. 79,104,202.

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contempt and ill-feeling the action won him, executed his duty by driving the American traders from the English islands of the West Indies.[1] This was at the beginning of Nelson's career. Southey asserts that the last words he spoke, dying at Trafalgar, were: "Thank God, I have done my duty." And he repeated the sentence over and over.[2]

Another curious parallel is provided by the generosity and high principle that Southey ascribes to Nelson and possessed himself. He takes care to bring out this quality in bold relief. Nelson married the niece of Mr. Herbert, President of Nevis, who was so displeased with his own daughter that he intended to disinherit her and leave his fortune to his niece. Nelson, although in straitened circumstances, refused to allow his wife to accept this assurance of prosperity and finally reconciled father and daughter.[3] Another example of how "feelingly alive was Nelson to the claims, and interests, and feelings of others" is provided by his earnest efforts to gain promotion for Captain Trowbridge who, through an unfortunate accident, was unable to engage in the Battle of the Nile.[4] Even when Nelson lay dying, Southey points out, this generosity did not desert him, for he insisted that the surgeon attend the sufferings of others.[5]

In Nelson generosity was heightened by gallantry, and in this particular he differed from Southey, whose circumstances

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1 Ibid., pp.44-47.
2 Ibid., p.304.
3 Ibid., p.51.
4 Ibid., p.151; cf. pp. 261.289.
5 Ibid., p.302.

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scarcely permitted such romantic coloring. But in essentials of character, the two men, Southey and the hero of his biography, are remarkably alike. It is probable that the Nelson whom Southey pictures is merely a projection of his own temperament -- or that Southey sees in Nelson those qualities he wishes to see. At least it is apparent that he had no conception of what modern criticism calls "pure" biography, the memoir that is reasonably free of its author's personality.

Nelson's character, from the standpoint of literature, suffers from this attempt to make him a summation of Southeyan virtues. That he was a human being with some human weakness is evident in his own memoir of his services, which reveals an arrogant conceit, and also in a few scattered passages in Southey's work which note but naively pass over elements of pessimism and doubt in Nelson's personality. Southey, of course, read Nelson's memoir, but in his spirit of all-excusing admiration he interpreted conceit as self-assurance, and in the biography he includes, with apparent approval, such remarks of the Admiral as: "Brave Emma! Good Emma! If there were more Emmas there would be more Nelsons".[1] The moments of dark brooding that Nelson experienced are merely mentioned; they are never subjected to the psychological probing that modern biography has proved to be so revealing. But Southey never took the trouble to understand his own mental unrest, and it is but natural that, in patterning his subject after himself, he should likewise neglect this phase of Nelson's temperament.

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1 Life of Nelson, p.284.

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In points other than those that touch Nelson's character, the Life shows the intrusion of Southey's own experiences and values. The familiar theme of sentimentalized domesticity is evident in a passage relative to Nelson's departure from home: "The pain which is felt when we are first transplanted from our native soil, when the living branch is cut from the parent tree, -- is one of the most poignant which we have to endure through life. There are after-griefs which wound more deeply, which leave behind them scars never to be effaced, which bruise the spirit, and sometimes break the heart: but never do we feel so keenly the want of love, the necessity of being loved, and the sense of utter desertion, as when we first leave the haven of home, and are, as it were, pushed off upon the stream of life."[1] The atmosphere of piety that surrounds Nelson and his actions is also to be traced to Southey's personality.

But stronger than any of these and most detrimental to the book's claim as biography is the moral strain that dominates the work. Southey expresses puritanic disapproval of the "depraved" court at Naples; he cannot resist the temptation to draw moral lessons; and his position of biographer in no way inhibits his customary tendency to level moral judgments. This moralism shows most conspicuously in his treatment of the relationship between Nelson and Lady Hamilton. It is to be expected that Southey, in whose scheme of things love is ever coupled with domestic duty, should fail entirely to understand

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1 Ibid., p.17.

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an illicit passion. He makes a strained attempt to give Lady Hamilton a fair deal. He says nothing of her questionable antecedents; he admits her fascination, her amiable manners, her "uncommon intellectual endowments", her strong character, and her services to England. He tries hard not to regard her as an adventuress, and he takes pains to make it clear that the "fault" was as much Nelson's as her own.

But he invites ridicule when he endeavors to place their love-affair on a platonic basis: "... it is certain that he had now formed an infatuated attachment for Lady Hamilton, which totally weaned his affections from his wife. Further than this, there is no reason to believe that this most unfortunate attachment was criminal: but this was criminality enough, and it brought with it its punishment."[1] (Later, he allows the reader to puzzle out how Horatia, whom he acknowledges to be Nelson's daughter, was born of this sexless relationship.) But having made an attempt to save Nelson from the charge of adultery, Southey proceeds to show the baleful effect of adulterous passion on his hero's character. This inconsistency in itself convinces the reader that Southey is floundering in waters beyond his depth.

In his own mind Southey knew that Nelson had erred, and he was quick to seek out the wages of sin. Soon after Nelson had formed his "unfortunate attachment", he violated a truce and was responsible for the execution of a number of Sicilian rebels who, when capitulating, had been assured their safety.

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1 Ibid., p.177.

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Southey found Nelson's guilty passion a convenient hook on which to hang this treachery: Nelson's loss of sexual purity, he implies, so weakened his character that even his sense of justice was impaired.[1] It is interesting to notice that Southey, torn between loyalty to Nelson and to his own standards of morality, remains true to himself and vehemently turns on his hero: "A deplorable transaction! a stain upon the memory of Nelson and the honour of England! To palliate it would be in vain; to justify it would be wicked; there is no alternative for one who would not make himself a participator in guilt, but to record the disgraceful story with sorrow and with shame."[2] Again, Nelson allowed Prince Francesco Carraccioli, a Neapolitan nobleman who had been forced to aid the French, to be tried and condemned by a vengeful court, with no chance to prove his innocence. Nelson himself took charge of the execution. It was obvious, Southey states, "that he was influenced by an infatuated attachment -- a baneful passion, which destroyed his domestic happiness and now, in a second instance, stained ineffaceably his public character."[3] Once more Southey apparently traces guilt to the "attachment". What he really means is that Emma influenced Nelson to this injustice, and by unworthy insinuation he makes this opinion clear to the reader without ever stating it. Emma was not to be found when Carraccioli wished to appeal to her -- but she

1 Ibid., pp. 177-178.
2 Ibid., p.179.
3 Life of Nelson, p.182.

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was present at the execution.[1] Emma was devoted to the Neapolitan court, "and the hatred which she had for those whom she regarded as its enemies, made her at this time forget what was due to the character of her sex as well as of her country".[2] Thus, in the last analysis, Lady Hamilton is the wicked factor, and Nelson is merely under her influence. To this extent Southey tries to justify his hero, and in so doing he betrays his real feeling regarding Lady Hamilton. The reader sees through his naive attempt to be impartial and recognizes the prejudice that his moralism on the one hand and his admiration of Nelson on the other have bred in him. When, as "faithful historian", he "is called upon to pronounce a severe and unqualified condemnation of Nelson's conduct",[3] the reader has no doubt that the denunciation is really intended for Lady Hamilton. But the reader has grave doubts that it is the faithful historian's business to pronounce unqualified condemnation of anyone. In his fictions Southey is privileged to place moral interpretations on his characters and episodes, for here he is the creator of the world and as such may manipulate it as he sees fit; but in literature based upon reality, upon factors beyond the author's control, the case is different, and nothing becomes a biographer so much as suspension of judgment and dispassionate observation of personality and events. Because Southey lacks such detachment, his Life of Nelson becomes a thing limited by the all too narrow bounds of his own understanding; because

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1 Ibid., p.181.
2 Ibid., pp.181-182.
3 Ibid., p.182.

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it is so completely true to Southey, it must be in some measure false to Nelson and therefore bad biography, if the premise be granted that no two individuals may be entirely alike and that the biographer has no right to fashion his subject after his own image.

However unsatisfactory the book may be as a piece of biography, its popularity cannot be denied, nor is it without merit. Southey's Nelson is not alive with interest, as are Boswell's and Strachey's biographies. Too many pages are cluttered with the technical detail that Southey strove so valiantly to master. But there are at least three unforgettable passages. The first of these is the brilliantly condensed history of Corsica. Although it has little point, except to prove that Frenchmen are villains, this brief piece of writing demonstrates Southey's ability to present in succinct form the external events of national history and the temper of its people. This talent for condensation, demanding the highest selectivity and the strictest economy of style, was no doubt acquired by Southey in long experience as a reviewer. Unfortunately he used this talent all too little in his histories and biographies. Again, the Battle of the Nile is vividly narrated in an epic tone that reminds the reader of Tennyson's Revenge. But the most famous passage and the best is the description of Trafalgar and Nelson's death. Here too the battle is narrated in a detached epic style, and Nelson's passing is treated with a realism, dignity, and simplicity that make it

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one of the most moving passages in all of Southey's prose. With uncommon skill he draws his motifs together: before the battle Nelson broods on his fate; he conducts the engagement with gallant generosity toward the foe; his pride of fame causes him to pin his decorations on his breast, and a French marksman sights them as a target; even as he is carried below, true to his profession he continues to give commands; and in his last hour he thinks of "dear Lady Hamilton, poor Lady Hamilton", of his sins, and of his duty. It is here that Southey's prose, irritatingly loose in earlier parts of the book, shows at its best, and if his closing paragraph sounds suspiciously like a clergyman's funeral oration, it is rhetoric of power and splendid beauty:

> There was reason to suppose, from the appearances upon opening the body, that, in the course of nature, he might have attained, like his father, to a good old age. Yet he cannot be said to have fallen prematurely whose work was done; nor ought he to be lamented, who died so full of honours, and at the height of human fame. The most triumphant death is that of the martyr; the most awful that of the martyred patriot; the most splendid that of the hero in the hour of victory; and if the chariot and the horses of fire had been vouchsafed for Nelson's translation, he could scarcely have departed in a brighter blaze of glory. He has left us, not indeed his mantle of inspiration, but a name and an example, which are at this hour inspiring thousands of the youth of England: a name which is our pride, and an example which will continue to be our shield and our strength. Thus it is that the spirits of the great and the wise continue to live and to act after them; verifying, in this sense, the language of the old mythologist:
>
> Τοι μεν δαίμονες εἰσι, Διὸς μεγάλου βουλας
> Ἐσθλοι, ἐπιχθόνιοι, φύλακες θνητων ἀνθρώπων

1 Ibid., p.310.

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The Life of Wesley, published in 1820, is much more elaborate and scholarly than Nelson, but has enjoyed less fame. The first hint of such a Life occurs in a letter to Wynn, dated December 3, 1807. Southey had been asked to contribute to the British Biography. "George Fox, William Penn, Wesley, and Whitefield," he wrote, "are all that I feel solicitous to biographise"; his obvious preference for Wesley is revealed by the appended statement: "Wesley is destined to hold as distinguished a place in history as Loyola."[1] It was not until ten years later that he began his biography of the great Methodist, at the most scholarly period of his life. In November, 1817, when he informed Bedford that he had "taken a good serious spell at the 'Life of Wesley'",[2] he already had his monumental histories of Brazil and of the Peninsular War well in hand. For the new biography he went into intensive research. His chief sources were two lives of Wesley -- one by Thomas Coke and Henry Moore, themselves Methodists, the other by John Whitehead --, the works and memoirs of Wesley, and various treatises on Methodists and Methodism. Altogether thirty-three items are listed in Southey's bibliography.

Southey began his biography of Wesley with the assurance that he could complete it in a short time. In fact, he allowed himself only a year for the task,[3] but the work, especially when he included in his scheme an account of the rise and progress of Methodism, became so ponderously difficult that

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1 Selections from the Letters of Robert Southey, vol.IV, p.33.
2 Ibid., vol.III, p.81.
3 Ibid., p.92.

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it was not until March 1, 1820, that he could inform Bedford that the book was finished. When he sent the manuscript to Rickman he expressed doubt as to whether the time it had demanded was profitably spent, "for it has been a work of considerable labour, so scattered were the materials..."[1] The years from 1817 to 1820 had not been leisurely ones. At the same time that he was occupied with the biography, he was working on the History of Brazil, the History of the Peninsular War, the Book of the Church, the Colloquies on the Progress and Prospects of Society, A Tale of Paraguay, and the usual articles for the Quarterly Review.

As biography, the Life of Wesley is more disappointing than Nelson. It suffers most from its two-fold purpose: to present Wesley himself and to describe the founding and progress of his sect in England, Scotland, Ireland, America, and the West Indies. Often Wesley is lost entirely in Southey's preoccupation with such coadjutors and followers as Whitefield, Cotton, Oliver, and Mather. Often the reader wonders whether the book is a biography of Wesley or a history of Methodism. Often both biography and history give way to lengthy exposition of theological doctrine. In short, the work lacks the singleness of purpose and concentration that good biography demands.

As in Nelson, some of the digressions from the chief subject contain fine examples of Southey's talent for condensed and finely-pointed writing. As interesting as the history of Corsica in the earlier work is the history of religion in England

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1 Ibid., p.188.

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inserted here. Southey himself regarded this chapter as one of the best things he had written, and was especially proud of its veracity to the spirit of the facts.[1] Equally worthy are the account of the Moravians in Germany and the description of Christianity in Ireland. But however interesting these sections are in themselves, they detract from the merit of the whole work, inasmuch as they interrupt the narrative and draw the reader's attention from Wesley himself. It cannot be said that they destroy the book's form, for, properly speaking, there is no form at all. Any curious episode, any anecdote, however chance its connection may be, is given a place in the work. Five pages are devoted to the knockings of the ghost Jeffry in the Wesley home. The incident is charmingly narrated, but what light does it throw upon John Wesley, who was away at school at the time? The book belongs to that genre of sprawling, unpatterned 'lives' that Strachey deplores in his preface to Eminent Victorians. Likewise, it lacks the becoming brevity that Strachey insists upon; much that is irrelevant to the interior character of Wesley is included, and much that might have been revealing is omitted.

This is not to say that this biography shows no psychological interest on the part of its author. But he too frequently refers psychological problems to vaguely defined specialists in the matter. He wonders at the mystery of Wesley's personality, but fails to execute the biographer's duty of penetrating it. His attitude, in this respect, is expressed

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1 Life and Correspondence, vol.IV, p.328.

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in a note to Rickman: "You will have W. in a few days, and you see in it strange cases of the mind upon the body and again of the body upon the mind. Some I can understand, but there are others which I cannot, and yet believe them I must, or give up all trust in human testimony."[1] This combination of puzzled acceptance and uncertain incredulity suggests that Southey is as inadequate as an expositor of Wesley's temperament as Maurice H. Fitzgerald asserts he is of Wesley's theological tenets.[2]

In matters that do not concern Wesley himself, Southey's perception is satisfactorily acute. For instance, his explanation of the miraculous "fits" into which Wesley threw his listeners is intelligent and positive. "A powerful doctrine preached with passionate sincerity, with fervid zeal, and with vehement eloquence, produced a powerful effect on weak minds, ardent feelings, and disordered fancies. There are passions which are as infectious as the plague, and fear itself is not more so than fanaticism. When once these bodily affections were declared to be the work of grace, the process of regeneration, the throes of the new birth, a free license was proclaimed for every kind of extravagance. And when the preacher, instead of exhorting his auditors to commune with their own hearts, and in their chambers, and be still, encouraged them to throw off all restraint, and abandon themselves

1 Selections from the Letters of Robert Southey, vol.III, p.188.
2 Southey, Life of Wesley and the Rise and Progress of Methodism, ed. by Maurice H. Fitzgerald, London, 1925, vol.I, Introduction, p.ix.

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before the congregation to those mixed sensations of mind and body, the consequences were what might be anticipated. Sometimes he scarcely began to speak, before some of his believers, over-wrought with expectation, fell into the crisis, for so it may be called in Methodism, as properly as in Animal Magnetism."[1] Southey is quick to point out the danger of this "inflammatory state of devotional feeling", which led Wesley's followers to take the death-covenant: these, having vowed absolute obedience to God's laws, have no keeper except their own conscience, which develops such morbid irritability that the most trivial error calls for agonizing penance; in the mental turmoil that results, the person either stifles his conscience, throws off all religion as insupportable, or loses his senses.[2] Moreover, Southey asserts that Wesley regarded these paroxysms as a "great triumph"[3] and instructed his preachers to throw their auditors into "strong terror and fear, and strive to make them inconsolable".[4]

But as much as Southey condemns this "crazed enthusiasm", he will not pronounce a judgment on the instigator and sponsor of it. He wavers between veneration of Wesley as saintly reformer and disapproval of him as mischief-working fanatic. And so, in a spirit of compromise, he contents himself with describing the Methodist as "indiscreet".

It may be objected that it is not the biographer's

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1 Ibid., vol.I, p.176.
2 Ibid., vol.II, p.298.
3 Ibid., vol.I, p.200.
4 Wesley, vol.II, p.398.

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business to pronounce judgment; but Southey clearly indicates his intention to judge. At the very beginning of his work he places Voltaire and Wesley side by side and asserts that the latter set mightier principles at work.[1] Again, in discussing such a disputable matter as Wesley's marital relations, he catalogues the widow Vizelle "in a triad with Xantippe and the wife of Job, as one of the three bad wives".[2] Why, then, the reader asks himself, is Southey silent on the question of Wesley's honor in the affair of Sophia Causton, whom he banned from church after she jilted him? Why does Southey pass no judgment on Wesley's absurdly rude treatment of William Law, of Count Zinzendorf? In regard to this latter point Coleridge, who freely annotated his copy of the biography, was vexed with Southey for not expressing "moral recoil in this black blotch of Wesley's heart and character".[3] Coleridge, it is true, concluded that Southey was the greater historian because his facts in themselves produced moral disgust in the peruser, but the reader, conscious of Southey's judicial turn of mind, would feel easier if the author showed more appreciation of the uncharitable spirit these facts reveal.

In a letter to Bedford, soon after the completion of Wesley, Southey asserted: "It is written with too fair a spirit to satisfy any particular set of men. For the religious public it will be too tolerant and too philosophical; for the

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1 Ibid., vol.I, p.3. (Preface).
2 Ibid., vol.II, p.152.
3 Ibid., vol.I, p.257.

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Liberals it will be too devotional; the Methodists will not endure any censure of their founder and their institution; the high Churchmen will as little be able to allow any praise of them."[1] It is true, of course, that Southey could not please all, but certainly he took unusual pains to keep in the good graces of the Methodists. He valiantly attempts to present Wesley in as favorable a light as facts will allow, even though these efforts lead him to flat contradiction of his own statements. He is anxious to establish the charity of Wesley's character. "The kindness of Wesley's nature is apparent... , and that same kindness produced in him a degree of charity which has seldom been found in those who aspire to reform a church or to establish a sect."[2] Again, "Wesley never returned railing for railing: he had his temper entirely under command, and therefore he was always calm and decorous in controversy."[3] Yet Wesley attributed the illness of his Moravian enemy to the vengeance of God; he gave his approval to accusations "of the foulest kind" lodged against his German antagonists, and published them in his Journal;[4] and he treated his former teacher William Law with boorishness. The Moravian Peter Boehler had persuaded him to ignore his own good works and righteousness and base his redemption on faith in Christ. Wesley, having seen the light of antinomianism, wrote to Law, insolently upbraiding him for not having taught this doctrine. "Now, Sir,

1 Life and Correspondence, vol.V, p.34.
2 Wesley, vol.II, p.77.
3 Ibid., vol.I, p.249.
4 Ibid., p.258.

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suffer me to ask, how will you answer to our common Lord that you never gave me this advice? ... I beseech you, Sir, by the mercies of God, to consider deeply and impartially, whether the true reason of your never pressing this upon me was not this, that you had it not yourself?"[1] In reply, Law asked how Wesley could have listened to him an hour without hearing this doctrine, how he could translate Thomas à Kempis without reading it.[2] Again, Wesley asserted at a Methodist conference that if a heathen, a Papist, or a Church of England man died without Methodist sanctification, he could expect "absolutely nothing but hell".[3] Southey himself is half-aware of the manner in which these facts contradict his presentation of Wesley as charitable, and he makes a weak attempt to save the Methodist by implying that his churlishness was counter to his real nature: "But the humaner opinion was more congenial to his temper, and in that better opinion he rested."[4] Very few instances, however, are given of what Southey would have us believe was Wesley's natural kindliness. It is evident that here, as in Nelson, the principle of de mortuis is in operation. Southey speaks disapprovingly of a number of petty faults in his subject, but he evades unbiassed judgment of the most important part of Wesley: the cast of mind from which Methodism emanated. Rather he attempts to induce in the reader a favorable opinion completely at odds with the presented facts. It

1 Ibid., pp.113-114.
2 Ibid., p.114.
3 Ibid., vol.II, p.80.
4 Ibid.

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is true, as Maurice H. Fitzgerald points out,[1] that Southey was not in full possession of the facts; but this is no reason why he shoul d not have made an honest judgment of the available materials, if he were to judge at all. It cannot be denied that Wesley was sincerely pious and as free from moral sin as any man can be; but personal virtue and religious enthusiasm are one thing, humane kindliness another.

It is evident that Southey, himself an uncompromising moralist, a diligent worker, a cordial religionist, an unflagging reformer, was attracted by these attributes in Wesley. Like Walton, he chose to treat subjects that reflected his own personality. But Methodism itself was suspect to him. He hated sectarianism, and the revolutions of feeling and irrational extremity that the religion encouraged awoke grave doubts in him. Moreover, as a staunch Anglican, he objected to several Methodist tenets. In his biography he takes pains to show how he differs with Wesley and others in points of religious belief, and on occasion these passages suggest a controversial spirit.[2] Here again Southey transgresses the code of the biographer. It might be questioned too whether it is the biographer's duty to devote whole chapters to the minute exposition of theological doctrine.

The Life of Wesley never quite decides whether it is biography, history, or theology. Southey, of course, was guilty only of the faults of his age, and his work gives ample testimony

1 Wesley, vol.I, Introduction, pp.xi-xiii.
2 Ibid., vol.II, p.250, pp.163-164.

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to the truth of Strachey's estimate of nineteenth-century 'lives'. Judged by the standards of its own time, Wesley, even though it lacks the intimacy and detailed portraiture of Boswell's Johnson and Lockhart's Scott, is a worthy piece of literature, scholarly, comprehensive, and thoughtful. Its prose, simple and yet distinguished, gives it a certain measure of vitality. But Southey himself called it a "great tesselated tablet"[1], a phrase which, in the present day, classes it as an obituary, a monument designed to celebrate the dead rather than a record concerned with what was essential in the living.

Southey's third well-known biography, the Life of Cowper, was begun in August, 1834,[2] at the request of the publisher Baldwin and Cradock, who had proposed the previous spring that Southey put out a complete edition of the poet in monthly volumes.[3] Southey agreed to execute this arduous task and to write a three-volume biography "for the love of Cowper".[4] Using Hayley's Life of Cowper and the poet's own memoir and letters as his chief source, Southey finished his account in less than two years.

In quality this biography is so similar to Nelson and Wesley that it demands only short treatment. The same faults occur here as in the earlier works. Southey introduces himself into the story in several ways: he gives his views on education and moral discipline;[5] he comments on the lack of religion in

1 Life and Correspondence, vol.V, p.34.
2 Selections from the Letters of Robert Southey, vol.IV, p.384.
3 Correspondence with Caroline Bowles, p.337.
4 Ibid.
5 Southey, Life and Works of William Cowper, London, 1836, vol.I, p.6.

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boarding schools and urges investigation;[1] he inveighs against the "ungentle craft" of criticism;[2] he takes up again the case against slavery;[3] he informs the reader that he, like Cowper, found in females his best advisers concerning poetry.[4] Here too Southey makes violent digressions from his main theme. He interrupts his story to detail the life of St. Withburga simply because Cowper lived for a short time in East Dereham, where the Anglican princess built her nunnery.[5] His attention is distracted from Cowper to his early friends, Robert Lloyd and Charles Churchill, and in the account of the latter Southey seizes the opportunity to give Tory damnation to John Wilkes. Again, eighteen pages are devoted to Van Lier, a Dutch clergyman whose letters Cowper translated. But only a sentence is given to the life of the Reverend John Newton, the poet's spiritual adviser. Southey weakly excuses this laxity with the assertion that "Mr. Newton's life is too remarkable in all its circumstances to be treated episodically and epitomized in this place".[6] Cowper, like Nelson and Wesley, displays little feeling for form on the author's part, and here ill-proportion is even more obvious than in the earlier works.

The most amazing instance of this deficiency is the summary of English literature from Chaucer to Cowper, covering seventy-six pages and needlessly swelling the bulky biography.

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1 Ibid., pp.12-13.
2 Ibid., p.77.
3 Ibid., vol.II, p.52.
4 Ibid., p.35.
5 Ibid., vol.III, pp.202-205.
6 Ibid., vol.I, p.201.

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Southey makes a transparent attempt to relate this matter to Cowper's life and works, but the reader is not deceived: long interested in literary history, Southey found this book a convenient place in which to insert his notes on the subject.

In several respects, Cowper is a more complex problem for the biographer than either Nelson or Wesley. Specialized psychiatric training seems indispensable to the complete understanding of a mind morbidly acute in its sanity, totally deranged in its madness, always fond of playing cruel tricks on itself. In fact, the Adlerian school of psychology would find in Cowper's memoir of himself a profitable case-study. Southey, as may be expected, is inadequate to the comprehension of a brain with the fixed belief that it is the field on which Christ and Satan wage decisive battles. Knowing his deficiency, Southey wisely allows his subject to tell his own story, and in twenty pages quoted from Cowper's narrative lies a tale as powerful and terrible as any in Dostoevsky. In simple, realistic, baldly detached language, Cowper tells how, being offered a government post and feeling himself unable to fill it, he courted madness as an escape; how he tried to commit suicide, by poisoning, by drowning, by hanging; and how finally his mind cracked. "If it were possible that a heavy blow could light on the brain, without touching the skull, such was the sensation I felt."[1]

But this is Cowper, not Southey, and at least half of the biography is told in the poet's words. Time and again

1 Cowper, vol.I, p.140.

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whole letters are quoted, despite the fact that a special section at the end is reserved for them; several poems are inserted; and the Adelphi, Cowper's memoir of his brother, is given entire. In fact, Southey uses a technique very similar to the life-and-letters style popularized by Mason's Gray, and more than once the reader suspects that Southey's part in this book was that of an editor rather than that of a biographer. Conscious of this procedure, he offered in his preface an involved but scarcely satisfactory reason for this "work... in mosaic".[1]

Southey's usual prejudices find their way into the narrative. His Catholic animus is evident in allusions to "Romish superstitions", "a crafty priesthood", and "a corrupt and profligate church".[2] His Toryism shows in his rough treatment of Wilkes.[3] The old tendency to mull over moral issues and to level judgment re-asserts itself in the episode of the mistress held in joint ownership by Wilkes and Churchill.[4] But Southey is to be commended for the just consideration he gives to Cowper's affair with Mrs. Unwin. He refuses to regard it as a scandal, and in this respect he is more just than Cowper's own clergyman. The psychological penetration of which Southey is sometimes capable reveals itself in his explanation of Newton's nastymindedness. He was animated, Southey suggests, by the spiritual pride of a father-confessor who, temp-

1 Ibid., p.v.
2 Ibid., p.32.
3 Ibid., p.81 et seq.
4 Ibid., pp.85-87.

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orarily removed from his charges by a sojourn in London, "considered it as a trespass if they moved out of the narrow circle within which he had circumscribed them".[1]

On the whole, however, the Life of Cowper is a work-a-day account, haphazard in structure, evasive in interpretation of the difficult problems it raises. It is true that one learns much of Cowper from it, but the significant details that impress the reader are contained in the passages quoted from the poet, who was an unusually precise recorder of what he saw in himself; Southey, it is true, does tell us that Cowper was fond of hares and that he was "fain, instead of healthier and more natural exercise, to use dumb-bells, and a skipping rope".[2] The two instances are memorable because the concrete detail rises like an island from a sea of generalities.

Here, as in all his biographical writings, Southey has a respect for the dead unwarrantable in a veracious chronicler. He never grasped the truth that a man stands or falls by the sum total of his life, not by the selection that an over-considerate biographer makes of it. His intention to "relieve a melancholy tale" and to present Cowper as sympathetically as possible caused him to suppress certain vital information. In 1836 he wrote to Caroline Bowles: "Some of Mr. Newton's correspondence with Mr. Thornton is in my hands at present, and I am to have the rest. In these letters the mystery is revealed,

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1 Ibid., vol.II, p.257.
2 Ibid., p.245.

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and my mind is made up, after consulting with Wordsworth, that if it ever be made public, it shall not be by me. It had better be discovered hereafter by some hunter after extraordinary facts, than embodied in the Life of so truly amiable and interesting a poet; for if it were there it would mingle distressingly with all one's thoughts and feelings concerning him." What is this extraordinary fact, this key to Cowper's mystery? Certainly it is not his mental disease, for he himself had advertised this to the world, and Southey comments on it freely. It is possible that some piece of biographical data of unusual value is still to be found in those letters of Newton that Southey, with his creed to speak nothing but good of the dead, declined to use in his memoir.

Every biographer, it is true, is faced by the necessity of selecting the salient phases of his subject's career, and such selection entails a certain degree of wise omission, if the finished work is to be more than a photographic copy, if it is to have a form and a meaning not apparent in the devious ramifications of an actual life. Most conscientious biographers would grant that a startling fact may be better omitted, if it be a mere circumstantial sport in the subject's experience, an untypical event that by its very strangeness serves to obscure the life-style. But Southey's omissions are motivated by no high regard for general truth. His selectivity is moral in basis and proceeds from his propensity to pass judgments

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1 Correspondence with Caroline Bowles, p.300.

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on human conduct. More glibly than others, he believed himself able to pronounce what was good and what was evil and to draw a bold wide line between the two.. A healthy doubt of his own code of values never entered his mind, and, compromising truth, he pushed his biographical subjects onto the paths which, he was sure, God meant them to walk.

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VII. THE HISTORIAN

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THE HISTORIAN

Perhaps no English writer had a greater desire for future fame than Southey. Finding himself neglected by his own times, he nursed for better worlds his "own immortal part"[1] and consoled himself with the thought that he would have fit audience in a more appreciative age. As he grew older, he was conscious of the decline of his talent for poetry; but, unwilling to admit defeat, he shifted his ground and made prose and scholarship his claims for posterity's praise.

As early as 1805 he weighed his work as creator and as scholar. He came to the conclusion that he excelled in the latter capacity. "Me judice, I am a good poet, but a better historian; because though I read other poets, and am humbled, I read other historians with a very different feeling."[2] Probably, his contemptuous estimate of previous chroniclers induced in him an ambition to set up a new standard of English historiography. The three requisites for such composition, he believed, were talent, industry, and virtue.[3] But those who have ability, lack the diligence and the moral values befitting a recorder of human destiny. He himself, he was sure, had none of these "staminal defects", and possessed the additional advantage of a poetic sense that enabled him to write beautiful, unaffected prose when the subject demanded it. At the age of thirty-one, he conceived an ideal of prose that he assiduously

1 "Lay of the Laureate", Works, vol.X, p.140.
2 Fitzgerald, Letters of Robert Southey, A Selection, p.99.
3 Ibid.

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tried to follow in later life: "My golden rule is to relate everything as briefly, as perspicuously, as rememberably as possible."[1] In some respects he succeeded: he wrote vividly and clearly; but because he attempted to tell everything connected with his subject, he was, by necessity, a discursive rather than a brief historian. A second duty of the chronicler, Southey informed John May, is to describe in detail the manners of a people, their environment, their folk-habits, their daily routine of living.[2]

But more important than these early ideas of form and content is the philosophy of history that Southey outlined in 1828, when he evaluated Hallam's Constitutional History of England for the Quarterly Review, and, judging the work by his own standards, found it singularly wanting. In the course of the article Southey lays down three laws which the successful historian must observe. First of all, history must not be divided into its constituent parts - civil and military, ecclesiastical, constitutional, literary, moral, and commercial - , for such a division is specious and, instead of simplifying, only complicates the story. "But a narrative which proceeds according to the course of time and events, and records things as they are intermingled in the multifold concerns of society, is read with more pleasure, and remembered with more profit."[3] Secondly, history must deal in details, not in deductions, for the latter are usually colored by the prejudice of the writer.

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1 Ibid.
2 Life and Correspondence, vol.II, p.51.
3 Quarterly Review, vol.XXXVII, 1828, p.194.

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Details, if they are truthfully related -- and falsity here can easily be detected - are objective and allow the reader to draw his own deductions.[1] Most important of all, however, is the third law, in which another and greater historian, Macaulay, emphatically concurred: history must not be written from a partisan point of view. National spirit and religious or factional zeal lead historians, Southey asserts, to give false impressions. The ideal historian "comes to his task, not like an advocate with the purpose of bringing forward such parts of the case as may favor the side on which he is retained, and of keeping others in the shade; but under the sense of a more serious responsibility, and a higher duty. He will faithfully state the facts which he has carefully collected, and when this is performed with a sound judgment, the best history will be that which contains the fullest details".[2] But he disputes Horace Walpole's motto: "Pour être bon historian, il ne faudroit être d'aucune religion, d'aucun pays, d'aucune profession, d'aucun partie." Julius Caesar, Xenophon, and Polybius have demonstrated that profession may be of use. It is <u>necessary</u> that the historian be religious: "The more religious an historian is, the more impartial will be his statements, the more charitable his disposition, the more comprehensive his views, the more enlightened his philosophy."[3] It is even desirable that a historian have some national feeling, but Southey agrees unconditionally with Walpole's dictum that the historian should

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1 Ibid., p.195.
2 Ibid., p.197.
3 Ibid., p.197-198.

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belong to no party. "The historian who suffers himself to be possessed by this evil spirit, contracts an obliquity of moral vision; his views are narrowed; his understanding is warped; his sense of right and wrong is perverted; he has ceased to be just, and therefore, he can no longer be generous."[1]

Lastly and most significantly, Southey emphasizes his belief that the end of history is, as Raleigh realized in the Tower, the revelation that "the mighty maze of human affairs is not without a plan; and that the ways of God are vindicated by the course of Providence even in this world".[2] For Southey, history must be moral; and he condemns Hallam for his "delight in detracting from the Good and the Great," and his sponsoring of opinions subversive to traditional authority, and his "immoral" reasoning. "But in no English writer who makes the slightest pretensions to morality and religion, have we seen the abominable doctrine so openly maintained, that the end justifies the means and that conspiracy, treason, and rebellion, are to be treated as questions of expediency, laudable if they succeed, and only imprudent if they are undertaken without a sufficient likelihood of success!"[3] Here then is a paradox: history, for Southey, must be unbiassed, yet he approaches it with a distinct moral bias, with the purpose of condemning all instances of immorality, and of justifying God's ways to man. The reviewer of Southey's own History of Brazil ten years earlier, hit upon this truth when he remarked: "As

1 Ibid., p.198.
2 Ibid., p.199.
3 Ibid., pp.259-260.

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a moral writer, Mr. Southey will leave behind him a name which few of his contemporaries will have equalled."[1] As a moral writer, perhaps, but not as an unprejudiced historian.

The History of Brazil, with the History of the Peninsular War, is Southey's principal achievement in this genre. He wrote articles of an historical nature for the Edinburgh Annual Register and the Quarterly Review; he gathered materials for an account of the monastic orders and a great work on the development of the Portuguese nation; he published in 1821 a brilliant little episode from South American history called The Expedition of Orsua and the Crimes of Aguirre. But none of these undertakings can compare in completeness and serious endeavor with the account of Brazil and the description of the southern campaign against France. The fashioning of these two monumental works, each exceeding two thousand quarto pages in length, stretches over the prime of his life. The History of Brazil was begun early in 1807; the History of the Peninsular War was finished in 1832; neither was laid aside for any long interval. Reviewing for the magazines and working on these histories were the substance of Southey's daily routine during this period.

The History of Brazil had its inception in Southey's ambition to write the story of Portugal, which in turn resulted from his impressions of that country during his stay there in 1796.[2] In his second sojourn in Portugal, in 1800, he actually

1 Ibid., vol.IV, 1810, p.473.
2 Life and Correspondence, vol.I, p.309.

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began a history of the country,[1] but consideration of the Portuguese Jesuits turned his attention to their work in Brazil as well as in Japan and other parts of the Orient. In fact, he contemplated in 1804 a vast undertaking which would include separate histories of Portugal in Europe, the Portuguese empire in Asia, the colony of Brazil, the work of the Jesuits in Japan, the rise of monachism in general, and the development of literature in the entire Iberian peninsula -- a matter of ten or twelve quarto volumes.[2] Such a work, he soon realized, was impracticable, and gradually he focussed his attention on Brazil. Originally only a section of a larger whole, this work, to Southey's surprise, came to be one of the principal efforts of his prose period. In 1808 he believed that the book would be published within the year.[3] But it was not until 1810 that the first part appeared; the second part followed in 1817, the third, in 1819.

The factor that moved Southey to concentrate his attention on Brazil was political. England, for obvious reasons, wanted Brazilian ports opened to foreign trade, an event which occurred through British influence in 1808, when the royal Braganzas emigrated to the South American country. In 1806, Southey, foreseeing the turn of events, sent to Lord Grenville a number of papers which his uncle had collected in Lisbon. Grenville replied that the materials related to "the wrong side of South America, for their present views", but recommended

1 Ibid., vol.II, pp.108,123,133,136.
2 Ibid., pp.305-306.
3 Ibid., vol.III, p.134.

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that Southey postpone the rest of his history and concentrate on the Brazilian subject, "in consequence of the present bias of the public mind".[1] Grenville then forwarded to Southey certain government papers which, joined to the manuscripts of the Reverend Herbert Hill, gave him access to hitherto unused materials. Later, he was able to add to this collection some valuable data gathered by Walpole when he was ambassador to Portugal. These papers, together with the America Portugueza by Sebastiam da Rocha Pitta, "a meagre and inaccurate work", formed Southey's chief sources. He augmented them with more or less incomplete accounts of South America by such Spanish and Portuguese writers as Antonio de Herrera, Francesco Lopez de Gomara, Gonzalo de Oviedo, and Simaim de Vasconcellos. He found valuable information also in the Histoire de Paraguay by the French Jesuit Charlevoix, and in the Brasilaense Zeeen Lant-reize of the Dutch writer Jan Nieuhof. Both of these were available in English translation, but Southey used the original Latin version of Martin Dobrizhoffer's Historia de Abiponibus, equestri bellicosaque Paraguarina natione. These are only a few of the works that Southey mentions in his marginal notes, but they indicate the extent of his research in preparing the History of Brazil.

True to his ideal, Southey interwove in his political account full descriptions of the manners of the various South American tribes in and around Brazil. Almost a half of the

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1 Selections from the Letters of Robert Southey, vol. I, pp. 401-403.

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ponderous work is dedicated to this interest in folk-ways. The reader learns how the savages painted their bodies and in what manner the dyes were made; what fashions of dress were prevalent, what colors preferred; what foods were eaten and how they were prepared; how dwellings were constructed and how furnished. Southey describes the rites surrounding childbirth, tells of the training of children, pictures the various marriage ceremonies, and distinguishes between the several methods of burial and mourning among the different tribes. He relates how this primitive society was divided into a caste system, how the tribes were governed, how they conducted themselves in war. He mentions the taboos and conventions observed by the Indians and explains their concepts of honor, decency, and social obligation. He even informs the reader how the Abipone mounted his horse and how the Yaro slept on his back, and whenever possible he comments on the nature of the dialect used by the tribe he is treating. He is particularly attracted by religious ceremonies and superstitions, and is fond of describing the savages' belief in thunder as the supreme being, their indifference to it, their fear of evil demons, their faith in dreams, nightmares, deliriums, and shadows; he is also interested in priestcraft and is quick to point out how wily Payes took advantage of the people's credulity. Accompanying the whole narrative is a running description of scenery.

It is a tribute to Southey's scholarship and command of detail that the reader finds it hard to believe that this

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is second-hand information, that Southey never saw the country, much less lived among its inhabitants. The History of Brazil is a treasure-house of obscure and fascinating detail, and it is these scattered descriptions of savage life that make the book eminently readable. But what accounts for Southey's interest in these facts? The answer is discovered when the reader perceives that they are presented merely as facts and are never drawn into a conclusion. They occur too often and too indiscriminately to be construed as a trick of style. They derive from no higher motive than curiosity, without direction and without purpose.

In this respect Southey contrasts with Thomas Huxley, who was also interested in folklore but more interested in drawing from it social and psychological inferences. The essay on The Evolution of Theology is a striking example of this systematized, purposeful curiosity in Huxley. It may be objected that Southey belongs to an earlier day. But even before his time, sociology had been developed. Krause and Ahrens had popularized the historical approach to the study of social and economic institutions, and in Southey's own age Bachofen published his Mutterrecht und Urkultur, utilizing the same sort of facts that Southey had at his command, but perceiving in them implications of great importance.

Southey is no child of the nineteenth century. Many aspects of his personality are typical of the preceding age; this especial one goes back even farther, for it properly be-

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longs to the pre-Baconian tradition of wonder, the desire to know how things are, the interest in fact for its own sake. Southey, marvelling at the way in which a mourning savage buries himself up to the breast in earth, is not far removed in spirit from the mediaeval monk who wrote

> Ypopotama a wonder beest is,
> Grete as an olifant, i-wis.

Southey writes history with no more detachment than he observes in his biographies, and the History of Brazil, as surely as Nelson, is a record of his prejudices. Napoleon inevitably appears, and Southey bestows on him the familiar catchword "perfidious tyrant".[1] France, as may be expected, is maligned as the most wicked of nations, execrably cruel and entirely unscrupulous. "That nation," he writes, "which has never acknowledged any other law than that of the strongest, nor suffered any opinion or any principle to stand in the way of its ambition or its interest, has always treated the Papal authority either with respect or contempt, just as has suited its own immediate views."[2] But happily no attempt is made to cause England, by contrast with the dark evil of France, to shine the brighter. To his credit, Southey admits that England's forays on Central and South America were nothing less than rank piracy.[3]

But if Southey restrains his patriotism, he puts no

1 Southey, History of Brazil, London, 1817-1822, vol.III, p.694.
2 Ibid., vol.I, p.30.
3 Ibid., pp.375-376.

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check on his Tory bias. Republicanism, or any suggestion of democratic government, is anathema to him. Thus he states that in colonial administration autocratic power in the Governor is an absolute necessity because "remote colonies tend too naturally toward republicanism".[1] He refuses to believe that the liberal spirit which challenges existing institutions has any idealistic motive. "In such commotions the great majority of the people are always disposed for peace and submission, and that very disposition enables turbulent spirits to control them, and carry forward their own mischievous purposes."[2] His judgment of Fernando Mompo, who in 1728 taught that the authority of Commons was superior to that of the King, demonstrates his hatred of those who contest the power of the Crown. "He was one of those men who are usually among the prime movers of popular revolutions; who, being without personal courage, are audacious when they have a multitude to support them; who boast of their public virtue, while they live in the habitual breach of their private duty; and who are never at a loss for words, because they are too ignorant to understand their own ignorance, and are alike regardless of logic and of truth. Such men naturally desire to promote an order of things in which authority shall be conferred by the rabble, and loquacity and impudence be the all-sufficient qualifications."[3]

But the most egregious examples of axe-grinding occur in those sections which treat of the Catholic Church, and these

1 Ibid., vol.II, p.498.
2 Ibid., vol.III, p.159.
3 Ibid., p.233.

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condemnatory passages are so frequent and so vehement that one almost concludes that Southey wrote the History of Brazil with the express purpose of stigmatizing Catholicism. Complete as his knowledge was, Southey's choice of Portugal as a subject for history proved unfortunate, for he was blindly prejudiced against its strongest institution and failed to appreciate its vital importance. It is strange that Southey could not realize the harm that this intolerant and unjust spirit would do to his reputation as an historian, the offence it would give to those members of his "fit audience" who did not subscribe to his hatred of Catholicism.

With blatant bad taste Southey places the "Popish Religion" on the same basis of superstition on which the primitive theologies of the Brazilian Indians were founded. In discussing the reactions of the savage to Catholic instruction, he asserts that "the fables and monstrosities of Popery did not indeed revolt his reason, because he had been accustomed to such gross diet".[1] Southey represents the veneration of the Virgin as "palpable idolatry"[2], and the Catholic belief in miracles as a crude irrationality furthered by impudent priests.[3] The supernatural deeds of the saints, he states, are blasphemous parodies of Christ's miracles.[4] Again, he tells how the Indians, trained by Jesuits, painted pictures and carved statues for the churches; he appends the gratuitous statement that "Pope Gregory the Great called these idols the books of

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1 Brazil, vol.II, p.378.
2 Ibid., p.127.
3 Ibid., p.114.
4 Ibid.

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the poor,... and the Catholic clergy have succeeded in substituting them for the bible".[1] During the pestilence of 1686, Southey informs us, Saint Xavier's statue was drawn through the streets of Bahia, "according to the belief in which a superstitious and deluded People have been confirmed by an idolatrous and deceitful Church".[2] Southey fails to see the psychological significance of this reminder of faith during a time of panic, and his imputation of deceit to the Church is, in the circumstances, blindly unjust. He makes a more serious charge when he writes that "murder was here [in Brazil] as it is in Portugal, and wherever the Catholic religion flourishes in all its privileges, ... a mode of revenge commonly practised, seldom punished, and regarded without horror, because the guilt might easily be wiped away by confession and absolution".[3] Southey is scarcely conscious of any prejudice in these statements; he makes them with the naive glibness of one who mistakes opinion for fact, and it is with uncalculated irony that he accuses Catholics of a heinous intolerance that sees "nothing but the work of the Devil in all religions except their own".[4]

But prejudice and historical knowledge bring the historian to an impasse when he considers the good works of the Jesuits in South America. He takes great pains to assure the reader of his unbiassed position in this matter. "It is especially the duty of an historian at this time to relate

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1 Ibid., p.341.
2 Ibid., p.588.
3 Ibid., vol.I, p.345.
4 Ibid., p.261.

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the good and the evil of the Jesuits with strict impartiality, neither detracting from their virtues nor concealing their impostures."[1] And in the succeeding pages Southey, like a dog off on a scent, keeps his nose close to the ground, eager to uncover the fox of Jesuit deception. The decision that he finally reaches in regard to the Order is that "imposture and falsehood had been its characteristic vices, and it had systematically palmed upon the world its impudent miracles and lying legends".[2]

But for once Southey's moral sense did not prevent him from seeing the great good that sometimes accompanies a minimum of evil. If the Jesuits have characteristic vices, they possess redeeming virtues. Chapter twenty-four of volume two is dedicated to the work of the Order in Paraguay, and here Southey gives a remarkably good account, drawn mainly from Dobrizhoffer, of the Utopia established there. Again he execrates the idolatry and superstition of the Catholic mind, but with curious inconsistency he notes how, in the case of the Jesuits, these flaws of nature "tended to purify and exalt the character, calling into action the benevolent as well as the heroic virtues".[3] His admiration is aroused by the noble efforts of the missionaries to bring civilization and peace to a savage, war-loving people; but eventually his anti-Catholic animus prompts him to find what faults he can in their system. His criticism is ludicrously far-fetched. He upbraids the

1 Ibid., vol.II, p.252; cf. p.333.
2 Ibid., vol.II, p.362.
3 Ibid.

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Jesuits for keeping the savages in a state of docile obedience, for not advancing their "political and intellectual emancipation."[1] He dismisses contemptuously the Jesuit argument that the Indians were only full-grown children incapable, at this stage, of independent civilization; and the reader is again impressed by the naïveté that occasionally shows itself in Southey's thinking. Notwithstanding the mountain of fact that he amassed regarding the primitive life of the Brazilian Indians, he could not interpret the primitive mind whence those facts derived. At one point he accredits to the natives a combination of reason and will rare even in civilized man; it was easy, he asserts, to wean the savages from drunkenness: "to be debarred from indulgence in a vice of which the ill consequences were so direct and obvious, was a restriction to which they willingly submitted, seeing the propriety, and feeling the benefit."[1] With as great a callowness, Southey asks the Jesuits to give civilized responsibility and independence to a people but one generation removed from the jungle.

It is possible that this is not artless simplicity but deliberate fault-finding, done with the purpose of warning the reader that nothing perfect can spring from an idolatrous and corrupt faith. In general, however, Southey is fairly just in his appraisal of the Jesuits, even defending them against the more absurd calumnies of Protestant detractors.[2] His esteem of the Catholic missionaries moves him even

1 Brazil, vol.II, p.379.
2 Ibid., pp.345-346.

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to forgive them their faith and to laud them for transcending it: "The follies, the errors, and the evils to which their institutions give rise may then be forgotten or forgiven; for the spirit of religion, which at other times is concealed under mummeries, or perverted into a noxious and destructive principle, casts off its trammels and appears unencumbered and unpolluted in its beauty and strength."[1] This statement should not be construed as asserting that only the forms of Catholicism are objectionable to Southey; he has consistently observed how these forms have moulded the Catholic mind and turned out a debased faith, an impudent clergy, and a superstitious people. He makes a special case only for the Jesuit missionaries, and he is obviously bewildered by the fact that, burdened as they were with Catholic belief, they could accomplish so much good. It was no easy matter for Southey to admit that benevolence sprang from a people who were ever suspect in his mind, and it is heartening to observe how, in this instance, justice overcame inveterate prejudice.

This treatment of the Jesuits partially atones for the slanderous attitude with which Southey regards Catholicism at large in the History of Brazil; but this extenuating factor is not great enough to save the book from the charge of vehement intolerance and rank partisanship. The latter quality is strikingly evident in the narration of the war between the Dutch and the Portuguese, in which Southey renounces the neutrality so becoming to an historian, indicates his sympathy

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1 Ibid., p.554.

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with the Protestant nation, and considers even the cruelty of Portuguese warfare as an inheritance from the Catholic Church.[1] The History of Brazil vividly demonstrates the three great political and religious prejudices in Southey's mind: his hatred of France, of republicanism, and of the Catholic Church. It is ironical that in his statement of the ideal qualifications of the historian he insists on the absence of partisan feeling, and declares that the more religion a man possesses, the more impartial will be his judgments, the more charitable his views, and the more enlightened his philosophy.

A subtler kind of prepossession is evident in Southey's approach to history. William Haller charges that Southey, in his historical studies, sought verification of those values on which he based his existence.[2] Haller's opinion is confirmed both by expressed theory and practical demonstration. Southey took his code not from the new spirit of scientific inquiry but from the medieval faith which led Sir Walter Raleigh to believe that "the mighty maze of human affairs is not without a plan; and that the ways of God are vindicated by the course of Providence even in this world".[3] The wonderful consistency of Southey's personality reveals itself again in his attempt to find a moral scheme in the course of a nation's destiny. Sir Philip Sidney had perceived that the historian, "being captivated by the truth of a foolish world", cannot present the course of human events as motivated by a moral plan; if he

1 Ibid., p.137.
2 Early Life of Robert Southey, p.312.
3 Quarterly Review, vol.XXXVII, 1828, p.199.

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does so, he is poetical, not historical. Southey demonstrated, in The Poet's Pilgrimage, his desire to be poetic in his approach to history:

> The individual culprit may sometimes
> Unpunished to his after reckoning go:
> Not thus collective man,.. for public crimes
> Draw on their proper punishment below;
> When Nations go astray, from age to age
> The effects remain, a fatal heritage.[1]

No judgment, of course, can be pronounced on such an opinion, but it scarcely seems the historian's part to justify God's ways to man, to make historical narration a kind of theodicy.

Superficial evidence of Southey's moralism is found in a number of gratuitous axioms scattered through the text of the History of Brazil. For instance, Southey writes in the epigrammatic manner of Bacon: "Chastity, like compassion, is one of the virtues of civilization; the seeds are in us, but will not grow up without culture."[2] Again, Southey's moral sense is continually outraged by the cruelty and treachery of the Portuguese. More naive is his horror at the way in which the savage ignores European standards of conduct and takes to himself a number of wives, thus committing polygamy," the most loathsome of all outrages against human nature".[3] Likewise, Southey is repelled by the amoral training of the Paraguayan child: "He grows up without restraint, without laws, without

1 Works, vol.X, p.92.
2 Brazil, vol.I, p.250.
3 Ibid., p.251.

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principles, without any participation of the comforts, or sense of the decencies of life." But most shocking of all, the Paraguayan passes his childhood "without hearing the sound of a churchbell".[1] Southey takes care to warn his readers that Pizarro is "a name never to be uttered without abhorrence",[2] to remind them that all the gold and silver in the earth are to be esteemed less than "the smallest rill which the Savoyard or the Piemontese directs to irrigate his fields".[3]

But these instances are of less importance than the moral plan on which Southey tried to found his history. He wished to believe that God's justice in this world was perceptible to man, that if the whole fact were laid bare, the good would be seen to triumph, the evil to reap a just reward. In some cases he succeeded in finding the wages of sin. Gonzalo, who tortured the natives, "soon found the evil effects of his cruelty" when constant rains impeded the progress of his expedition and caused his troops much suffering.[4] Again, Southey observes the working of divine vengeance in the case of Francisco de Mendoza, who, having murdered his wife and her domestic chaplain, came to a violent end on the anniversary of his crime.[5] The cupidity of the Portuguese government, leading it to work its subjects cruelly in the diamond mines, was rewarded by fraud and treachery in the people.[6]

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1 Ibid., vol.III, p.425.
2 Ibid., vol.I, p.91.
3 Ibid., vol.III, p.643.
4 Ibid., vol.I, p.91ff.
5 Ibid., pp.180-181.
6 Ibid., vol.III, pp.642-643.

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But there were too many examples of evil triumphing by its very wickedness. Southey, in his survey of the dark, blood-stained destiny of Brazil, was unable to perceive the predominance of good, for everywhere he met instances of corruption, hatred, and debasement. Finding that facts would not support his theory, he fell back upon an assumption of faith: "Nor must we so far disparage humanity, as to suppose that the vices, which may be general in many places, are in any place universal. It is in the nature of evil to manifest itself, and of goodness to be concealed:... while vice and folly are flaunting in public, virtue and good sense keep house. The even tenour of a well-spent life passes on in obscurity and silence: but actions of atrocious guilt are bruited abroad far and wide..."[1] God's ways are justifiable, but perhaps not in the present, nor within the cognizance of one generation of men. The future, Southey prophesies in his closing pages, will show the triumph of good in Brazil. Already some of the worst evils are slipping from their high seat of dominance; soon slavery will be abolished and justice made secure; soon Brazil, so rich in external beauty and internal resources, will find moral purity and become a second Eden. The two great deterrents to this inevitable reform are the curse of a corrupt religion and the menace of a liberal tendency, but a true spirit of piety and a strong central government can root out both these evils; and with the unction of a Keswick clergyman Southey concludes his homiletic history with a benediction:

1 Ibid., p.831.

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"God, in his mercy, prepare the Brazilians for this happy change; and grant, that order, freedom, knowledge, and true piety, may be established among them and flourish through all generations."[1]

As Nelson grew out of a review for the Quarterly, the History of the Peninsular War developed from a series of articles on the Spanish campaign which Southey wrote for the Edinburgh Annual Register. In May, 1813, it occurred to him that an elaboration of these articles into a complete account would be a profitable enterprise.[2] It is evident that he originally intended to devote only a short time to the history, but his habit of keeping three or four irons in the fire (Brazil, Wesley, The Doctor, and other projects divided his attention) and his passion for completeness and precise detail, hindered progress on the work. The first volume was not published until 1823; four years more were required for the second volume; and the third and concluding part of the history appeared in 1832, almost twenty years after the work's inception.

For sources Southey used various memoirs and letters published by officers who participated in the war -- Dalrymple, Milburne, Stothert, Burroughs, and others, some of them anonymous. Several military treatises supplied him information concerning strategems and maneuvers. The memoirs of King Ferdinand VII, the Queen of Etruria, General Diez, and Spanish, Portugueze, and English state papers gave him material

1 Ibid., pp.878-879.
2 Selections from the Letters of Robert Southey, vol.II, p.324.

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on the diplomatic entanglements that accompanied the conflict. Only a few French accounts were available, and the three general histories at his disposal, by John T. Jones, Captain Stothert, and Adam Neale, were meagre and anything but authoritative. W. F. P. Napier's History of the War in the Peninsula and South of France, a more definative work than Southey's, appeared in 1828 and 1829, too late to be of any use, according to Southey's own statement.

If the History of the Peninsular War was begun as a money-making venture, it was continued, through two decades of patient industry, as a tribute to England. In his opening pages Southey asserts that the work was aided by two factors: first, his patriotic feelings, which gave him the necessary inspiration, and second, his previous studies of Spain and Portugal, which gave him the necessary qualifications.[1] Patriotic feeling made the book a worthy product of the Laureate but not the record of a detached historian.

Pride of country causes Southey to exaggerate England's idealism in the conflict. He attempts to make the Peninsular Campaign a kind of holy-war in which England pitted her goodness against the forces of evil. His country, he asserts, was moved by an exalted wish to fight "for all good principles", and this purity of motive gave to the struggle "a higher and holier character".[2] When Wellington's skill

1 Southey, History of the Peninsular War, London, 1823,1827, 1832, vol.I, p.2.
2 Ibid., pp.345-346.

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turns the tide of fortune, Southey hastens to explain that England had not looked forward to this advantage, that even the welfare of Europe had been a secondary consideration when the English went to the aid of insurgent Spain, that British detestation of iniquity had been the primary force that caused England to take up arms.[1] Southey mentions but gives no meaning to the Treaty of Tilsit, in which the Russian Tsar and Napoleon had agreed to close European ports to England; he fails to point out that in 1807 England was threatened with the extinction of her trade with the Continent[2]; he also fails to emphasize England's fear of invasion; and he suppresses the fact that in 1808, as Wellington asserted, [3] Napoleon could be taken at a disadvantage in Spain, his army being scattered on several lines and the weakest part of it, consisting mainly of raw recruits,[4] quartered in the Peninsula. It is possible that mercantile interests, defensive considerations, and canny opportunism had something to do with England's entrance into the Spanish war.

Southey repeats here the arrogant boast, made in Nelson, that English soldiers must inevitably triumph, even though the enemy possess numerical advantage.[5] It is of course

1 Ibid., p.526.
2 Sir Charles Petrie, George Canning, London, 1930, p.47.
3 G. R. Stirling Taylor, "Wellington", Seven Nineteenth Century Statesmen, London, 1939, p.31.
4 Friedrich M. Kircheisen, Napoleon I, Sein Leben und Seine Zeit, München und Leipzig, 1914, vol.III, p.50.
5 Peninsular War, vol.I, pp.526-527.

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true that the English overcame greater numbers in Spain, opposed as they were by untrained soldiers, but to say that an Englishman is wounded only in the front[1] is to display an undiscriminating pride of nationality. Southey wishes the reader to believe that these English were regiments of Thalabas, bent upon the extermination of evil, but he does not mention the fact that Wellington's army was composed chiefly of mercenaries.[2] The justice of the English cause, he asserts, permeated the army and inspired it to exemplary conduct;[3] but Wellington wrote to Castlereagh, on May 31, 1810, that the army was a gang of ruffians, that it plundered mercilessly, that every violence, indecency, and horror were committed by British soldiers against a population that received them as friends.[4]

The British, in Southey's history, are painted white in order to make the French seem blacker. If every success of the English is a triumph, a French victory is a massacre. The battles are well narrated, but usually Southey purposes to show the superior gallantry of English soldiers and the skill of Wellington, as contrasted with the villainous inhumanity and martial inferiority of the French. It is a rare occasion when Southey, describing the battle of Albuhera, writes that the French exhibited the highest state of discipline and were directed with consummate skill; but he hastens to add that "this was more than counterbalanced by the incomparable bravery

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1 Ibid., vol.III, p.231.
2 Kircheisen, Napoleon, vol.VIII, p.527.
3 Peninsular War, vol.III, pp.925-926.
4 The letter is quoted by Kircheisen, Napoleon, vol.VIII, pp.64-65.

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of their opponents".[1]

Convinced that the French soldiers partook of the nature of their demon-emperor, Southey wastes many pages in denunciation of their plundering, but, as Wellington said, the English army was no better. In like manner, Southey frequently asserts that the French displayed their customary perfidy by falsifying their reports of losses in battle. In his brilliant account of the battle at Ciudad Rodrigo, however, he states that only 1310 men of the British forces were killed or wounded, an estimate strangely at variance with the true figure of 6000.[2] Southey, of course, had read the government's falsified account of the losses in The Times.

His desire to make the French seem as despicable as possible causes Southey to contrast them also with the Spanish. Here he involves himself in contradictions. The Spaniards, he maintains in his first volume, always distinguished themselves by honor and generosity in war;[3] but in volume three he proceeds to tell of the shocking atrocities committed by them in the Peninsular struggle. No inhumanity, Southey explains, could revolt the public mind, "because the Spaniards had been accustomed to cruelties, by the history of their American conquests (wherein the enormities of the conquerors have not been concealed), and by the Inquisition..."[4] It is true that he attempts to show that Napoleon's predatory system of war

1 Peninsular War, vol.III, p.331.
2 Kircheisen, Napoleon, vol.VIII, p.551.
3 Peninsular War, vol.I, p.345.
4 Ibid., vol.III, p.58.

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"necessarily" made the Spanish barbarous,[1] but he forgets that this barbarity manifested itself as early as the time of the American conquests. An example of how this procedure affects Southey's sense of values is provided by two adjacent incidents in the history: in the first he tells how the Spaniards trapped a number of French in a house and burnt them alive; in the second he describes how the French either hanged the Spanish or made them face the firing-squad. The French, Southey asserts, were the more inhumane.[2]

This slander of the French is no surprise. It has been seen that Southey's hatred, as extreme as his loyalty, was concentrated on France and Catholicism. As Brazil provided a vent for his anti-Catholic animus, the Peninsular War gave him opportunity to express his detestation of the French. The two prejudices were not mutually exclusive. As France is maligned in Brazil, so here the Catholic Church is defamed. Southey states that it was "Romish superstition", allied with gross governmental tyranny, that brought about the decline of Spain and Portugal.[3] "Wherever this corrupt church is dominant, there is no medium between blind credulity and blank, hopeless, utter unbelief."[4] And in his usual manner Southey sneers at Catholic reverence of saints and relics.[5] Here too his third prejudice, the Tory bias, shows itself. Liberal principles

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1 Ibid.,
2 Ibid., pp.57-58.
3 Peninsular War, vol.I, p.4.
4 Ibid., p.7.
5 Ibid., vol.III, pp.539-541, 548-550.

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are "insane opinions which lead to revolution and ruin";[1] France's transference of power to the Commons was a "fatal error";[2] the Jacobins were men "with no scruples of conscience or of honour; whom no turpitude could make ashamed; who shrunk from no crimes, and were shocked by no atrocities".[3] Southey associates moral deterioration with republicanism. If the French were naturally vicious, the Revolution completed their corruption;[4] but Southey fails to compare post-Revolution license with the depravity of the old aristocracy. He contends that republican immorality corrupted Portugal, but he considerably weakens his case when he aligns the wickedness of the French with the evil conduct of the Moors.

Southey refuses to see any virtue in the French Revolution, perhaps because of his own passionate but thwarted hopes of it in his youth. He is bent upon putting the worst construction on every feature of the republic's attempt to carry out its ideals. Particularly unjust is his condemnation of the impracticable but high-souled program of democratic education;[5] when the French admit the evil effect of this scheme, Southey asserts that the acknowledgment is a mere ruse to win papal favor.[6] Still more irritating is his contemptuous manner toward those who did not follow his example and change their early admiration of French republicanism to unconditional damna-

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1 Ibid., vol.I, p.60.
2 Ibid., p.14.
3 Ibid., p.35.
4 Ibid., pp.131-132.
5 Ibid., p.27ff.
6 Ibid., p.34.

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tion. Those who have remained steadfast in their belief that out of the Revolution has come some good are, Southey asserts, weak-minded and pitiably deluded.[1]

It is in his appraisal of Napoleon that Southey most strikingly demonstrates his one-eyed manner of looking at things. There are two ways of regarding such a phenomenon: to compare the end with the means, the method of the detached historian; or to fasten upon the means, the procedure of the moralist. The historian concludes that Napoleon was primarily an idealist, willing to damn his soul for the sake of the ideal, working partially for self-aggrandizement but more largely for a sublimely impersonal and universal realization of liberty, equality, and fraternity. That Napoleon should have conceived this realization as centering in his own ego is a problem that the historian consigns to the psychologist. On the other hand, the moralist, shocked into irrational abhorrence by the extremity of Bonaparte's methods, allows his reason to founder and never proceeds beyond the means. Needless to say, Southey takes the latter course, and exhausts the vocabulary of invective in denouncing Napoleon. It would be pointless to list these terms of opprobrium, "atheist", "inhuman butcher", "monster", and the like, but it may be effectual to give a few instances of how this hatred caused Southey, intentionally or unwittingly, to falsify his account. He makes much of the false friendship that Napoleon offered to King Ferdinand and of the "kiss of

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1 Ibid., p.57.

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Judas Iscariot" that the conqueror gave the young Bourbon.[1] Actually Napoleon's reception of the Spanish king was frostily peremptory, and it was Ferdinand, eager to win favor, who kissed Bonaparte.[2] In the whole affair of the Spanish usurpation Napoleon acted, not with the treacherous insincerity that Southey represents, but with the forthright bluntness of a man who will waste no time in dickering with fools. In his Egyptian Campaign, Southey asserts, Napoleon refused all mercy to the inhabitants of Alexandria, took the city, and pursued women and children into a mosque and murdered them there; later at Jaffa, Southey continues, the French slaughtered three-thousand captives.[3] Kircheisen, the most detached and the most authoritative of Napoleon's biographers, relates that Napoleon tried vainly to come to terms with the Amir of Alexandria, gave violence only to the minority of Mamelukes who tyrannized over the people, and early became the adored hero of the populace.[4] There is no substantiation for the massacre in the mosque, except that on a later occasion Napoleon, cramped for room, broke into an empty mosque and quartered his general staff there for the night. It is true that Napoleon caused three-thousand prisoners taken at Jaffa to be executed, but Southey omits the extenuating reasons: that the French army was only ten-thousand strong; that if the prisoners were released they would re-enforce the Turkish stronghold at Akka,

1 Peninsular War, vol.I, p.306.
2 Kircheisen, Napoleon, vol.VII, p.536.
3 Peninsular War, vol.I, p.17.
4 Napoleon, vol.III, p.346ff.

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toward which the French army was headed; that they could not be exchanged, inasmuch as the Turks had killed or sold into slavery all French prisoners; that the captives could not be sent to Egypt, since Napoleon's reduced numbers allowed no convoy; and lastly, that there was not enough food to keep the prisoners alive.[1] If Southey's purpose were to condemn war, then the siege of Jaffa would provide fruitful material, as would England's bloody bombardment of Copenhagen and seizure of the Danish fleet, in 1807, a deliberate act of aggression on a neutral power. But Southey makes no mention of this latter incident.

Another and greater sin of omission is Southey's silence concerning the vast reforms that Napoleon instituted in Egypt. Southey's charge that Napoleon allowed rape, pillage, and wholesale murder is false, for he expressly forbade violation of women, plunder, and unnecessary cruelty.[2] Likewise the accusation that Bonaparte embraced Islamism in order to further his influence with the Egyptians is untrue, a popular calumny that arose from nothing more reprehensible than Napoleon's staunch belief in religious tolerance.[3]

It is impossible to determine whether Southey's historical ignorance or deep-rooted prejudice is responsible for these misstatements. Certainly he was too near the actual event to get a complete and clear picture of it, but on the other hand he was all too ready to believe any enormity reported

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1 Ibid., vol.IV, pp.17-19.
2 John S. C. Abbott, History of Napoleon Bonaparte, New York, 1902, vol.I, p.185.
3 Ibid., pp.187-188n.

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of Napoleon, all too ready to renounce the skepticism that his position as a conscientious historian and ardent patriot demanded.

Wellington, of course, is thrown into direct contrast with Napoleon. As Bonaparte is the villain of the piece, the Iron Duke is the hero, and the concluding pages of the work are dedicated to his apotheosis. "His campaigns were sanctified by the cause;... they were sullied by no cruelties, no crime; the chariot-wheels of his triumphs have been followed by no curses; ... his laurels are entwined with the amaranths of righteousness, and upon his death bed he might remember his victories among his good works."[1] Kircheisen, who admiringly describes Wellington's vigor, bravery, patience, shrewdness, powers of organization, and devotion to duty, also points out that the Duke was vain and arrogant, that he was feared by his own men and hated by the Spanish, and that he so desired to emulate Napoleon that he attempted to win the Emperor's cast-off mistresses.[2] Southey neglects these aspects of Wellington, the chief agent in England's idealistic onslaught upon iniquity.

Southey's moral approach to history is as evident in The Peninsular War as it is in Brazil. In his preface he makes the moral value of the work an apology for its incidental defects: "I might well be apprehensive for my own fortune in the present undertaking, were it not for a belief, that in the variety of details which this narration contains, in the im-

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1 Peninsular War, vol.III, p.926.
2 Napoleon, vol.VIII, pp.527-528.

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portance of its events, in its splendid examples of heroism and virtue, and above all, in the moral interest that pervades it, the reader will find attractions which may compensate for any defects in the execution of so arduous a work."[1] True to his promise, Southey provides several examples of the operation of poetic justice. For instance, he asserts that during the Terror it seemed that God had withdrawn himself from France; but soon evil killed evil, and divine vengeance was thus made manifest: "Before this madness was exhausted, the wretches who had thrust themselves into the government paid the earthly penalty of their guilty elevation. One faction did justice upon the other: in the same place where dogs had licked the blood of Louis and his Queen, there in succession did they lick the blood of Brissot, Danton, Hebert, Robespierre, and their respective associates."[2] At the conclusion of his work, Southey lists the moral "lessons" -- as he calls them -- exemplified by the Peninsular War: that brutal tyranny may be laid low by "resolute perseverance in a just cause"; that national independence demands national spirit; that England may trust in her righteousness and strength; and that the philosophy that ends justify means is false.[3] But more largely, the whole history has shown the triumph of good, exemplified by England, over evil, embodied in France. Southey writes on his opening page that the war between the two nations was "as direct a contest

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1 Peninsular War, vol.I, p.vi.
2 Ibid., p.15.
3 Ibid., vol.III, p.927.

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between the principles of good and evil as the elder Persians, or the Manicheans, imagined in their fables."[1] His concern with the moral implications of the struggle is perceived in the unjustifiable fear, expressed in his concluding paragraph, that he may have given too little emphasis to this point: "... if in the course of this long and faithful history, it should seem that I have any where ceased to bear the ways of Providence in mind, or to have admitted a feeling, or given utterance to a thought inconsistent with glory to God in the highest, and good-will toward men, let the benevolent reader impute it to that inadvertence or inaccuracy from which no diligence, however watchful, can always be secure; and as such let him forgive what, if I were conscious of it, I should not easily forgive in myself... Laus Deo."[2]

The reader has perceived to what extent Southey, in the History of Brazil and the History of the Peninsular War, has lived up to his code of historiography; to what extent religion has made him impartial, charitable, enlightened, just, and generous; to what extent national feeling has proved an advantage; and in what degree he has vindicated the ways of God. The reader has also perceived the limitations of a prejudiced mind and the obliquity of truth that a narrow conception of morality may engender. It is true that Southey has intermingled the constituent parts of history, but from the standpoint of form it is debatable whether this procedure advances

1 Ibid., vol.I, pp.1-2.
2 Ibid., vol.III, pp.927-928.

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the reader's understanding of the subject. He has failed to relate everything and has committed some startling sins of omission; and neither of his histories is brief. If he has narrated separate episodes perspicuously and rememberably, he has cluttered his whole canvas with the bewildering detail of an old battle-painting, and the reader is left with the impression of a vast and chaotic complexity.

Of the two works, the History of Brazil is the more attractive, principally because of its fascinating pictures of savage life. The History of the Peninsular War deserves to live only as a literary curiosity, an English parallel to the lewdly calumnious pamphlets that Mirabeau wrote concerning Marie Antoinette.

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VIII. THE SOCIAL THINKER

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THE SOCIAL THINKER

A large portion of Southey's mature life was spent in literary endeavors to improve the condition of society. The essential kindness and humanity of his nature caused him to concentrate his attention on contemporary issues and to seek solutions for the various problems that beset his time. Although he lived in retirement in the rural peace of Keswick, he kept himself informed on the social, political, and religious developments that disturbed England. In his case these matters were not merely an object of speculation; they affected him deeply and caused him no little worry for mankind. But despite the unselfish earnestness of his concern, its expression in his writing constitutes the least satisfactory part of his work. Nevertheless, Southey's social thought is significant inasmuch as it reveals his attitude toward his age and demonstrates the peculiar rigidity of his mind.

Southey's later opinions sharply contrast with his earlier; yet, however much the content of his thought altered, the desideratum that lay at the base of it remained the same. He himself notices this constancy underlying change in A Letter to William Smith, a periodical article among those that he collected and republished in 1832 under the title Essays, Moral and Political. William Smith, one of Southey's more subtle baiters, had delivered in the House of Commons a speech demanding action against the "seditious book" Wat Tyler. This was a procedure intended to embarrass the Laureate, whose early

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revolutionary drama had been published in a pirated edition in 1817. Southey answered the charges of Smith with Johnsonian dignity and concluded with a forceful, if somewhat ostentatious, peroration:

> How far the writings of Mr. Southey may be found to deserve a favourable acceptance from after ages, time will decide; but a name, which, whether worthily or not, has been conspicuous in the literary history of its age, will certainly not perish. Some account of his life will always be prefixed to his works, and transferred to literary histories, and to the biographical dictionaries, not only of this, but of other countries. There it will be related, that he lived in the bosom of his family, in absolute retirement; that in all his writings there breathed the same abhorrence of oppression and immorality, the same spirit of devotion, and the same ardent wishes for the melioration of mankind; and that the only charge which malice could bring against him was, that as he grew older, his opinions altered concerning the means by which that melioration was to be effected, and that as he learnt to understand the institutions of his country, he learnt to appreciate them rightly, to love, and to revere, and to defend them.[1]

In his youth Southey reasoned from bookish propositions, but his mature ideas have the merit of being based on observed fact. And the fact from which all his social thinking proceeds is the state of the poor. In a typically garrulous piece called Sir Thomas More: or Colloquies on the Progress and Prospects of Society, Southey, as Montesinos, engages in fifteen conversations with the ghost of the sixteenth-century humanist. Since More, in the spirit world, has gone sour on human nature and Utopian schemes and perfectionism in general, he invites Montesinos to join him in a comparison of feudal society with life in the nineteenth century to the end that they may de-

1 Essays, Moral and Political, London, 1832, vol.II, pp.30-31.

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termine the degree to which civilization has progressed. They then sketch a gloomy picture. Since the decay of the feudal system, well-cared-for serfs have become wretched paupers, neglected by their fellowmen and left to run their sordid course. The decline of the baronial power released soldiers on the land, and the system of enclosures degraded small farmers to hired laborers and finally to social dependents. The menace of a vagrant, brutalized population, originating in More's day, is approaching its consummation in Southey's, and such folk have now become a caste.[1] Industrialism, although it has destroyed the military despotism of Napoleon, has aggravated the social evil by debasing men and women, introducing the abomination of child labor, and instituting the religion of Mammon-worship.[2] Machinery, brought into competition with manual labor, has made a decent standard of living impossible.[3] In the essay On the Means of Improving the People, Southey points out that the new industrialism also has caused the disappearance of the patriarchal spirit and has thus destroyed one of society's surest moral forces.[4] But its most ominous effect has been to increase the class of paupers. Southey, in his appraisal of The State of the Poor, 1812, considering this question of over-population, indignantly rejects the Malthusian theory on the ground that it shifts the blame on nature and therefore

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1 Sir Thomas More: or Colloquies on the Progress and Prospects of Society, London, 1829, vol.I, pp.96-97.
2 Ibid., pp.166-177.
3 Essays, vol.II, p.226.
4 Ibid., pp.114-116.

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on God.[1] The fault is not in the numbers of the poor, but in the poverty of those numbers; the error is society's, and it the duty of society to make amends.

This pauperism, as Sir Thomas More explains, results from the uneven distribution of national wealth. Those who work hardest live in squalor, while worthless inheritors feast on the fat of the land. Moreover, the substitution of paper currency for chattel and freehold has made wealth so unreal that at any moment, by the failure of banks, the whole economic structure of a community may collapse.[2] But Southey, on the verge of falling back into pantisocratic solutions, hastily declares his incompetence to deal with such a problem.

The tremendous advance in chemical and mechanical discoveries may seem to give modern times a great advantage. But Southey objects that physical progress is deleterious unless it is accompanied by a corresponding moral evolution, as Roger Bacon realized when he withheld his invention of gunpowder.[3] The machinery of the present age is not to be destroyed, for such an arbitrary interruption of progress would only retard civilization. But men should be brought to an understanding of the proper use of these devices. A healthy moral outlook will demand that they be employed for the welfare of all men rather than for the aggrandizement of a single class.

Despite Roger Bacon's efforts, the secret of gunpowder was revealed to society before it was morally prepared

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1 Ibid., vol.I, pp.77-78.
2 Sir Thomas More, vol.I, p.178.
3 Ibid., pp.306-307.

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for the ownership of such a deadly weapon, and the result has been tragic. If gunpowder has made war more impersonal, it has also rendered it more terrible. But both Sir Thomas More and Montesinos agree that war is an unmitigable evil; even in England, where it has been practised with the most humanity, it has ever left the people worse than it found them.[1]

There is always the hope that moral culture will catch up with physical progress, but this is a remedy too intangible for a nation that focusses its gaze on immediate conditions. The sordidness of the human lot has led to humanitarian measures, some good, some bad. The worst, Southey believes, is the delusion that government is responsible, and that rebellion against authority will bring relief to the masses. Here he gives full expression to his deep-rooted hatred of republicanism. He can, in no sense, be considered a political reformer, because his whole feeling, in this respect, was that change must be resisted. The wise and proper aim of statesmen, Sir Thomas More tells Montesinos, "is to keep things as they are".[2] In several instances Montesinos disagrees with his ghostly visitor, but it is apparent that Southey fully concurs with this statement. In the essay On the State of Public Opinion he staunchly defends the British constitution and asserts that it must ever remain unaltered. "It is not as a garment which we can deliver over to the tailors to cut and slash at pleasure, lengthen it or curtail, embroider it or strip off all the

1 Ibid., p.221.
2 Ibid., vol.II, p.73.

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trimmings, and which we can at any moment cast aside for something in a newer fashion. It is the skin of the body politic in which is the form and the beauty and the life,.. or rather it is the life itself."[1] Southey is as good as his word. However much he desires the institution of such reforms as will ameliorate the lot of the poor, he pits the whole strength of his pen against the current attempts to change the structure of government. Even public sinecures, he maintains, must be preserved, on the score that they enhance the dignity of government; and the salaries of higher officials must not be cut, since the state that they necessarily keep is expensive.[2] The pamphlet, On Sir F. Burdett's Motion for Parliamentary Reform, offers an indignant remonstrance against an early motion to effect a more representative constitution of Parliament. If members are to be elected on the basis of population and if they are to forward the desires of their constituents, then government will be subordinate to public opinion,[3] and Southey's attitude toward vox populi is anything but favorable. In Sir Thomas More he asserts that "the more loudly Public Opinion is expressed, with the more reason ought it always to be distrusted! The more powerful it becomes, the more easily is it misled, and the more are its predominance and its tyranny to be dreaded".[4] Already the power of numbers and the influence

1 "On the State of Public Opinion", Essays, vol.I, p.378.
2 "On the Economical Reformers", Essays, vol.I, pp.56-59.
3 "On Sir F. Burdett's Motion for Parliamentary Reform", Essays, vol.I, pp.12-13.
4 Sir Thomas More, vol.II, p.203.

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of public sentiment in the House of Commons has lowered the standard of government.[1]

On the Rise and Progress of Popular Disaffection warns England of the "anarchistic" tendencies inherent in public opinion of the present day. Here Southey traces popular unrest from the time of the Wars of the Roses, pointing out that, however much good it achieved in such phases of history as the Reformation and the Glorious Revolution, it augurs nothing but ill for modern times. He reveals his true meaning when he states that popular disaffection is the peculiar achievement of the Whigs.[2] Public opinion is dangerous because, since it represents the attitude of the vast majority of the nation, it is democratic in its direction. A government resting on mass-sentiment is republican, and ever since his disillusionment with the French Revolution Southey had refused to perceive any virtues in a democratic state. America, he affirms, in Sir Thomas More, is regarded as a model of republicanism, but little do its enthusiasts realize how impermanent that government is, how jerry-built is the whole structure of the state. Because democracy is concerned with the drastic reduction of the fabric of policy, democracy erects so little that its government may easily be razed.[3] Moreover, since individual freedom is the obsession of the republican spirit, a democratic government cannot insist on religious conformity nor institute an

1 Ibid., p.335.
2 Essays, vol.II, pp.95-96.
3 Sir Thomas More, vol.II, pp.175-176.

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established church, which, in Southey's opinion, is a powerful safeguard against anarchy.[1] On the bases of morality as well as of practical efficacy, he condemns republicanism. In a state in which people govern as a whole, moral responsibility is so divided that there is no "corporate conscience", and hence democracies have no public scruples.[2]

One of the most pernicious effects of democracy, Southey implies, is its influence on letters. In his own time, he perceived, the nation was deluged with books, most of them written to appeal to the masses. This fact would seem to point to an increased desire, on the public's part, for knowledge and culture; but Southey asserts that there is no real advantage in such popularization of literature, for the current fashion in letters is to divorce the religious faculty from the intellectual. Although literary art, rightly used, provides fine enjoyment and fosters piety and humanity, it is too often perverted to nefarious usages, with the result that evil books are produced and widely disseminated. Even in literary style the spirit of the times shows itself, for a corrupt society has induced a dazzling, meretricious manner of expression.[3] The standard of literature has been lowered, and nowhere is this more noticeable than in the newspapers, the organ of democratic propaganda, the open "flood-gates of sedition". In the article On the Rise and Progress of Popular Disaffection

1 Ibid., pp.196-197.
2 Ibid., p.193.
3 Ibid., pp.389-391.

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Southey declares that "all the other confluent causes of discontent are trifling in themselves and light in consequences compared to the seditious press", and he urges a rigorous censorship of incendiary journalism.[1]

Republicanism, Southey asserts, results from an individual pride of independence that is wholly inconsistent with the public weal.[2] A companion-sin in monarchy is empty pride of rank, but the other fallacy is the more active and hence the more dangerous. What Southey wishes in government is, first of all, the perpetuation of the British monarchy as constitutionalized by the Revolution of 1688, with a common people venerating tradition, respecting their betters, and submitting to authority, and with a peerage noble in feeling as in name, endowed with superior privileges but cognizant of superior responsibility. This is substantially the ideal that before him was held by Clarendon. With the addition of a hero as king and with stronger emphasis on a "working aristocracy", it is similar to the scheme that was later conceived by Carlyle.

Like Ruskin, Southey believes that there are certain specific reforms which a Tory government can put into effect. Ale-houses, which encourage the poor to drink, gamble, and whore, should be gradually reduced in number, and be always under police surveillance. Legal measures should be taken to coerce the idle to work, and to help the well-deserving.[3] The

1 Essays, vol.II, pp.105-106.
2 Sir Thomas More, vol.II, p.322.
3 "On the Means of Improving the People", Essays, vol.II, pp.126-134.

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government might open fisheries and thus provide occupation for a large group, and great landholders should be persuaded to employ the poor in improving their estates. An extensive program of national works-projects would relieve many from pauperism, and the opening of military and naval training schools for the indigent young would, in some measure, forestall the increase of the dependent class.[1] For the protection of unmarried women, a Ladies Association should be encouraged; even the institution of a Protestant order of Sisters of Charity or the founding of a Beguinage would be advisable.[2]

The employment of the poor in this manner will do much to relieve their suffering and to prevent crime. But no measure, Southey admits, can root out the criminality that exists in some minds, and society must be guarded from these reprobates by a strict enforcement of the law. Before this is possible, the legal profession must alter its aim and seek to ascertain rather than to evade justice. "Lawcraft," Sir Thomas More declares, "if not a twin-fiend with Priestcraft, is an imp of the same stock, and perhaps the worser devil of the two. There may be other professions which harden the heart as much, but none which tend so greatly to corrupt the sincerity, to vitiate the moral sense, and to sophisticate the understanding."[3] Government must do all in its power to reduce crime. One way is to censor the press, which encourages criminality by its

1 "On the State of the Poor, 1812", Essays, vol.I, pp.142-149.
2 Sir Thomas More, vol.II, p.305ff.
3 Ibid., pp.208-209. See also The Doctor, &, London, 1834-1847, vol.I, pp.274-277.

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detailed accounts of theft and murder.[1] Another is to reform the prison system, to separate criminals according to the degree of their vice, to exclude all pernicious habits, such as drinking and gambling, and to provide a benevolent instruction that will make the prison "a hospital for the treatment of moral diseases".[2]

But the two remedies that will most benefit the suffering orders of society are emigration and education. Southey never quite surrendered his pantisocratic scheme of colonization, although in his later years he regarded it as an expedient rather than a Utopian measure. More and Montesinos discuss various idealistic attempts of this nature and conclude that, although unsuccessful, their principle was right. Montesinos declares that emigration is incontestably the best means of removing the surplus population of a state, even though colonists are apt to change their country as well as their climate.[3] In the essay On Emigration Southey advises a transplantation of the dependent class to Canada, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Prince Edward's Island, the Cape of Good Hope, New South Wales, and Van Dieman's Land; and he suggests that the government lend to emigrants sufficient funds.[4]

Education is a still more effective measure because it strikes at the very root of the social evil. Before the lower classes can live properly, their ignorance must be removed;

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1 "On the Means of Improving the People", Essays, vol.II, pp. 171-172.
2 Ibid., pp.171-176.
3 Sir Thomas More, vol.II, pp.282-283.
4 Essays, vol.II, p.273ff.

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they must be taught how to live. "The greatest boon which could be conferred upon Britain (and this is of such paramount importance that we cannot enforce it too earnestly, or repeat it too often) is a system of national education established by the legislature in every parish, as an outwork and bulwark of the national church: so that instruction could be given to all who can not pay for it; ...none shall be suffered to perish for lack of knowledge."[1] Southey notes, in Sir Thomas More, that education has advanced enormously in cost. Endowments established for poor scholars have been monopolized by the sons of the wealthy, eager to compete for the honor of scholarships, and only by the most extraordinary show of talent can a poor boy enter either of the universities.[2] Yet it is the poorer class that needs education most, and "if you would make men good subjects, good servants of the public, good stewards of that which is constituted to their charge, you must place them in circumstances favourable to their own happiness".[3] To take care of this underprivileged class, funds should be raised for the establishment of another university, in York or northward, where a liberal and religious education might be obtained.[4] The government, with less foresight than the Roman Church, has paid too little attention to the instruction of its subjects, and nowhere is learning so little loved as in England.[5]

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1 "On the State of the Poor, 1812", Essays, vol.I, p.146.
2 Sir Thomas More, vol.II, p.131.
3 Ibid., p.142.
4 Ibid., p.140ff.
5 Ibid., p.136.

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, This is no cheerful picture that Southey has drawn of his times, but it should not be suspected that he is a pessimist. He notes the evils of the manufacturing system, but, like Montesinos, he refuses to join More in condemning it as "a fungous excrescence on the body politic".[1] Bad as the system may be, Montesinos answers, England will work her way through this evil, as she has done through others.[2] Such is Southey's constant and hopeful attitude toward social history. Sir Thomas More, skeptic that he is, tries to convince Montesinos that the world is not headed toward perfection, that the ferment that exists everywhere may be acetone rather than vinous. But Montesinos sturdily maintains "that the progress of knowledge and the diffusion of Christianity will bring about at last, when men become Christians in reality, as well as in name, something like that Utopian state of which philosophers have loved to dream,... like that millenium in which saints as well as enthusiasts have trusted."[3] This consummation depends entirely upon human actions, and more specifically, upon man's obedience to the will of God.[4] Thus, in the last analysis, Southey's social thought is religious in basis. Like Charles Kingsley, he believes that all reform springing from legal measures is focussed upon secondary causes of social evil, that the primary change is to be made in the hearts of men. "Where there is most love of God, there will there be the truest and

1 Ibid., vol.I, p.171.
2 Ibid., p.172.
3 Ibid., p.37.
4 Ibid., p.38.

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most enlarged philanthropy. No other foundation is secure. There is no other means whereby nations can be reformed, than that by which alone individuals can be regenerated... National happiness must be produced through the influence of religious laws."[1] Again, in the concluding pages of Sir Thomas More, Southey declares that Kant's ideal of a perfect state, in which the potentialities of human nature are fully realized, is possible only in a government conducted in strict conformity with the precepts of the Gospels. When Christianity is supreme over the power of the world, society will find its perfection.[2]

But, unlike Charles Kingsley, Southey is unwilling to believe that this socio-religious development will spring from men's simple love of Christ. When he speaks of religion he always means the Church of England, for in his code of values there is no other true faith: and this topic calls for a consideration of the current problem that troubled him most of all, the question of Catholic Emancipation. Indeed, throughout his writings, both poetic and prose, from Joan of Arc to the History of the Peninsular War, a bitter animosity toward the Catholic Church obtains. As early as 1797, when Southey published his Letters Written During a Short Residence in Spain and Portugal, he had already formulated one of his social objections to Catholicism, that it stifled the desire for a better life by imposing an orthodox superstition upon its subjects.[3]

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1 Ibid., p.134.
2 Ibid., vol.II, p.412.
3 Southey, Letters Written During a Short Residence in Spain and Portugal, With Some Account of Spanish and Portugueze Poetry, Bristol, 1797, pp.128-129.

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As he grew older and his interest in topical events increased, the agitation concerning the Catholic question caused him to examine more closely the political and social implications of the problem.

Catholics, he believed, aimed at supplanting the Establishment first in Ireland and then in England.[1] With the overthrow of Episcopacy, the English monarchy would fall prey to the pernicious and subversive tendencies of liberalism, for church and state mutually support each other, and Anglicanism is the cornerstone of the British constitution.[2] Moreover, Catholicism, acknowledging the supremacy of the Pope over all temporal powers, is inconsistent with that obedience to civil authority on which the order of nations depends. Wise men have been persuaded to believe that the Catholic Church has changed, but Southey assures them that today, as always, persecution, intolerance, and greedy ambition are its distinguishing qualities.[3] He realizes that he has opened himself to the charge of intolerance, but declares that toleration has its limits and that "the gratification of any party or sect, however numerous or respectable, must give way to public convenience."[4] We must ask, he asserts, the simple question: which is the true faith, Anglicanism or Catholicism? But in the same breath he stigmatizes the Roman Church as "a system which, wherever it has not proved deadly to intellect, has been deleterious

1 Sir Thomas More, vol.I, p.253.
2 Ibid., pp.383-384; vol.II, pp.47-48.
3 Ibid., vol.I, p.255.
4 "On the Catholic Question, 1828," Essays, vol.II, p.359.

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to morals, and has, in most cases, equally degraded both."[1] He is brought to the impasse which faces all thorough believers; if his own religion embraces the whole truth, if he trusts in it beyond all doubt, then how can another faith be anything but error and how can there be toleration without compromise of faith?

Since Catholics are bent on the ruin of the Anglican Establishment, as Southey insists, then "to admit into Parliament those persons whose desire and duty it is to bring about a subversion of that religion,... would be a manifest and palpable absurdity".[2] The Catholic argument that every man, according to abstract right and natural justice, has equal privileges is false: for society is based on differences among men. The man who lacks a certain amount of landed property cannot sit in Parliament; an uneducated person of the lower class cannot meet his superior on the same social level; and -- a reduction to the absurd --a man of short stature cannot be a grenadier nor can a vegetarian qualify for the beef-steak club.[3]

It is true, Southey concedes, that not only the Catholics but also the Unbelievers and the Dissenters are in favor of Emancipation, the former because they seek the extirpation of Christianity, the latter because the Test Act stands in their way.[4] Southey has no love for the non-conforming Protestant sects. Although by their exceptional zeal they have

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1 "On the Catholic Question, 1809", Essays, vol.II, p.303.
2 Ibid., p.381.
3 "On the Catholic Question, 1828", Essays, vol.II, p.367.
4 "On the Catholic Question, 1809", Essays, vol.II, p.379.

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kept the religious spirit alive and have prevented the Anglican clergy from sinking into a torpor, they are "schismatics in temporals as in spirituals"[1], and thus are a menace to the state. But such sects as the Methodists have a pure faith and are not dominated by a foreign power; hence there is a chance that they will lose their factious spirit and be drawn into harmony with the Church of England.[2] But no such concord is possible with Catholics, whom Southey regards with a hatred bordering on irrationality: "And the statesmen who persist in recommending that we should conciliate them by conceding all that they demand, may be compared to the man who, if a cobra-capella were erecting itself upon its coils in hostile attitude against us, its head raised, its eyes fixed and fiery, its hood dilated, the forked tongue in action, and the fangs lifted in readiness to strike, should advise us to court the serpent with caresses, and take it to our bosom!"[3]

The Catholic Question was responsible for the production of one of Southey's major prose works, The Book of the Church. It may be wondered why such an ardent patriot wrote no history of England's internal development. Actually such a work was planned. He intended to call it The Book of the State or The Book of the Constitution, and to make it "an outline of our civil history, having especially in view the causes and events which have affected the condition of the people, and

1 Sir Thomas More, vol.II, pp.44-46.
2 Ibid., pp.83-83.
3 Ibid., vol.I, p.294.

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the institutions of the country".[1] Southey never found time for the execution of this work, but in 1824 he did complete and publish an ecclesiastical history of England to which the projected civil history was to serve as companion-piece.

The Book of the Church was hastened to completion by Southey's apprehension of Anglican disestablishment as a result of the Catholic Question. The work was meant to strike a hard blow at Catholics[2] and to teach Protestant non-conformists a lesson.[3] The plan of this ecclesiastical history was conceived as early as 1811. The projected outline, he explained to the Reverend Herbert Hill, was to give a brief synopsis of "the philosophy and anthology" of Anglicanism, in a style that, appealing to the emotions of the young and the reason of the old, would ensure the book an established place in the national schools as well as in private libraries.[4] Southey's principal sources for this work were John Foxe's Acts and Monuments, Richard Hooker's Of Ecclesiastical Polity, Thomas Fuller's Church History of Britain, Gilbert Burnet's History of the Reformation of the Church of England, and Jeremy Collier's Ecclesiastical History. So plentiful were his materials that the projected duodecimo volume grew into two octavos of almost a thousand pages.

But despite its length The Book of the Church only

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1 Selections from the Letters of Robert Southey, vol.IV, p.26.
2 Ibid., vol.III, p.294.
3 Life and Correspondence, vol.V, p.113.
4 Ibid., vol.III, pp.320-321. See also Southey, Vindiciae Ecclesiae Anglicanae, Letters to Charles Butler, Esq., comprising Essays on the Romish Religion and Vindicating the Book of the Church, London, 1826, p.46.

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partially fulfills its promise. Southey, in tracing the rise and decline of the "false" religions of the ancient Britons, Romans, Saxons, and Danes, takes especial pains to point out the immorality which these pagan faiths nourished.[1] With the introduction of Christianity, he notes that English civilization advanced rapidly: intellectual communication brought the remnants of Roman art and culture to the island, a native literature was encouraged, laws were established, women were assured protection, education was fostered, and the ferocity of the tribes was lessened.[2]

Southey exposes the falsity that he perceives in Catholicism during the long interval between the introduction of Christianity and the Protestant Reformation. He ridicules reverence for saints, and points out the frauds involved in their miracles.[3] He assails the celibacy of the monks, and links papal excommunication and the right of sanctuary with pagan institutions.[4] He recites the life of St. Dunstan as an example of Catholic deceit, chicanery, and cruelty at their worst.[5] But with unwonted justice he gives a remarkably fair account of Thomas à Becket, concluding that "with all its errors, his was an heroic mind".[6]

In Southey's view of the papal system, to which he devotes a long and thoughtful chapter, he again surprises the

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1 The Book of the Church, London, 1824, vol.I, pp.8-9, 10-11, 17-19, 76-77.
2 Ibid., pp.56-62.
3 Ibid., pp.37-38; vol.II, pp.72-73.
4 Ibid., vol.I, pp.99,189,284.
5 Ibid., pp.88-113.
6 Ibid., p.237.

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reader. Regarding the papacy as an abuse in itself but as a remedy for greater evils, he proceeds to outline its benevolence as a great conservative power in turbulent times, as a social force in the dark ages, and as Europe's defense against Mohammedanism.[1] But these advantages are more than offset by the evils of the system, and in the latter part of the chapter Southey outlines his specific grievances against the Church of Rome. He charges that it kept the Bible from the vulgar because Romish practices were counter to scriptural authority; that the frauds connected with reverence of the Virgin and the saints have made the people superstitious and the victims of impostures; that the view of the Virgin as an intercessor has made Christ seem an angry god demanding propitiation; that the adoration of the Virgin and the saints has made Christianity a polytheism, an idolatry, and a creature-worship, and thus linked the religion of Christ with pagan faiths; that the battle of the Two Principles, borrowed from oriental religions, has led to an extravagant disdain of the body and the earthly life; that transubstantiation is insulting and degrading to the human intellect; that the extreme authority and sanctity given the clergy, with its power to hear confession and tender absolution, have resulted in a laxity of moral standards.[2] But, worst of all, in Southey's opinion, is the supreme power accorded to the Pope. The theory that every human creature is his subject concedes to him the right to depose kings and thus

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1 Ibid., pp.283-286.
2 Ibid., pp.288-315.

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rule the civil as well as the ecclesiastical state. It was upon this point that Southey considered Catholics a grave menace to government. A second claim of Romanism, that the Pope is infallible, upsets the moral balance, since it places him beyond the reproof of law even though he drag a million souls to perdition. This last contention, Southey asserts, has led to the blasphemous casuistry that the Pope, with the privilege of acting illegally, can do more than God, who, being law itself, cannot disobey the law.[1]

Although viewing the Reformation as one of mankind's greatest blessings, Southey admits that German Protestantism condemned the benefits as well as the evils of Catholicism.[2] But there is no just appraisal of vices and virtues in his consideration of the precursors of the English Church, and here the real purpose of the book, its exaltation of Anglicanism, becomes evident. His admiration for such early martyrs as William Sautre, William Thorpe, and John Bradley is complete, and the only fault he finds with Wicliff is his annoying habit of advancing democratic opinions.[3] He believes in the miracles of these English figures, although he tries to find for them a rational explanation.[4]

Southey is obviously uncertain as to what attitude to take toward Henry VIII's break from Rome. He cannot overlook the fact that Henry was motivated by his passion for Ann

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1 Ibid., pp.316-320.
2 Book of the Church, vol.I, p.322.
3 Ibid., pp.350-356.
4 Ibid., vol.II, pp.19-20.

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Boleyn as much as by his wish to establish a national religion, but Southey does his best to whitewash the King's character, even attributing his vices to Catholic education.[1] Finally Southey concludes that "with regard to the Church of England, its foundations rest upon the rock of Scripture, not upon the character of the King by whom they were laid."[2]

In the section of the book devoted to the reign of the Stuarts and to the Interregnum, Southey delivers a blow at sectarianism as represented by the Puritans. Here the spirit of martyrology again prevails, with the non-conformists displaying the same inhuman cruelty that Catholics had manifested in earlier persecutions. Laud is deified into a position to be envied by any major Catholic saint, and his enemies are castigated. Southey's low estimate of the Dissenters is based, of course, on civil as well as on religious grounds, and again he notes their "natural" tendency toward faction and their disregard of restrictions imposed by law and government. Often their zeal is merely a disguise of vulgar ignorance, and their ruling passion is rancour rather than pious charity. He is inclined to identify the Puritans with the rabble, for whom, as a Tory, he feels distrust; and as a traditionalist he is shocked by sectarian "contempt for ancient usages".[3]

In his long history Southey has provided an "anthology" of the Anglican Church and has fittingly commemorated its chief figures, but at no point has he given an exposition of dogma

1 Ibid., pp.103-104.
2 Ibid., p.104.
3 Ibid., pp.387-391.

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sufficiently specific and extended to be construed as Anglican philosophy. Apparently he feels that Hooker and Laud had already covered this subject. His own inability to treat matter of this sort satisfactorily has been noticed here in the discussion of Wesley.

The Book of the Church is part history, part martyrology, written with the express purpose of exalting the Church of England and laying low its enemies. It is a controversial, not an impartial work. English Romanists naturally objected to the Laureate's attempt to hold up their religion as an abomination, and Charles Butler, a Catholic acquaintance of Southey,[1] sprang to the defense with his Book of the Roman Catholic Church, which appeared in 1825 and was followed by a vindication and addendum in 1826. Butler charged Southey not only with uncharitable prejudice but also with falsification of fact. Southey proposed to answer Butler in a preface to the second edition of The Book of the Church, but characteristically this grew into a book of over five-hundred pages. This controversy tickled Southey's pride; he saw himself as a second Milton heroically championing his religion, and in imitation of Milton he called his defense Vindiciae Ecclesiae Anglicanae. But the work is merely an elaboration of passages in The Book of the Church, a listing of authorities, a quibbling over phrases, a refutation, point by point, of Butler's statements, and a reiteration of the fraud of Catholic miracles, the greedy ambition of the

1 At least, Southey dined once at Butler's home. Selections from the Letters of Robert Southey, vol.III, p.379.

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papacy, the superstitious idolatry of Virgin-worship, and the immoral inclinations of celibate monks.

Despite his expressed intention to strike at Catholics in The Book of the Church, Southey asserts, in his vindication, that he was animated by no partisan spirit, and that he thus produced "strictly an historical work".[1] Is it possible that he actually believed it to be such? Surely, he allowed inward conviction to distort into its own pattern the external reality of things, and hence the whole course of history gave confirmation -- so it seemed -- to the rightness of his thoughts. As Edwin P. Whipple has said: "Nothing could shake his egotism. Though, in many respects, one of the best of Christians and noblest of men, he was never free from bigotry when there was any occasion for its development. He often confounded his prejudices with his duties, and decked out his hatreds in the colors of his piety. In all his controversies he never seems to have appreciated the rights of an adversary. To oppose him was to champion infidelity or anarchy."[2] Whipple emphasizes here the essential flaw in Southey's social, political, and religious thinking -- his total inability to see the other side of any question. When he does concede a point, it is only to take his opponent by surprise. Moreover, his moral bias leads him to carry his ideas of good and evil into provinces where they are of doubtful application. His condemnation

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1 Southey, Vindiciae Ecclesiae Anglicanae, pp.xiii-xiv.
2 "English Poets of the Nineteenth Century", Essays and Reviews, Boston and New York, 1850, vol.I, pp.333-334.

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of Malthus on religious grounds is a patent absurdity, and his willingness to slander any opposition as vicious, to confuse political issues with moral values, is evidenced by his denunciation of Jim Cobbett as a "miscreant" spreading atrocious falsehoods,[1] a "brutal ruffian" with a "vulgar and ferocious spirit".[2] It is Southey's earnestness that causes him to abjure tolerance and forget charity. A philanthropist and a bigot, a religionist lacking the spirit of religion, tender in motive yet fiercely vindictive in action, loving mankind yet bitterly opposing individual men, he belied the very truth he took as his creed, and attempted to impose the Christian ideal by fire and sword.

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Strangely at variance with this seriousness is The Doctor, &, a work so nondescript that it defies strict classification and would demand, were its merit greater, a chapter to itself. But to some extent it is social in purpose, and may be regarded, among other things, as a humorous counterpart to Sir Thomas More and the Essays. The Doctor, &, is usually called a novel, but Southey derided those who regarded it as such, and insisted that it was a collection of "biographical sketches", whose veracity the reader could doubt or credit at his pleasure.[3] Southey evidently wishes the reader to believe that Daniel Dove of Doncaster, his hero, was a real personage;

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1 "On the Rise and Progress of Popular Disaffection", Essays, vol.II, pp.101-102.
2 Ibid., p.102.
3 The Doctor, &, London, 1834-1847, vol.VII, pp.23-24; cf. vol. V, pp.196-199, 306, 317.

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moreover, it is possible that Doctor Dove actually lived in Yorkshire in the eighteenth century, for Southey, in a letter to Mary Barker, refers to "that eminent physician whose house I reconnoitred at Doncaster".[1] But to consider the book as merely a biography would be misleading, for properly it is a grand miscellany of information and opinion on the most diverse subjects. This work is related to Southey's other social writings in that it repeats many of the familiar themes: Catholicism and liberalism are assailed, the evils of the manufacturing system are exposed, and education is encouraged. Then too, its general purpose is to instruct society to the end that men might lead more reasonable lives. But The Doctor,& (and here the meaning of the & becomes clear) mingles social thought with abstract philosophy, history with literary criticism, and fact with fancy; and the whole is presented to the public as a jest with a serious meaning.

A brief account of the development of the work may clarify matters. It grew out of an early project, The Butler, in which Grosvenor Bedford was to have collaborated with Southey. The Butler "was to have been pure nonsense, relieved only by occasional glimmerings of meaning, to deceive the reader into the idea that there was meaning in all the rest".[2] Bedford was unwilling to undertake the task, and The Butler was dropped. But Southey kept the plan in mind, and in 1813 began the composition of a similar work as relaxation from more serious

1 Selections from the Letters of Robert Southey, vol.III, p.3.
2 Life and Correspondence, vol.VI, p.235.

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labors. He and Coleridge, at Greta Hall, had been in the habit of amusing themselves and irritating their families in the evenings, by telling over and over the story of a doctor and his horse. The idea was to see who could stretch the tale out to its thinnest and thus test the audience's endurance.[1] It was suggested that Southey commit the story to paper, and if the first pages of The Doctor,& are true, as Southey assures Caroline Bowles they are,[2] the proposal appealed to Southey but produced different reactions in his family.

> "He will write it!" said the Bhow Begum (Mary Barker), taking up her snuff-box, and accompanying the words with a nod of satisfaction and encouragement. "He will never be so foolish!" said my wife. My wife's eldest sister rejoined, "he is foolish enough for anything."[3]

Begun as a jest, The Doctor,& grew to be something different. "Intending little more at first," Southey explained to Caroline Bowles, "than to play the fool in a way that might amuse the wise, and, becoming 'a sadder and a wiser man' as I proceeded, I perceived that there was no way in which I could so conveniently dispose of my multifarious collections, nor so well send into the world some wholesome but unpalatable truths, nor advance speculations upon dark subjects, without giving offence or exciting animadversion."[4]

Southey began The Doctor,& in 1813, intending to

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1 Correspondence with Caroline Bowles, p.326.
2 Ibid.
3 Doctor,&, vol.I, p.5.
4 Correspondence with Caroline Bowles, pp.326-327.

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conclude it in two volumes. In 1834 he published the first two volumes, in 1835 the third, in 1837 the fourth, and in 1838 the fifth. But still the work was not complete, and after Southey's death his son-in-law, John Wood Warter, put out the sixth and seventh volumes in 1847, without exhausting the materials Southey had gathered for this piece of whimsy. The writer had intensified his joke by publishing his bewildering work anonymously; most of his friends and even his son, Charles Cuthbert Southey, were in ignorance of the truth, and Southey took pains to confuse matters by gravely speculating on the authorship in his letters[1] and by referring sarcastically to the Laureate in the book itself.[2]

The story contained in The Doctor, & is indeed slim, although it is scattered through seven volumes. Southey tells of Daniel Dove, a simple, pious, naïvely learned rustic who has an only son, also named Daniel. The boy is tutored by a country schoolmaster, Richard Guy, and is amused by the antics of his foolish Uncle William, whose most signal accomplishment is his imitation of barnyard noises. The young Daniel grows up amid a welter of moral platitudes, obscure allusions, and erudite facts, and as a young man is sent to study medicine under Peter Hopkins of Doncaster, who becomes so attached to the boy that he sponsors his further education at Leyden. Daniel takes his degree in the Dutch city and falls in love with the burgo-

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1 Selections from the Letters of Robert Southey, vol.IV, pp. 368-369, 373, 441-442, 527.
2 Doctor, &, vol.I, pp.171,176; vol.III, pp.3,4; vol.IV, pp.132-133.

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master's daughter, but he returns unmarried to Doncaster, where he succeeds to the practice of Hopkins. Southey now leaves Doctor Dove to tell of the idyllic courtship and marriage of Leonard Bacon and his cousin Margaret. Five years after their union, Margaret dies, leaving Leonard a daughter to rear. When Deborah has grown into a young woman, her father calls in the Doctor to inoculate her against small-pox. The acquaintance of Deborah and the Doctor grows into love, but Daniel Dove postpones proposal until another suitor presents himself. Then the Doctor, having recently acquired the wonderful horse Nobs, also takes unto himself a wife.

This story, which Southey tells only in the barest outlines, allows him to write little moral essays on love and marriage. He distrusts the sudden affection implied in the term "to fall in love" and suggests that if more people grew in love, a more general happiness would prevail in the marital state.[1] Long companionship and mutual interests are, in Southey's opinion, a better basis for marriage than romantic adoration. He points out that marriage is a gamble and that very often women have ulterior purposes in marrying[2] -- certainly no original observation; but Southey is too much the home-lover to be as skeptical of marriage as Francis Bacon, and so he declares that a single man is only half a man, that Christian and natural laws demand that he take a wife.[3] The ideal marriage is a perfect union of souls as well as bodies, the husband tendering

1 Ibid., vol.II, p.173.
2 Ibid., pp.176-180.
3 Ibid., pp.295-296.

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love, respect, and honor, the wife recognizing her duties and showing complete obedience. Once more Southey pleads for the preservation of home-ties and asserts that the loosening of them frequently reduces human nature to the level of animal life.[1] Woman, he sportively implies, is the weaker vessel, and as such is the greatest threat to the concord of the home. It is even possible, Southey asserts, that woman was made not from man's rib but from his tail, which God deemed superfluous but too good material to waste.[2] Again, he suggests that the Devil is a hermaphrodite, inasmuch as evil is by no means exclusively masculine.[3] He chuckles at the indignation these statements will arouse in the fair sex, but he assures his readers that it is all a harmless joke.

This semi-frivolous treatment of ethics contrasts with the dead seriousness of Southey's attitude toward such topics as life, death, and immortality. The short career of man, with extinction ever before him, demonstrates the wisdom of God; for, if man should know death only as a remote possibility, he would cease to fix his attention on the after-life and spend this one in riotous sensuality.[4] The average life-span is short enough for man to endure his suffering, but not so short as to prohibit the proper development of his moral faculty. It is wrong to desire a postponement of death, for a man who has lived beyond his time lapses into a repulsive state

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1 Ibid., vol.III, p.286.
2 Ibid., vol.VII, p.52.
3 Ibid., p.59.
4 Ibid., vol.IV, pp.345-346.

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of decay in which all the admirable parts of his nature disappear.[1] But an old age that looks forward to death is filled with tranquillity and indicates a resignation to God's will. In this peace with the Creator lies the only true happiness, for all else is vanity.[2]

Death is a blessing for the good man, since it removes him from this world of time and change and secures him a beautiful and permanent existence in a perfect state.[3] Thus Southey considers grief for the dead a sin against God and a manifestation of self-centered human nature, since we mourn our own loss and forget the gain of the departed spirit.[4] Likewise, Southey, a Stoic rather than a romanticist, considers the broken-heart a sign of weakness and an evasion of God's wishes.[5] His belief in immortality is uncompromisingly stated in all his writings, but in The Doctor, & he speculates on a ramification of that subject: are the spirits of the dead cognizant of earthly happenings? The Catholic Church, Southey asserts, has preached this doctrine and deceitfully capitalized on it. But he believes that God allows the dead to witness, as reward or punishment, the consequences of their actions on earth.[6]

If God supervises all human events and shapes them according to His plan, should the Christian credit the dogma of predestination? Southey believes in it to the extent of

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1 Ibid., p.355.
2 Ibid., pp.356-357.
3 Ibid., vol.III, pp.233-236.
4 Ibid., pp.233-234.
5 Ibid., pp.68-69.
6 Ibid., pp.241-245.

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asserting that destiny is under the direction of almighty and omniscient God. But men disparage their Maker, he maintains, when they attribute small accidents directly to his will. Much that we lay to the blame of fortune or chance or predestination is really the result of human imprudence. Man, of course, is not responsible for such unavoidable and irremediable disadvantages as physical ugliness, but -- and here Southey foreshadows Emerson's idea of compensation -- an ugly person usually possesses redeeming advantages of some sort.[1]

Another subject, frequently discussed in The Doctor, &, should be mentioned in this connection. Daniel Dove advances the theory of "progressive existence", the supposition that man, in a previous state of existence, belonged to the animal world. Each of us, the Doctor believes, carries in his human nature some trace of his animal being, and thus we call this man a fox, that one a goose. It is difficult to ascertain how seriously Southey wishes to be taken at this point, but he is unmistakably sincere when he speaks of a "system of progression which the All Father has established throughout the living and sentient world,"[2] and prophesies that many of those who pass for men will, in their next change, not advance to a higher stage but revert to the brute-level.[3] It is evident that Southey is not speculating on evolution here, for he asserts that man often interrupts this progress through the types, by degrading his own nature and that of the inferior creatures under his control.[4] In spite of his lively interest in the past history of science, Southey fails to recognize the trend

1 Ibid., vol.VI, pp.103-110.
2 Ibid., vol.VII, p.317.
3 Ibid., p.138.
4 Ibid., p.317.

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toward evolution in his own time. He anticipates no conflict between science and religion, and even declares that the scientific mind, aiming to investigate the works of the Creator, is usually the most religious one, since it always reaches the conclusion that life is the product of an all-wise, all-powerful, and all-good deity. If the scientist fails to believe this, then he has a depraved mind,[1] and thus Southey dismisses the problem which was to loom largest in his century.

These are a few of the "unpalatable truths" and "speculations upon dark subjects" that are included in The Doctor, &. These ideas are neither original nor particularly weighty, but Southey regards them as basic truths and presents them with a studied philosophic gravity. Much lighter in tone is the social satire which is another constituent of the work. For instance, Southey announces that the lost tribes of Israel have at last been found in London, and designates them as the Threepercenties (bankers), the Amorites (libertines), the Simeonites (Cambridge men), the Haggites (women of fashion), the Man-ass-ites (men about town), the Gadites (frequenters of watering places), the Ah-oh-ites (erotic poets), the Geshurites (journalists), and the Gettites (business men). But three tribes not mentioned in the Old Testament make up the greater part of England's population, the Low, Middle, and High Vulgarites.[2] In addition to such criticism of society, the book

1 Ibid., vol.IV, pp.184-185.
2 Ibid., vol.II, pp.54-57.

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contains satire of specific personages, such as Francis Jeffrey, who was editor of the Edinburgh Review, Lord Lauderdale, who ridiculed an attempt to prohibit child-labor, and Leigh Hunt, who sponsored liberal principles. Then too, much of The Doctor,& is devoted to the exposition of curious facts that have little or no relation to one another or to Daniel Dove, despite Southey's oft-repeated claim that they are all apropos. Here he demonstrates the unbelievably wide range of his interests. He offers, among other things, a treatise on bell-ringing, an account of the flea in literature, a history of English horticulture, an article on the proper spelling of Job, a complete list of devils, a chapter on cetology, a history of surgery, a comment on religious fetishes, several biographies of obscure men such as the musician Thomas Mace and the printer Thomas Gent, abstracts of various books, a complete record of the town of Doncaster, and an account of anti-Semitism in the Middle Ages. And lest the reader object that these varied elements are incongruous, Southey warns him that he may not condemn the author until he sees that author's purpose -- a manifest impossibility.[1]

It is apparent that, however serious some part of The Doctor,& may be, Southey often treats the reader to the same prank that he played on his family during the evenings at Keswick. He takes pleasure in being long-winded, in throwing a hundred unrelated subjects together and gravely assuring the reader that he is stupid if he fails to see the connection. In this respect The Doctor,& is the most elaborate and most

1 Ibid., vol.V, pp.241-242.

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laborious practical joke in the English language. This is the humor of exhaustion, and its success is complete when the reader finally gives up and throws the book aside in vexation. It resembles the humor of the ballads inasmuch as it depends on external incongruity rather than inner wit for its effect, but it wearies the reader much sooner than does the more tempered farce of the ballads. Southey's garrulity, comic when the reader first experiences it, finally puts his teeth on edge after he has suffered it through seven volumes. Such a reaction, of course, has been calculated by the author, who, adding insult to injury, includes a chapter on the art of verbosity and asserts that his loquacity is more inexhaustible than the reader's patience. The Doctor, & finally resolves into an endurance contest between author and public, and -- the cream of Southey's jest -- the public is the greater fool for engaging in it. But perhaps Grosvenor Bedford was right when he said that "a joke may be very well received across a table which would be considered the dullest thing in the world in print".[1]

Southey told Caroline Bowles that, although the predominant spirit of The Doctor, & was his own, there was "something... of Tristram Shandy in its character, something of Rabelais, more of Montaigne, and a little of old Burton".[2] The Sternean influence is revealed in Southey's tricks with print and his "pillar-to-post divagations" in style. Montaigne shows in the moral strain and in the endless quoting of authorities.

1 Life and Correspondence, vol.V, p.190.
2 Correspondence with Caroline Bowles, p.327.

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Southey's wide and recondite erudition is reminiscent of Burton, and the division of The Doctor,& into ante-initial chapters, initial chapters, and post-initial chapters may be a gentle parody of the carefully subdivided Anatomy of Melancholy. A similarity with Rabelais may be observed in the mixture of reason and folly, but in nothing else. Fielding's influence also is apparent, especially in the chapters that inform the reader how to peruse the book, and Southey even steals Fielding's figure of the "ordinary" to describe his work.[1]

But it is true that the predominant tone of The Doctor,& is Southey's own, prolix and grotesque, learned and conventionally moral: the humor is genuine in some passages, miserably flat in others, and the whole affords an exaggerated example of Southey's formlessness and preference for the grotesque. But perhaps here, as in the epics, recognition of deficiency dictated the extravagant method. The Doctor,& is Southey's bid for a place among the English humorists. He knew that he lacked the quality of wit that distinguished Byron, but perhaps something could be won with quantity. Whether this was his reasoning or not, he produced in The Doctor,& an unsuccessful application of the baroque to comedy, and tried by the most drastic means to force a laugh from his readers.

It is doubtful if this book contributes to Southey's worth as a social thinker. Its humor is too strained to leaven the acrimonious spirit that prevails in Sir Thomas More, The Essays, and The Book of the Church, and social import is

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1 The Doctor,&, vol.I, p.189.

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frequently lost in the multiplicity of Southey's interests. Lacking singleness of purpose, The Doctor,& is successful neither as information, persuasion,nor amusement, for Southey fails to effect a proper fusion of erudition, precept, and comedy.

Despite the fact that he spilled much ink in his earnest wish to aid society, Southey contributes very little to social theory and only occasionally links himself with the nineteenth-century tradition of social philosophy as exemplified in Carlyle, Ruskin, and Arnold. The most significant part of his endeavor is his sponsorship of certain specific measures such as government employment for the pauper class, national education, and colonization, for here he anticipated reforms that have done much to relieve the distress occasioned by the industrial revolution. But his thought seldom probes beneath the surface of things, and he never attempts analysis of the bases of society. He seems to do so when he asserts that, before civilization can progress to its destined perfection, men must be motivated by a religious rather than a selfish purpose, but the social value of his statement is negated by his limiting of religion to the Anglican faith. His recognition of such economic evils as the unfair distribution of wealth should have moved him to criticize the whole social structure, but his Tory bias, linked with his fear of France, caused him to disregard any measure that would challenge the status quo. He was prone to lump any thought transgressing beyond the established system with that child of the Revolution, the "New Philosophy", which he considered to be a compound of atheism, materialism, and animalism.

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Such an attitude, which sometimes borders on hysteria, is comprehensible in Southey, whose early hopes for the millenium were blasted by the violence of the Terror and the rise of Bonaparte, whose later years were spent in living down his youthful republicanism. But his failure to realize the implication of the Revolution -- the direction of the critical intelligence to the very foundations of society -- accounts, more than any other factor, for the limitations of his social thinking.

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IX. THE LITERARY CRITIC

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THE LITERARY CRITIC

To understand Southey's literary judgments, one must remember that he is the most moral of critics. Morality for him is all-important, far more considerable, certainly, than aesthetic pleasure or material success or fame. His particular basis of morality is Stoicism, and his favorite moral author, Epictetus. On December 21, 1806, he wrote to his brother, Lieutenant Southey: Twelve years ago I carried Epictetus in my pocket, till my heart was ingrained with it, as a pig's bones become red by feeding him upon madder. And the longer I live, and the more I learn, the more am I convinced that Stoicism, properly understood, is the best and noblest system of morals.... Books of morals are seldom good for anything; the stoical books are an exception."[1] To the hard doctrines of Stoicism Southey added the more consoling ones of Christianity, and, twenty-eight years later, on the occasion of his wife's insanity, he could write to his friend Henry Taylor that "the wounds which stoicism cauterizes, Christianity heals."[2] Such a system of morals was, for Southey, no mere theoretical abstraction or unapplied philosophical attitude, but a code of conduct to which, whatever his success as a literary figure may be, Southey, the man, admirably succeeded in adjusting his life. Throughout his long and unusually tragic years -- through the disappointments of his public career, through the disease and death of his children,

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1 Selections from the Letters of Robert Southey, vol.I, p.400.
2 Life and Correspondence, vol.VI, p.248.

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particularly of Herbert Southey, in whom he placed all his hopes, through the madness of his wife -- he met the trials of outrageous fortune with the strong, if forced, calm of Stoicism and with the humble resignation of a Christian. The story of this life is movingly told in Southey's private letters, which drew the most cordial admiration from Thackeray.

But the moral strength that ennobled his life made Southey's literary judgments peculiarly unsatisfactory. It moved him to call Byron's Don Juan "a foul blot on the literature of his country, an act of high treason on English poetry"[1]; it moved him to confuse Shelley's personal life with his literary works, to label the latter as "monstrous" and "pernicious in their tendency"[2], to supplicate the younger poet to turn from "that abominable philosophy that teaches self-indulgence instead of self-control".[3] Conversely, in Omniana, two volumes of short comment written in collaboration with Coleridge, he defends MacFlecknoe on the score that "he is never in the slightest degree an immoral writer himself, and that he expresses a due abhorrence of the mischievous and disgraceful writings of his contemporaries".[4] Likewise, the kindness that was a part of Southey's morality so interfered with his discrimination that he gave to the writings of the dead Kirke White, which he himself published, a praise that their intrinsic merit little deserved. The same distressingly uncritical attitude

1 Ibid., vol.V, p.21.
2 Correspondence with Caroline Bowles, p.359.
3 Ibid., p.365.
4 Omniana or Horae Otiosiores, London, 1812, vol.I, p.107.

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is evident in his Lives of the Uneducated Poets, where he writes that "when it is laid down as a maxim of philosophical criticism that poetry ought never to be encouraged unless it is excellent in its own kind, -- that it is an art in which inferior execution is not to be tolerated, -- a luxury, and must therefore be rejected unless it is of the very best, -- such reasoning may be addressed with success to cockered and sickly intellects, but it will never impose upon a healthy understanding, a generous spirit, or a good heart". In continuing, he even goes so far as to assert that bad poetry is not to be discouraged, if it makes the poet the happier for having written it, and he strengthens his position by quoting Landor's statement that "poetry opens many sources of tenderness, that lie forever in the rock without it".[1] In the same charitable spirit he quotes, in a review of James Montgomery's poems: "Of the summer insects who come within our reach we destroy without compunction such as are noxious; but it were crude to shorten the life of the golden chafer or the butterfly -- let them enjoy the summer while it lasts."[2]

Southey's moralism again shows itself in his criticism of Hallam's Constitutional History of England. He believed that a historian should be impartial and yet vindicate the ways of God. Apparently the unbiassed chronicler must also be a Tory, for Southey condemns Hallam for his sponsoring of opinions subversive to traditional authority. Hallam's greatest

1 Lives and Works of the Uneducated Poets, London, 1925, pp. 164-165.
2 Quarterly Review, vol.VI, 1811, p.413.

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fault, however, is his "unprincipled" reasoning. "But in no English writer who makes the slightest pretensions to morality and religion, have we seen the abominable doctrine so openly maintained, that the end justifies the means, and that conspiracy, treason, and rebellion, are to be treated as questions of expediency, laudable if they succeed, and only imprudent if they are undertaken without a sufficient likelihood of success!"[1]

When Southey attempts to perceive the nature of genius, the same consistency obtains. In a review of James Montgomery's The West Indies, and Other Poems, he vaguely defines it as "that talismanic power which ennobles and beautifies whatever it touches".[2] Somewhat more positively, in his article on the poetry of Lucretia Maria Davidson, a young girl driven to madness and death by the consciousness of her creative powers, he links genius with morality. Genius must necessarily have intellectual modesty, which is akin to the moral sense. Thus, the true genius will shrink, as if instinctively, from displaying his talents. In thinking of the early death of Lucretia Maria, he writes, associating in his mind genius with moral excellence: "Let no parent wish for a child of precocious genius, nor rejoice over such a one without fear and trembling! Great endowments, whether of nature or of fortune, being with them their full proportion of temptations and dangers; and perhaps in the endowments of nature the danger is greatest because there is most at stake. In most cases it seems as if the seeds of moral and intellectual excellence were not designed

1 Ibid., vol.XXXVII, 1828, p.195.
2 Ibid., vol.XLI, 1829, p.292.

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to bring forth fruits on earth, but that they are brought into existence and developed here only for transplanting to a world where there shall be nothing to corrupt or hurt them, nothing to impede their growth in goodness, and their progress toward perfection."[1] Like such moral qualities as virtue, genius finds its fittest habitation in a realm above the mundane, and Southey further spiritualizes genius when he insists on its immortality. He mourns the early passing of the child-poet, but he finds her death less lamentable when he remembers that her creative powers are beyond the division of death. Science has proved that no particle of matter can be destroyed. How much more indestructible, he reasons, are spiritual things; "inhering in our immortal nature, they partake of its immortality, and constitute in their fruition a part of that happiness which our Almighty and Allmerciful Father has appointed for all his creatures who do not wilfully renounce their birthright!"[2]

If genius is ill-adapted to this life, how may the person of extraordinary powers adjust himself to the routine of living? Genius, Southey believed, is a dangerous possession, for it encourages an injurious and perwersive irrationality. He himself was so addicted to the Stoic's creed that he almost gave up poetry, seeing in it the same baneful effects that Plato perceived in it long before. On January 25, 1813, he wrote to Neville White that "composition where any passion is

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1 Ibid., p.301.
2 Ibid., p.301.

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called forth, excites me more than it is desirable to be excited; and, if it were not for the sake of gratifying two or three persons in the world whom I love, and who love me, it is more than probable that I might never write a verse again."[1] Likewise, he discouraged Charlotte Brontë from making literature her profession, not only because women are unfit for such a fatiguing and all-engrossing career, but more especially because the writing of literature induces an excitement of imagination that increases the troubled stir of life itself.[2] He saw with pain the gradual surrender of Coleridge to the tyranny of irrational imagination which subjected his mind to "a perpetual St. Vitus's dance -- external activity without action"; and his analysis of Coleridge's condition -- a great intellect "palsied by a total want of moral strength" -- indicates his solution to the problem: genius, being moral, must subject itself to discipline.[3]

The demonic urge to create, which destroyed Lucretia Maria Davidson, must be tempered to a gentler, more reasonable motive. The first step is for society to estimate mental endowments at their just worth, that is, to regard them as no more awe-inspiring than ethical goodness or purity. The next step is to impress upon the genius the fact that his gifts are not so rare as they are generally deemed to be, that, after all, his abilities differ, not in kind, but only in degree from

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1 Life and Correspondence, vol.IV, pp.16-17.
2 Ibid., vol.VI, pp.328-329.
3 Letters of Robert Southey, A Selection, p.60.

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those of the ordinary man.[1] It is clear that Southey will not allow special privileges for the genius. In his survey of Portuguese literature in the Quarterly Review he regrets that some poets have imprudently devoted themselves exclusively to literature, and that from the eccentricities of such men the herd have connected genius with extravagance. "But a love of literature, and a passion for beauty," he maintains, "have been, at least, as frequently connected with inoffensive habits, pure morals, and a contented mind."[2] Eager to reconcile genius with morality, Southey insists, in his comment on Disraeli's Calamities of Authors, that the poet must live as sanely as other men.[3] If his sensitivity is increased, if his nervous temperament is maintained at a higher pitch, he has, the critic implies, a greater apprehension of moral laws, which must restrain him from those guilts in conduct that Southey deplored in Byron and Shelley.

Although he is none too explicit on the point, Southey apparently wishes to regard genius as moral for much the same reason as did Longinus. A great book is a moral book, and can be the product of only a moral mind. In his attempts to see into the nature of genius, he wavers between absolutely identifying it with the moral sense and vaguely associating it with morality. Perhaps the most that can be said is that he perceives an inherent relationship between the two. He is reasonably sure, however, that the highest genius must be supplemented

1 Quarterly Review, vol.XLI, 1829, p.301.
2 Ibid., vol.I, 1809, p.381.
3 Ibid., vol.VIII, 1813, pp.99-100.

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by taste. In the Letters Written During a Short Residence in Spain and Portugal, he looks back with envy to that period of English poetry when, "whatever enmity might subsist between two countries, it extended not to their literature,"[1] when Chaucer, Gower, Lydgate, Barclay, and Crashaw added foreign genius to their own, and when Ariosto and Tasso were, through the translations of Harrington and Fairfax, familiar to the English public. Clearly, Southey favors a cosmopolitan taste in literature, perhaps as much as did Arnold or Oscar Wilde. Southey himself set an example by his interest in Latin, Greek, German, French, Spanish, and Portuguese literature. He notes, however, that the authors of the latter two nations have exercised surprisingly little influence on English letters. Yet, upon investigation, he concludes that a sufficient explanation is to be found in the fact that the literature of Spain and Portugal never attained any great or lasting elevation.

In all countries an era of rough genius must precede that of taste, and both of these qualities demand a "peculiar aptitude of mind" left unexplained by Southey. But he clearly implies that there is a connection between environment and national progress, and these two elements. Of the two, genius is the hardier, for "the buds of genius will burst forth, and its roots strike deep, however unfavourably it be situated". "But taste is a delicate plant that cannot be reared without the most careful cultivation." In the earlier stage of the development of a literature, genius without taste, poets are

1 Letters Written During a Short Residence in Spain and Portugal, pp.131-133.

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eager to record their thoughts and impressions, so eager that they fail to exercise an artistic eclecticism in language and congruous elements. "We had our Cowley and our Dryden before Pope taught us correctness, or Gray united judgment with imagination, and Dante, Pulci, and Boyardo preceded Tasso."[1]

No matter how great may be a poet's genius, his excellence must depend, in part, on the progress in taste that his country has made, and one infers that Southey means by "taste" the same set of values which the eighteenth-century arbiters called "correctness". An era of false taste in the seventeenth century, when "quaint metaphors and more quaint metaphysics" took possession of poetry, distorted "the sublime powers of Quarles" and wasted "the genius of Cowley". This element of eccentricity and bad taste, among the extravagant Spaniards, explains in part the comparatively low quality of their poetry. But other causes, perhaps as potent, joined with this one to bring about a general declension in Spanish literature. Despotic government fettered the human mind, and dread of the power of tyranny checked the freedom of genius. The effect of such a system, involving ignorance, superstition, and constriction of thought, "is like that of those poisons on the body that produce death by a slow but certain operation". Longinus had denied that the governmental system, affecting the nation, produces any great effect on genius, but Southey goes so far as to say that "as nations decline so declines the genius of their individuals; they have risen together and together have

1 Ibid., p.125.

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they fallen, and this participation of national glory or national degradation is uniform. Athenian genius perished with the liberty of Athens, and Roman literature had become contemptible long before the Goths destroyed it."[1]

Genius, then, to show its full richness, demands two conditions: a public taste highly developed and a system of government that allows the liberty and enlightenment of its subjects. In England, Southey asserts, in his review of Alexander Chalmer's Works of the English Poets, there was no great poetry between Chaucer and the Elizabethan writers because the destruction of baronial power caused an uncertainty and a condition of petty tyranny that stifled genius; and the moral and intellectual degradation attendant upon civil strife, fanaticism, and hypocrisy brought about the fall of poetry after the Elizabethan period.[2] Indeed, so close a connection obtains between literary creation and the general temper of the age that the former is inevitably a revelation of the latter. "Books," Southey maintains, "are the portrait of the public mind, and the characteristic traits of every age and of every people may be read in their poetry. Who is there that cannot physiognomize the French from Ravine, Crebillon, and Voltaire? To say of our own countrymen that Shakespeare is their favorite bard, is at once to give their character and pronounce their eulogium. It is the same terrible energy that produced the

1 Ibid.
2 Quarterly Review, vol.XII, 1815, pp.66,74.

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ballads of Bürger and the dramas of Schiller that emables the brutalized German to butcher his kneeling enemy."[1] The latter statement adequately demonstrates the weakness of Southey's theory.

Since Southey is eager to find some inherent relation between genius and morality, one expects him to define the end of poetry in moral terms, and here again he is consistent. In his article on Chalmers' Works of the English Poets, he agrees wholly with Dennis' statement that poetry is "an art by which a poet excites passion in order to satisfy and improve, to delight and reform the mind, and so to make mankind happier and better: from which it appears that poetry has two ends, a subordinate and a final one; the subordinate one is pleasure, and the final one is instruction."[2] Primarily, then, poetry is not the art of pleasing, but a medium for moral education. In his review of the Memoirs of the Life and Writings of William Hayley, Southey is quick to point out that poetry, in many instances, has so impressed the young mind with moral thoughts that a whole righteous life has been determined by it. He cites the example of a young girl of extraordinarily perverse and intractable spirit, who, upon reading of Serena, the angelic heroine of Hayley's Triumphs of Temper, suddenly changed into "the most docile and dutiful of children". Were parents to consider this as they ought to do," the critic solemnly preaches, "some of the most celebrated and fashionable productions

1 Letters Written During a Short Residence in Spain and Portugal, p.130.
2 Quoted in Quarterly Review, vol.XII, 1815, p.89.

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of these days would be transferred from the drawing-room to the fire."[1] In the article on Lucretia Maria Davidson, Southey again indicates the two purposes of poetry, and gives to each its proper emphasis: "The most gratifying reward that an author can receive, is to know that his writings have strengthened the weak, stablished the wavering, given comfort to the afflicted, and obtained the approbation of the wise and the good; but simply to have been the means of imparting innocent pleasure to a simple and innocent heart, is itself neither a light nor an unworthy gratification...."[2]

But the true service of poetry is a much more personal one for Southey. The idea that it gives moral instruction to the reader holds good in the relation between author and public, but in the relation of the creation and the creator, poetry has an even more vital importance. In several instances he maintains that poetry must be written for its own sake and for the sake of the poet; the possible benefit to the reader is of secondary consideration. It will be remembered that Southey, in the Lives of the Uneducated Poets, wrote that poetry is not to be discouraged if it makes the poet the happier for having written it. In a letter, dated November 25, 1809, to his brother Lieutenant Southey, he states a belief that the first duty of the poet is to please himself in writing.[3] And in The Doctor, & he intimates, in a quotation from Pasquier, that his especial concern in writing this puzzling book was to

1 Ibid., vol.XXXI, 1825, p.285.
2 Ibid., vol.XLI, 1829, p.295.
3 Life and Correspondence, vol.III, p.268.

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give satisfaction to himself.[1] Such statements come dangerously near to implying that poetry is not a communicative art, but a vessel of wholly subjective expression and entirely selfish enjoyment on the part of the poet. But Southey is far removed from Gertrude Stein or James Joyce, and his real meaning is finally evident in a letter to Charlotte Brontë, who, in March, 1837, had written him, as the highest literary arbiter of the past generation, requesting his advice as to whether she should continue in literature. "Write poetry," he recommended, "for its own sake; not in a spirit of emulation, and not with a view to celebrity: the less you aim at that, the more likely you will be to deserve, and finally to obtain it. So written, it is wholesome both for the heart and soul; it may be made the surest means, next to religion, of soothing the mind, and elevating it. You may embody in it your best thoughts and your wisest feelings, and in so doing discipline and strengthen them."[2] The notion of poetry as a possible substitute for religion seems to look forward to Matthew Arnold's high estimate of poetry as the future receptacle of man's religious beliefs, but there is this difference between the earlier and the later critic: for Southey, poetry, executing its prime purpose, spreads its benevolent influence not outward but inward -- back into the creator himself. In such a scheme, literary composition becomes a process in which moral conviction, the very ore of poetry, is refined and strengthened; in the fire

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1 The Doctor, &, vol.I, p.189.
2 Life and Correspondence, vol.VI, p.329.

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of imagination thoughts and feelings are purified; by the will to create they are cast in a form that is permanently durable. As a Stoic, Southey believes staunchly in duty, and the first duty of genius, according to his conception, is not to fashion an object of aesthetic beauty which may thrill the reader, nor to instill in others a sense of ethical principle, although this latter function, if it accompany the prime purpose of poetry, increases its merit; but to express what is good and noble in himself and to accept this creation as a palladium of his own spiritual and moral greatness. This most aristocratic of all views of poetry, in which the poet constitutes his own public, explains, perhaps, the failure of Southey's verse to appeal to any large and popular audience.

In Southey's idea of the purpose of poetry, one fact is strikingly evident: that he has little love, and perhaps a little contempt, for the reading public. He found that those works which he deemed worthy were received with indifference by a public whose intellectuality, he thought, was unequal to an appreciation or even a comprehension of them. He wrote to Coleridge that an author who wishes to succeed must make his works as simple and elementary as possible, for it is unreasonable to expect a reader to meet an author with intelligence, especially since modern society and even government dispenses with intellectuality. To Walter Scott he wrote that Wordsworth's prose will never be appreciated simply because the public dislikes anything which it can understand only with difficulty.[1]

1 Ibid., vol.III, p.246.

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In his own poetry, he wrote to Landor, he is forced to compromise because the public, unwilling to learn anything new, hates innovations.[1] Reviewing the life of Camoens, he is indignant at the failure of the Portuguese to recognize the greatness of their first poet, and he recollects that "the literary history of every country is full of such cases".[2] "A poet," he concludes, in his survey of English literature, "is more likely to obtain immediate reputation, as well as common popularity, by glittering faults, than by such a strain, as, to use the pregnant words of Drayton, 'may content the perfect man to read:' for children will always be attracted by trinkets and tinsel; and with regard to poetry, the great mass of the people are always children."[3] In The Doctor, he perceives some truth in Shaftesbury's statement that "of all the artificial relations between mankind, the most capricious and variable is that of Author and Reader". But, Southey adds, the greater author refuses to enter such a relationship and is saved from its baleful effects by the fact that, first and foremost, he labors, not for the reader's sake, but for his own higher gratification.[4]

But despite its low intelligence, the public has one especial virtue: it never judges severely. The book which pleases the people is liked because it gives pleasure, for all that the people require is to be pleased; and, Southey asserts,

1 Ibid., pp.145-146.
2 Quarterly Review, vol.XXVII, 1822, p.13.
3 Ibid., vol.XII, 1815, p.74.
4 Doctor, vol.V, pp.381-382.

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for this reason their state is the more gracious.[1] Such an attitude, of course, is at odds with the principle of formal criticism. It is essentially romantic, and aligns Southey, so far as his ideas about the judgment of poetry are concerned, with Wordsworth and Coleridge. A passage in the second volume of The Doctor, &c. is still more definite: "All Readers -- thank Heaven, and what is left among us of that best and rarest of all senses called Common Sense, -- all Readers however are not critical. There are still some who are willing to be pleased, and thankful for being pleased; and who do not think it necessary that they should be able to parse their pleasure, like a lesson, and give a rule or a reason why they are pleased, or why they ought not to be pleased. There are still readers who have never read an Essay upon Taste; if they take my advice they never will; for they can no more improve their taste, by so doing, than they could improve their appetite or their digestion by studying a cookery book."[2] Such a statement seems sound enough until one remembers that Southey himself, in the Letters Written During a Short Residence in Spain and Portugal, decreed that public taste must be improved before genius can fully assert itself. One remembers, too, his low rating of public intelligence; if the merits of literature are to be estimated by the degree of pleasure it gives to the unthinking populace, The Bride of Abydos is a greater poem than Paradise Lost.

1 Quarterly Review, vol.XI, 1814, p.79.
2 The Doctor, &c. vol.II, p.86.

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In his desire to score the too critical reader, Southey overshoots the mark and exaggerates to the point of absurdity. What he really wishes is a group of readers who keep their hearts open to receive, who still retain an understanding not grown dull, whose feelings are unexhausted and not encrusted by the stiff mold of sophistication. Such readers will be found among the youth of a country, he believes, and such readers need only one law of judgment, "a better rule than any professors of criticism will teach: if a book induces you to dissatisfaction with self-government or the control of others, (without self-government no virtue and hence no happiness), induces you to abate reverence for what is great and good, to diminish love for fellow creatures, to emphasize your evil propensities, to defile your imagination,-- throw it in the fire."[1] The reader that Southey desires, then, is one willing to be pleased. The idea of literature as a compelling force, as a power that draws response, even against the will of the reader, is foreign to him, and yet it would seem that the greatest literary works are of this order. The mind that is alert to aesthetic flaws is, in his opinion, over-sophisticated, just as the mind that is apathetic to moral faults is primitive and undeveloped. Strict judgment, he almost seems to say, must be restricted to moral issues. Above all, the reader must not base his appreciation on accepted canons of taste. He who loves literature for its own sake, Southey states in The Doctor, &,

1 Ibid., pp.87-88.

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is never fastidious. The true lover of literature is not the specialist in letters nor the undiscriminating drudge who believes that everything written is of equal merit, but "the man of robust and healthy intellect who gathers the harvest of literature into his barns, threshes the straw, winnows the grain, grinds it at his own mill, bakes it in his own oven, and then eats the true bread of knowledge. If he bake his loaf upon a cabbage leaf, and eat onions with his bread and cheese, let who will find fault with him for his taste -- not I."[1]

In his emphasis on discipline and moral selectivity, Southey is classical, but in other remarks on the writing of poetry he betrays his close relationship with the romanticists. As early as 1793 he wrote to Grosvenor Bedford that in literature nature is a much better guide than antiquity and that imitation of the ancients had led modern authors to ridiculous practices.[2] Critically, he had no respect for the rule of the model: in the Lives of the Uneducated Poets he regrets that Stephen Duck and James Woodhouse stopped expressing their thoughts and feelings in their own language, which "had a certain charm of freshness as well as truth", and began to form their style upon some approved model, producing "just such verses as any person, with a metrical ear, may be taught to make by receipt".[3] The freedom of the romantic spirit is likewise discernible in Southey's attitude toward external truth in its relation to literature: in writing his projected poem

1 Ibid., vol.I, pp.172-173.
2 Life and Correspondence, vol.I, p.176.
3 Lives of the Uneducated Poets, pp.118-119.

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on King Philip's War, he will change facts as he desires, and to any accusation of falsity he will answer in the spirit of the Frenchman, who, after relating a story and then being reminded that the facts were different, replied, "Ah, monsieur, tant pis pour les faits."[1] He is romantic, too, in placing a high premium on originality in poetry and in decreeing that, without genuine feeling, poetry is worthless.[2] But Southey has no good word for that romanticism which expresses itself in "morbid feelings, atrocious principles, exaggerated characters, and instances of monstrous and disgusting horror .... the more un-English, un-Christian, and immoral, the better, provided it be slavered over with a froth of philosophy";[3] that is, the romanticism of Byron and Shelley. Stoicism had taught Southey moderation, and the moderation he found necessary in life, he also thought necessary in poetry. The excess which is manifested by luxurious decoration in poetry degrades literature, he wrote to Sir Walter Scott,[4] and, in his review of The Works of the English Poets, he expressed a hearty contempt for the coruscations and flashes of extravagant fancy that distinguished the metaphysical poets.[5] Likewise, because its elaboration and exaggeration transgressed his limits of literary temperance, he condemned Pope's translation of Homer.[6]

His inclination, then, so far as his critical attitude is concerned, was romantic in that he shared the liberality

1 Life and Correspondence, vol.V, p.196.
2 Quarterly Review, vol.XXXI, 1825, p.279.
3 Selections from the Letters of Robert Southey, vol.III, p.135.
4 Life and Correspondence, vol.IV, p.338.
5 Quarterly Review, vol.XII, 1815, p.80.
6 Ibid., p.85.

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of Wordsworth and Coleridge; but the discipline which his classical moralists imposed on him and the temperance which he demanded in poetry precluded his participation in the enthusiasm of the one and in the free imagination of the other. He reveals in his criticism the struggle of the old with the new, of the suppression of passion with the renascence of feeling, of wisdom with enthusiasm, of the old age of Epictetus' Stoic doctrine with the youth of Rousseau's romanticism. He was drawn to the new school, but in the end the principles that had made him strong to endure the trials of his life won the conflict; for truly his heart was ingrained with the teachings of the Enchiridion, and his mind, made by necessity a bondsman to duty, was unequal to the freedom of inspiration. He recognized the value of feeling in poetry, but he experienced grief so intensely and overcame it with such effort that he felt only indignation when he perceived how emotion is dallied with in literature. Poetry, he believed, should soothe rather than excite. "The pathetic," he wrote in The Doctor, &, "is a string which may be touched by an unskilful hand, and which has often been played upon by an unfeeling one."[1] His specified purpose, more humanitarian than aesthetic, was to make his readers neither laugh nor weep. "It is enough for me, if I may sometime bring a gleam of sunshine upon thy brow, Pensoso; and a watery one over thy sight, Buonallegro."[2]

To effect a balance in the world, to bring the too

1 Vol.II, p.297.
2 Ibid.

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sanguine temperament to a recognition of the tragic side of man's lot and thus arouse his sympathy, to bring a consciousness of the joyful in life to the man troubled by grief and care -- this was Southey's ideal. Sorrow was too grimly real to contain for him any aesthetic pleasure, and when he saw fit to introduce it at all, his purpose was not

> to entertain
> The heart with useless grief; but, as I may,
> Blend in my calm and meditative strain,
> Consolatory thoughts, the balm for real pain.[1]

In his mind he could draw fairly fine distinctions between the real and the unreal, and one thing that he was sure of was that literature is essentially make-believe and that life is distressingly real. He knew, too, that many authors who make a great show of feeling in their works have never actually experienced emotion. Amusedly he contemplates how poets have bandied about the passion of love. According to their own statements, "they have endured scorching, frying, roasting, burning, sometimes by a slow fire, sometimes by a quick one..... Sometimes they have undergone from the same cause all the horrors of freezing and petrifaction. Very frequently the brain is affected; and one peculiar symptom of the insanity arising from this cause is that the patients are sensible of it and appear to boast of their misfortune".[2] With a malicious pleasure, Southey extracts the worser passages on love from Lord Brooke, Pasquier, Lyly, Ben Jonson, Amadis de Gaule, and Ronsard.

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1 A Tale of Paraguay, Works, vol.VII, p.35.
2 The Doctor,&, vol.II, p.342.

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It is to be doubted, he asserts, that love ever made a poet, but it is beyond doubt that love has inspired more bad poetry than any other subject. When poets write of love they are possessed by the desire to say something new about a thing that surrendered all its novelties centuries ago, and they are forced, by this wish, to ridiculous stratagems.

Southey cites the case of Greene, who, realizing that the demand for a glance from the mistress' eyes was exhausted, hit upon the thought that a look from one eye would be enough and wrote a sonnet rationalizing this sufficiency; and of Dryden, who, desperately pressed, made his hero say, "I'll not one corner of a glance resign."[1] With the poets, love has been a subject for romantic exaggeration; in an empty heart it works "like quicksilver in an apple dumpling"; in a diseased heart it loses its nature and produces a new disease; in a full heart (which is to say a virtuous one) it is "sedative, sanative, and preservative; a drop of the true elixir, no mithridate so effectual against the infection of vice." But the love of perfect understanding, of peace, of piety, of self-sacrifice -- such a love as Margaret and Leonard experience in The Doctor,& -- is an emotion never described in Mr. Thomas Moore's poems, and, Southey adds, "which Lord Byron is as incapable of understanding or even believing in another as he is of feeling it in himself."[2] Love, Southey believed, is a dangerous subject for poetry, and, if treated wrongly, it is morally injurious. "In

1 Ibid., vol.III, p.44.
2 Ibid., vol.II, p.345.

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fact," he writes, "it is not passages of ludicrous indelicacy that corrupt the manners of a people; it is the sonnets which a prurient genius like Master Little sings virginibus puerisque, -- it is the sentimental slang, half-lewd, half-methodistic, that debauches the understanding, inflames the sleeping passions, and prepares the reader to give way as soon as the tempter appears."[1]

The choice of subject is an important element in poetry, Southey believes; he pronounces Henry More's verse, particularly the Song of the Soul, unsuccessful because its subject matter, being didactic but not cast in allegory -- the only poetical medium for preceptive matter --, is unfit for poetic treatment.[2] But the arrangement or structure of a poem, he asserts with a classical emphasis on form, is more important still. In the review of James Montgomery's poems he writes that "if there be anything radically erroneous in the plan of an edifice, the most exquisite workmanship may be bestowed in vain."[3] Again, in The Doctor,&, he quotes Shaftesbury's comparison: "The just composer of a legitimate piece is like an able traveller, who exactly measures his journey, considers his ground, meditates his stages and intervals of relaxation and intention, to the very conclusion of his undertaking, that he happily arrives where he first proposed at setting out."[4] A leisurely and full treatment is desirable, but Southey scorns

1 Ibid., vol.V, p.153.
2 Omniana, vol.II, pp.157-158.
3 Quarterly Review, vol.VI, 1811, p.408.
4 The Doctor,&, vol.III, pp.77-78.

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the author who, "having no more argument than would lie in a nut-shell, wire-draws it and hammers at it, and hammers at it and wire-draws it, and then wire-draws it and hammers at it again, like a lecturer who is exhibiting the infinite ductility of gold".[1] If form is the most important part of technique it is also the most exacting. "In poetry, as in painting, and music, and architecture," Southey wrote to Allan Cunningham, a young poet seeking advice, "it is more difficult to design than to execute. A long tale should be everywhere consistent, and everywhere perspicuous. The incidents should depend upon each other, and the event appear like the necessary result, so that no sense of improbability in any part of the narration should force itself upon the hearer."[2] But Southey makes his most important observation on form in a letter to C. W. W. Wynn, in which he asserts that the parts of a poem should be in a fixed logical order. If this order is absolutely logical, it will also be absolutely immutable. His own poem Thalaba, he believes, has the fault of Samson Agonistes -- its parts might change place.[3] Here is a concept of that organic or integral unity in poetry which Coleridge borrowed from August Wilhelm Schlegel, who applied the monism of Leibnitz to literary theory and popularized the conception of organic unity in his various writings.

Of style, language, and meter, Southey has a great

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1 Ibid., pp.79-80.
2 Life and Correspondence, vol.IV, p.350.
3 Ibid., vol.II, p.134.

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deal to say. In regard to meter, he believes that blank verse is the measure which, for versatility of application and variety in itself, for power and dignity, "exceeds every meter of every language ancient or modern." The long line used by Chapman in his Iliad "has grown out of the defects of languages which abound in similar terminations"; yet it can produce at times a happy effect. The long fourteen-syllable verse is good because it allows fluctuant caesura, but the common heroic measure has more variety. Ottave rime, he believes, are faulty because the pause falls too regularly at the end of the first quatrain and because the concluding couplet is not in harmony with the whole; but the Spenserian stanza, on the contrary, is excellent because the parts are indivisibly interlaced and the rhythmic increment at the end makes for a full sounding close. He is amused at the idea of quantitative verse in English and at the outcome of it in Stanihurst's Aeneid, and he disapproves even of accented hexameters on the ground that the length of the line, in such a condensed language as English, encourages verbosity.[1]

In prose he favors a simple, short, concise style, "plain as a Doric building, and ... of eternal durability."[2] Poetry, too, must be couched in clear and severe terms, and he dislikes the Lay of the Last Minstrel for its mixed language, obscurity, want of perspicuousness, modern barbarisms, and unnatural syntax.[3] Even Landor's style in Count Julian, profound

1 Quarterly Review, vol.XII, 1815, pp.69-74.
2 Life and Correspondence, vol.II, p.133.
3 Ibid., vol.II, p.316.

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and exquisitely wrought, misses clarity, for it is "like water which however beautifully pellucid, may become dark by its very depth".[1] In short, Southey believes that the best style is the one that is as simple as the subject matter permits. In an undated letter to Coleridge he spoke in plain terms on this point: "You have told me that the straightest line must be the shortest; but do not you yourself sometimes nose out your way, hound-like, in pursuit of truth, turning and winding, doubling and running when the same object might be reached in a tenth part of the time by darting straightforward like a greyhound to the mark? Burke failed of effect upon the people for this reason -- there was the difficulty of mathematics without the precision in his writings."[2] He also accuses Coleridge of a too-swelling diction; an inherent connection, he believes, should always obtain between style and subject matter; the language should rise and fall with the tone of the content, but should always maintain a dignified elevation.[3] In fact, an author should not have a style, but an infinite number of styles, each varying with the subject. "My style," he promises, "shall always mold itself to the subject and not my subject to my style. Sometimes it shall be a style, and sometimes a turnstile, and sometimes a five-barred gate, and sometimes such a stile as we have in Cumberland, which is very like a ladder."[4] Here, perhaps, is a recognition of that close connection between

1 Ibid., vol.III, p.299.
2 Ibid., pp.262-263.
3 Selections from the Letters of Robert Southey, vol.I, p.216.
4 Ibid., p.404.

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Southey regarded language as one of the great determining factors of poetry. The literature of every country, he stated in his article on Chalmers' Works of the English Poets, is influenced by its language. Indeed, the nature of some tongues, such as that of the Five Indian Nations, precludes any possibility of poetry. The mere ore of speech must go through a process of gradual refinement before it can be ductile enough for verse, but refining may be carried too far, as it was in Chinese, where all aesthetic pleasure depends on characters, not on sounds. The European languages, too, have their limitations. French is unfit for poetry, especially for heroic verse, and Ronsard was hindered from achieving greatness only by the unworthiness of his native tongue. Likewise, the Spanish poets are unable to be firm or graceful because their language forces them "to walk on stilts".[1] Not only the nature of the language, but also the stage of its development determines the quality of its poetry. The Cid is the best in Spanish poetry, but the crudity of the language at that time, mere rubbish and unhewn stone in comparison with the marble of Dante's and Petrarch's Italian, rendered it unsatisfactory. For the same reason Chaucer, superior in gifts to Dante, never produced anything as great as the Italian poet's works, since the undeveloped state of English in the fourteenth century was incapable of forming a style to equal the strength and severity of Italian, a language much older and therefore more refined.[2]

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1 Quarterly Review, vol.XII, 1815, p.61.
2 Ibid., pp.64-65.

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But English, Southey believes, has developed into the ideal language of poetry. The national character of the Britons, their bluntness, honesty, and strength, influenced their language and made it condensed and strong. The lack of mellifluent Italian sounds, seemingly a loss, is really an advantage, for, by the law of compensation, it has required English poets to put something more than sweetness into their verse, has called into being a characteristic body of thought and aspiring imagination which uplifts and glorifies the language. "Thus the very defects of that language have been made advantageous to our literature, as long winter nights and stormy seas have given us our maritime skill, and as we have learnt from the uncertainty of our climate to be alert and active in all seasons alike."[1]

Pride in his language made Southey a purist. Write English, he advised, not the nondescript language of Sir Thomas Browne's Vulgar Errors. Poetry, he believed, must be cured of its "wheyishness", and in the spirit of a zealous reformer he wrote to William Taylor, ".....I will say what for a long while I have thought -- that you have ruined your style by Germanisms, Latinisms, and Greekisms, that you are sick of a surfeit of knowledge, that your learning breaks out like scabs and blotches on a beautiful face." There cannot be too many images in a poem, he continues, but these images must have the stamp of their author and must be in "plain perspicuous English -- such as mere English readers can understand. Ours is a noble language,

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1 Ibid., p.65.

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a beautiful language. I can tolerate a Germanism for family's sake; but he who uses a Latin or French phrase where a pure old English word does as well, ought to be hung, drawn, and quartered for high treason against his mother-tongue."[1] Southey's linguistic ideal seems sound enough if it be not carried too far. But English is an unfortunate tongue for puristic reform, and Southey himself, in his poetry, found it necessary to vary his Saxon monosyllables with the "long, savorsome Latin words, rich in 'second intention'" that Pater loved; and in his earlier poems he has recourse, at times, even to Latin idiom. He is more practical, in his views on language, when he quotes and concurs with Oldmixon's noble statement that "the English of modern tongues is fitted best for poetry. Its copious choice of monosyllables (which many have been rash enough to call a blemish) make it strong, significant, and comprehensive. Its derivatives from Greek and Latin have adorned it with a variety of cadences; and intermixed its masculine excess of consonants with a melodious fluency from interposing vowels. It adorns, and is adorned by rhyme; yet takes it in but as a subject, not obeys it as her tyrant. It is grave, slow, stately, soft, swift, wanton, or majestic. It has all the lentor of complaint and pity, yet has all the transport of excursive energy. It is an inexhaustibly full treasury, supplied from the selected tributes of whatever was most excellent in other speeches, but possesses them with so improved an aptitude as to have made that honey which was raw juice in the flowers it drew it from."[2]

1 Letters of Robert Southey, A Selection, pp.59-60.
2 Quoted by Southey in Quarterly Review, vol.XII, 1815, pp.83-84.

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Because he respects the beauty of English, he contemns the vilifying of it by bombastic or affected style -- or is it because something imbedded in his nature, by the slow instilling of Stoic doctrine, cries out against immoderation? For Southey, first and foremost, is a moral critic, and the moral part of him continually dominates the critical. Perhaps he expected that posterity would elevate him to poetic greatness by the same formula that he applied to Burns -- a moral, and therefore a truly great, poet. His prophecy that, one day, his memory would "smell sweet and blossom in the dust", has scarcely been fulfilled. But if his poetry, perhaps unjustly, has been neglected, his criticism has suffered even more, and the reason of such oversight is plain enough. Southey formulated no principles of criticism, he referred too much to his system of morals, and he looked with cordial contempt on the idea of criticism itself. The little hate of which he was capable he expended on the English critics, whom he believed the most stupid and the most pretentious in Europe. "Le rôle d'un auteur," he quoted from Diderot, "est un rôle assez vain: c'est celui d'un homme qui se croit en etat de donner des leçons au public. Et le rôle du critique? Il est plus vain encore; c'est celui d'un homme qui se croit en etat de donner des leçons à celui qui se croit en etat d'en donner au public. L'auteur dit, Messieurs, écoutez-moi, car je suis votre maitre. Et le critique, C'est moi, Messieurs, qu'il faut écouter, car je suis le maitre de vos maitres."[1] Those

1 The Doctor, &, vol.IV, p.381.

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who voice their judgments loudest are the small critics, inflating their ego by showing their superiority to the insignificant works they believe to be important. "Like town ducks they dabble in the gutter, but never purify themselves in clear streams, nor take to the deep waters."[1] He has no cavil with the honest, equitable critics, who pre-judge nothing and who give their sentence, without reference to persons, on the merits of the case. But these are all too few, and their honest voices are stilled by the loud mouthings of "the aspirants and wranglers at the bar, the dribblers and the spitfires, ...The puppies who bite for the pleasure which they feel in exercising their teeth, and the dogs whose gratification consists in their knowledge of the pain and injury that they inflict; -- the creepers of literature, who suck their food like the ivy from what they strangulate and kill; they who have a party to serve or an opponent to run down; what opinion will they pronounce in their utter ignorance of the author? They cannot play without a bias in their bowls! -- Aye, there's the rub!"[2]

It was Southey's conviction that "bad poets become malevolent critics, just as weak wine turns to vinegar," that those who fail at creating, turn, with a craving for reputation and a desire to deprecate others, to criticism and find there a congenial calling.[3] But Southey had faith in his gifts as a poet, and trusting in his creative powers, he could dismiss,

1 Ibid., vol.VII, p.135.
2 Ibid., vol.III, pp.5-6.
3 Lives of the Uneducated Poets, p.165.

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with indifference, the work of his critical faculties. His criticism, of course, is the worse for this contempt, but, remembering the state of reviewing in the days of Keats and the young Tennyson, one can sympathize with his attitude and appreciate this just return: "Away the dogs go, whining here, sniffing there, nosing in this place, pricking their ears in that, and now full-mouthed upon a false scent, -- and now again, all at fault."[1]

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1 The Doctor, &, vol.III, p.11.

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X. CONCLUSION

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CONCLUSION

After reading a representative selection of Southey's work, one is impressed most of all by its variety and amplitude. Quality, however, is not proportionate to the amount of his writing, a fact especially true of his prose. This discrepancy between merit and productivity is explained by Southey's peculiar attitude toward literary composition. He wrote as other men would talk, expressed where others would consider and plan. Too articulate for his own good, he allowed every thought that registered on his mind to reproduce itself on paper, and since words became to him a stock in trade, a matter of pounds and guineas, he never learned "the last and greatest art, the art to blot".

Nevertheless, Southey's prose reveals that his mind had a definite scholarly bent, and even though he failed to give direction to his intellectual curiosity, even though he loved the fact for the fact's sake, his pages usually offer interest if not profit. In stating opinion, he was inclined toward bigotry, and no doubt the rigidity of his prejudice is the most unattractive part of his literary personality. But there was complete honesty of principle in Southey, whatever those principles may have been. He never worked for an ulterior purpose, and there are no arrière-pensées in his preconceptions. He wrote what he actually believed was true, and his mind was too positive to doubt its own convictions. As a sincere reactionary, he upheld the status quo, crusading against democracy

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and Catholicism, insisting that other men follow his code of conduct, giving no ear to the adversary because he honestly believed that his way was the only true and just one. There is nothing to be said for his provincialism, but much for his integrity.

Southey's prose is good in its parts, but weak as a whole. His style -- if the word may be restricted to apply to the phrasing of sentences and building of paragraphs -- is lucid, graceful, and picturesque; but his form, slipshod and ill-considered, demonstrates the same inability to relate and shape that has been noticed in his treatment of facts. In his poetry the case is different. The restraints of verse were beneficial to Southey, for the limits set by meter forced him to practise a verbal economy that was not a part of his native endowment. This is not to say that his poetry is concise; any reader of his epics would justly object to such a statement. But Roderick and Madoc are certainly less prolix than The History of the Peninsular War and The Doctor, &. It is in a larger sense, however, that Southey achieves a signal success of form in his verse. What he desired most of all in his poetry was theatrical effect, and he knew that such effect was to be gained only through shrewd calculation, through careful weighing of the part in its relation to the whole, to the final impression the reader was to receive. The greatest aesthetic merit of the epics is their scheme of action, and Southey may truthfully be called a master of narrative construction.

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His verse fails where his prose succeeds -- in the choice of word and phrase. Whole stretches of his poetry consist of nothing more than verbal formulas worn so smooth that they slide unnoted past the mind, similes so tattered that they move the reader to pity rather than to praise. Here Southey proves most conclusively that he is not a poet of the first order, for his very medium of expression lacks both beauty and distinction. In prose he has a style; in poetry, for the most part, only a memory.

What accounts for this startling variance? The answer to that question is not difficult to find. In his own heart he knew that he was not a poet, in spite of hoping against hope that his verse would live. His reason for considering himself a better historian is significant: he asserted that, whereas the reading of other chroniclers gave him self-assurance, the perusal of other poets humbled him. It must be remembered too that he composed verse based upon a scholar's research rather than an artist's inspiration. He knew that he was not a poet, however fine a story-teller he might be, and so his feeling of inferiority, suppressed though it was, moved him to rely upon the signs and symbols of expression, the words and phrases that certainly were not prose and therefore might be construed as poetry, equipment that had served others well and therefore might serve him.

The same recognition of his primary defect accounts, perhaps, for Southey's frequent use of the massive, the awe-

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inspiring, the baroque in poetry. If he could not uncover the beauty of this world, he might reveal the terrors of the supernatural one; if he could not seduce with verse, he might overwhelm with imagination; if he could not delight, he might astound. Thus Southey, by cosmic upheaval, by conquest of heaven, by ruin of hell, tries to take possession of the reader through sheer physical force, -- and he very nearly succeeds.

This quality of Southey's verse naturally leads to the less fruitful consideration of his connection with the Romantic School. His interest in the exotic, in the strange, would seem to place him in a category with Coleridge, Byron, Shelley, and Keats, but Southey's use of the unfamiliar differs from theirs in intensity. Where they attempt to enchant, he tries to awe; and his love of remoteness is less an escape from reality than from poetry, less a matter of temperament than of practical necessity. Moreover, the development of his mind was from the distant to the local, from the dreams of the past to the problems of the present, from the vague fantasy of Kehama to the grim reality of Catholic Emancipation. The same trend is followed by the other romantic aspects of his youthful mind. His early trust in nature diminishes as he grows older, and is replaced by religion and the Anglican Church as the best spiritual guide for men. Likewise, his fondness for the supernatural is exchanged for interest in such realistic matters as the condition of the poor, and in his later life, as A Tale of Paraguay proves, he comes to distrust the emotionalism

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that so attracted him in his youth. In short, romanticism was a matter of his younger years, and even then the cardinal point of his nature, love of the bizarre, the startling, was something other than romantic.

It is in his zeal for reformation that Southey is most in harmony with his times. But even here a distinction must be noted. As eager as he was to better the lot of man, he opposed the reorganization of society on the ideals of freedom and equality. His whole aim was to ignore the French Revolution and all it implied, to effect social amelioration within the traditional state of things. This humanitarianism emanating from vested authority and directed downward through the social levels is the benevolent rationalism of the eighteenth century, of Frederick the Great and Voltaire. The characteristic currents of thought that distinguish the nineteenth century met with Southey's resistance, not his approval. The spirit of freedom springing from Robespierre and Saint-Just only repelled him. He saw no implications in the rise of science and its inevitable clash with religion, and he missed entirely the objective approach to reality that the new scientific spirit encouraged. Skepticism was foreign to his understanding, and unlike Tennyson he never submitted his belief in immortality and the prevalence of good to the test of doubt.

New ideas troubled him, and he would have been happier if he had been born a hundred years earlier. But although he would have found the eighteenth-century tradition of polite

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learning congenial to his nature, he would not have cut a better figure as a literary man. Southey lacked the sharpness of mind, the incisively critical attitude that, in Swift, Voltaire, and Lessing, is the best product of that age. Seldom, for instance, does he turn criticism on himself or try to understand his own temperament. In this respect and in many others he contrasts with another forgotten man of the eighteenth century, Georg Christoph Lichtenberg, a little German hunchback who wrote aphorisms and satirical essays, and lived in London as the protégé of George III. Both Southey and Lichtenberg have gone to oblivion, but for different and enlightening reasons. Lichtenberg, over-concise, wrote complex thoughts in epigrams; Southey, over-expansive, expressed simple ones in epics. Southey, wanting intellectual originality, resisted change; Lichtenberg's acuity anticipated it. The Englishman never looked into himself, but the German looked too deep, at a time when he could not profit by the fuller knowledge of the modern psychology of which he is a precursor. The one was greedy for fame, the other was skeptical of his right to exist. "If God," he said, "should ever choose to put out a second edition of my life, I should have a great many valuable suggestions to offer, with regard chiefly to the frontispiece and the style of the whole."[1] Neither Southey's works not Lichtenberg's will ever become popular fare, for in the one there is too much broth for the meat, in the other too

1 Georg Christoph Lichtenberg, Gedanken, Satiren, Fragmente, ed. by Wilhelm Herzog, Jena, 1907, vol.I, p.24.

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much meat for the broth.

But both men have integrity, and here is Southey's strongest point. He was honest, and willing to die in the last ditch before he saw the destruction of his ideals. This force of character gives sincerity and dignity to his work and relieves to some extent its flatness. Ease of expression was his worst enemy. Too uncritical to write little, he drowned his merit in the flood of his own output, and if the good could be extracted from the surrounding mediocrity of his work, if only the last pages of Madoc survived, if Ereenia's ascent to Seeva were a fragment, if Nelson consisted only of its final chapter, if The Doctor,& were a one-volume work instead of a seven-, Southey would never have been forgotten. He had a Pegasus of modest strength, but he rode it into a hack.

The fact remains, of course, that Southey, however ill he deserves the contempt given him, is not a first-rate poet. But even those to whom he can offer little for aesthetic appreciation or intellectual consideration may find in him an interesting example of the pathology of the mediocre literary man. In this respect he represents the vast body of those who move in the entourage of genius, of those who write for no very good reason except that they want to write. They present a legitimate problem to the investigator of the literary mind, and may even serve to explain what is genius by indicating all too clearly what is not.

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