

Coleridge and ‘the general taste for unconnected writing’

This article explores various literary, social and political implications of Coleridge’s admiration of late sixteenth- and seventeenth-century English prose style in the first two decades of the nineteenth century, at which time he detected ‘a passion for the unconnected’ in contemporary writing. In *The Friend*, Coleridge conceived syntactical connection as a hallmark of good method and rigorous thinking – qualities he believed to be in short supply in the political imagination around 1810. During the Napoleonic Wars, he hoped the structure as well as the content of his periodical would encourage unity and rejuvenate public taste by protecting it from the insidious effects of a fragmentary style which he perceived to be French in origin. He extended this aspiration to Wordsworth’s *Cintra* pamphlet. The emphasis which Edmund Burke placed on the relationship between syntax and the social contract in his denunciation of Richard Price provided a model for Coleridge’s interest in joined-up thinking as a sign of a healthy Constitution and also contributed to his misgivings about the style of Addison’s *Spectator*. For Coleridge, it was the syntactical order underlying long or complex sentences – as found in *The Friend* and *Cintra* in the former instance and Thomas Browne in the latter – which best announced a socio-political, religious or poetic vision capable of looking beyond itself. The same conviction informed Coleridge’s defence of exuberance in his Shakespeare criticism, which safeguarded his own digressive practice whilst consolidating his faith in a prose style loyal first to the rectitude of its own ambitions rather than to the universal requirement to be obvious.

I. ‘a brain with a twist’

In 1808, Samuel Taylor Coleridge adopted a short-lived annotatory scheme in the margins of an edition of Sir Thomas Browne to designate passages which struck him as either brilliant or sublime, or as inaccurate factually or philosophically. The following sentence from the third edition of the *Pseudodoxia Epidemica* (1658) concerning God’s ‘omniscience and essential ubiquity’ was marked by him to signify ‘*majesty* of Conception or Style’:

Who as he created all things, so is he beyond and in them all, not only in power, as under his subjection, or in his presence, as being in his cognition, but in his very Essence, as being the soul of their causalities, and the essential cause of their existencies.ⁱ

The eight commas break the line into a sequence of natural syntactic members which can be visualized and numbered as follows: (1.) Who as he created all things, (2.) so is he beyond and in them all, (3.) not only in power, (4.) as under his subjection, (5.) or in his presence, (6.) as being in his cognition, (7.) but in his very Essence, (8.) as being the soul of their causalities, (9.) and the essential cause of their existencies.

Configuring the sentence like this promotes the emergence of patterns of symmetry which order layers of intricate hypotaxis. The subordinating conjunction ‘as’ is threaded through units 1, 4, 6 and 8, introducing in every case a dependent component which necessarily modifies the preceding phrase in all but the initial inverted instance. Browne could have straightforwardly avoided this opening construction, had he wished, with the more obvious and less powerful formulation: ‘He is beyond and in all things which he created’. That he elected not to do so prevents creation itself from being grammatically taken for granted. More substantially, it augments rhetorical emphasis on the theological point that although knowledge of God is predicated on the act of creation, God’s own existence is not. The pre-eminence of unit 1 at the head of the sentence is not to be mistaken as the basis for the divine primacy which underpins it.

The placement of subordinate conjunctions establishes a host of dependencies: unit 1, though privileged positionally, cedes to unit 2 semantically, forming one assemblage; unit 4 qualifies unit 3 in another pair; 6 qualifies 5 in a further set; and 8 qualifies 7. The coordinating conjunction ‘and’ in unit 9 continues the dependent relation activated by ‘as’ in unit 8, and thus 7, 8 and 9 make up the final cluster. Within these four groupings (1-2; 3-4; 5-6; 7-8-9), precedence is given to units 2, 3, 5, and 7, each of which outlines one aspect of God’s triune personality: his omnipotence (3. ‘power’), omnipresence (5. ‘presence’), and ‘omniscience’ (2. ‘beyond and in them all’; 7. ‘Essence’). These units all commence with another conjunction, either coordinating (‘so’, ‘or’) or correlative (‘not only’...‘but’),

building interdependencies extending beyond any single group and, consequently, an inter-relationship of the deific features which together characterize God. Thus, whilst units 3 and 4 constitute a cohesive pair, unit 3 is connected to unit 2 in a regulatory capacity and also initiates a grammatical relation which is only satisfied later on in unit 7, bringing omnipotence into conjunction with omniscience. Units 3 through 7 cannot therefore be reordered without disabling the structure of the whole sentence. Indeed, although it would be syntactically possible to jump straight from unit 2 to 8, or 3 to 7, amending or leaving out the intervening units of parenthetical insertion, this would be detrimental to the cumulative strength of the sentence as actually experienced in its protraction. The loss would be especially acute because the subject of units 4 and 6 is ‘all things’ – creation itself – whereas the subject of the remaining units is God. Shifting the subject within the same form enables Browne to replicate the idea that God is the cause of ‘all things’ both ‘beyond’ them and ‘in’ them.²

Rearranging the period reveals the extent to which its syntax is very precisely implicated in its might: (1.) Who as he created all things, (2.) so is he beyond and in them all, (7.) in his very Essence, (8.) as being the soul of their causalities, (9.) and the essential cause of their existencies, [(3.) not only in power, (4.) as under his subjection, (5.) or in his presence, (6.) as being in his cognition]. If units 3 through 6 are tacked on at the end, the sentence tails off; if they are deleted altogether, the elucidation of the triune God is abandoned. In both cases, God’s ‘very Essence’ is sacrificed to its surroundings; it no longer holds the same status. Browne’s structure is the only one in which syntax and God are in vital alliance. In Browne’s version, all units from 3 onward enumerate the contents of units 1 and 2 – the ways in which God-as-creator is ‘beyond and in’ creation – with units 4, 6, 8 and 9 additionally qualifying some aspect of sempiternal individuality outlined in units 3, 5 and 7. The distinction attained by unit 7 is conditional on its separation from unit 3, upon which it

grammatically relies. Unit 7 is postponed by the interpolation of three other units (4, 5 and 6) before God's 'very Essence' is shown to be responsible for, though not contingent on, creation. Browne illustrates this doctrine within a deliberately circular architecture as the triumph of technical difficulty overcome: proliferating members are resolved back into the omniscience with which the sentence started. God's tripartite being is unified in a divine chiasmus extending across units 7, 8 and 9 marrying causality and existence, essence and 'essential cause'.

Repeatedly alternating modulations of the voice permit the reader to adjudicate most easily between the elements of the sentence which stand in vertical arrangement and those which stand in horizontal. Whilst some units are held in apposition (3, 5, 7), others subtend (4, 6, 8, 9). This recurring effect produces a very specific series of sound commands. Browne's sentence is designedly mellifluous; its timbre disintegrates if the units are reshuffled. The reader is obliged to stress the words 'power' (3), 'presence' (5), and 'Essence' (7) in a vocal effort to navigate the reticulated composition of the sentence and catalogue with sonic force this strata of units as bearing an identical share of God's originality. The accumulating sequence of members generates qualitatively discrete relations which have to be retained together and determined in the mind and ear in the process of reading. Eloquence, as well as punctuation, is tasked to clarify the axis of a hierarchy which makes sense both linguistically and theologically. The reader is entrusted with this analytical and elocutionary work of discovery. Browne's prose benefits from being read aloud, and this sentence is a good example, because its pitch encodes an aspect of a divine order envisaged within the syntactical organisation of its parts. It is the intricacy of that order which Coleridge responded to with admiration when he judged the passage to possess '*majesty of Conception or Style*'.³

Integral to Coleridge's verdict is Browne's distribution of subordinate units which orchestrates the central conceit at work, and without which the spiritual and the syntactical would not be congruent. These correspondences between style and content affect the grain of the prose in the *Pseudodoxia*, lending it the familiarities of speech, though it is a meticulously contrived freedom. The density of the line is simultaneously offset by the deftness with which it is conveyed. In the first place, the dependencies amplify the struggle of comprehension, yet the oscillations in verbal texture which they produce seem to indicate the manoeuvrings of a flexible and enquiring spirit – 'a brain with a twist', as Coleridge put it – rather than a declarative or intolerant one (*LL* II. 234). This seems especially felicitous for a book motivated by the unthinking presumptions behind truth claims, strenuous in method but not in meaning, and acts to preserve the disinterested integrity of Browne's last injunction in his address 'To the Reader': 'we are not Magisterial in opinions, nor have we Dictator-like obtruded our conceptions'.⁴ Such hard-won discursiveness underpins the enduring critical perception that Browne's writing encapsulates 'an actual meditation in process',⁵ his tone imitating 'the movement of the enumerating and discovering mind' rather than a mind made up.⁶ It is as though a particularly conciliating temperament is being brought to bear on the material through a concessionary kind of syntax which specializes in self-critique, anticipation and deference. The device enables Browne graciously to recognize that rational investigation into the nature of God or into the transmission of specious facts does not admit of total knowledge, even as the omni-directional aspirations of his sub-clauses impart predictive and contrapuntal power to his utterances. In this case, committed to substantiating God's being in its entirety, Browne's plenitude allows him a slim share of the omniscience which he abjures, delicately poised between Christian self-effacement and all-encompassing divinity. It is as if God decided to punctuate a sentence about himself.

When Coleridge lent this edition of Browne's works to Sara Hutchinson in March 1804, four years before he drew up his system of appraising hieroglyphs, it was Browne's capaciousness which he entreated her to 'wonder at', this time singling out the *Hydriotaphia* as exemplary of Browne's 'entireness in every subject' (CM I. 763). This 'entireness' can be gauged by a form of parallelism that appears only rarely in the treatise, but which does so at moments disrupting the flow of the historical narrative with an altogether different resonance, at once personal yet impartial. It is most evident in sections of the *Hydriotaphia* which Coleridge read very carefully when the volume was back in his possession in 1808, deduced from the circumstance that several passages closely surrounding the following excerpts are marked with pencil in the margin (CM I. 790-1):⁷

Though the Funerall pyre of *Patroclus* took up an hundred foot, a piece of an old boat burnt *Pompey*; And if the burthen of *Isaac* were sufficient for an holocaust, a man may carry his owne pyre.

To burn the bones of the King of *Edom* for Lyme, seems no irrationall ferity; But to drink of the ashes of dead relations, a passionate prodigality.

Urnnall enterrments, and burnt reliques lye not in fear of worms, or to be an heritage for Serpents; In carnall sepulture, corruptions seem peculiar unto parts, and some speak of snakes out of the spinall marrow.

There is no antidote against the *Opium* of time, which temporally considereth all things; Our Fathers find their graves in our short memories, and sadly tell us how we may be buried in our Survivors.⁸

Although semicolons proliferate throughout this edition of the *Hydriotaphia*, notably fashioning sentences of prodigious length, very few function as medial caesurae which break the period in half, creating a symmetry of commas in each hemistich, as in the above four

cases. This highly stylized prose, which is not consistently punctuated across early editions of Browne's works and which might not be of his own making, occurs at points in the text when the ethnographic account of burial practices gives way to a fundamental concern about the human condition.⁹ At these junctures, Browne's exposition of common truth is recorded in the punctuation as a plangent alteration of pace and pattern. The semicolons provide structural equanimity for a vision of reality which is itself well-balanced. In the first example, where the topic of cremation unifies various stories in *The Iliad*, Plutarch's *Lives* and the Old Testament, the conjunction of accounts is such that the apodosis carries far greater weight than if it appeared alone as a sentiment of purely practical expediency: 'a man may carry his owne pyre'. From the semicolon it can be inferred that the fate of Patroclus – who wore Achilles' armour in his advance against the Trojans – and 'a man' is co-ordinate; so too is their worth. The punctuation holds their trajectories in a strictly analogous relation. What Browne proceeds to say overtly about how 'A small fire sufficeth for life' whereas 'great flames seemed too little after death, while men vainly affected precious pyres' is anticipated here, felicitously or on purpose, as a virtue in the construction of the prose.¹⁰ These illustrations countenance an idiom to synthesize the collective funerary and memorial customs of myth, history, hearsay and painfully individual experience which exposes the frailty of the human form and the folly of worldly ambition. It is an attitude galvanized by the correlative pressures of the semicolons, which appear calibrated with the spiritual equilibrium of a man whose faith gave him 'an handsome anticipation of heaven'.

Though the subtitle announces it as *A Discourse of the Sepulchrall Urnes lately found in Norfolk*, the *Hydriotaphia* rises in parts to be a transhistorical reflection on humanity and eternity which, in places, finds a mode of expressiveness adequate to what Browne called 'the Metaphysics of true belief', in which the composure of the syntax stands as an earnest with God in place of 'lasting Monuments' and other 'irregularities of vain-glory'. The serene logic

of these sentences figures death with a philosophical recognition which is its own benison, and which ‘trampleth upon pride’ whether or not ‘noble believers’ continue to observe in its perpetuity the intimate shape of God’s assurance.¹¹ These lines gain readers’ assent not because their authority is doctrinally secure but because it is sincere and equal to its matter, as Coleridge himself exuberantly perceived in commending the work to Sara Hutchinson: ‘how *earthy*, how redolent of Graves & Sepulchres is every Line!’ (CM I. 763-4). Properties of the punctuation in Coleridge’s edition of the *Hydriotaphia* fully justify his appreciation, for it is there that the desire to live forever is most compassionately addressed, rather than in Browne’s formal declarations of piety. Whilst his forbearance was almost certainly derived from the conviction that life is simply a pause, a transient state to be endured in any nature whatsoever – ‘Ready to be any thing, in the extasie of being ever’ – it is unnecessary to share Browne’s devotion to grasp that his confrontation with mortality is not evasive. On the contrary, reticence is here an appropriate manner of resilience; his reserve is plotted into the cyclical profile of sentences which map the contours of the natural order with surpassing grace and modesty, whether or not the semicolons are in fact the arbiters of Browne’s religiosity. To the extent that they *are* the insignia of that ‘magnanimous resolution’, they suspend all human experience as broadly equivalent, gesture at Browne’s misgivings about fame and the impermanence of ‘carnall sepulture’, and touch on his faith in ‘Christian annihilation’ to confound the shortcomings of memory and the original serpent in ‘the spinall marrow’.¹²

II. ‘the *relations* of things’

The strengths of Browne’s sentences exhibited a criterion for good writing which Coleridge elaborated in *The Friend*. What Coleridge expected from ‘works, the object of which is to make us better acquainted with our own nature’, was the author’s demonstration

to ‘have *added* either to the stock of our knowledge, or to the vigour of our intellect’.¹³ The multiple interactions of Browne’s clauses satisfied the requirement to be vigorous because of the taxing inducement to trace and resolve the connective threads of his discourse. Coleridge believed this mental application profoundly worthwhile. In *The Friend*, he forthrightly reminded readers that ‘Attention and Thought are Efforts, and the latter a most difficult and laborious Effort’. This was a tenet instilled in him through his saturation in late sixteenth- and seventeenth-century prose, whose value he considered to have been vitiated by what he denigrated as ‘the mere excitement of curiosity and sensibility’ linked to ‘habitual novel reading’ (CF I. 17, 20).¹⁴ In the assemblage of Browne’s periods can be identified Coleridge’s crucial principle of method, which distinguished the ‘superior mind’ as one cognizant of the merits of the selective ‘*arrangement*’ of words and not one steered associatively by the accident of ‘events and images’. Although Browne offered a more complicated example than most, his writing ‘evolved by an organic inner principle’, which is what fundamentally attracted him to Coleridge.¹⁵ It was this sense of internal cohesion or ‘*arrangement*’, rather than syntactical complexity *per se*, which Coleridge aspired to emulate in *The Friend* and which he located in Wordsworth’s prose. For him, the discriminating thinker was in the ‘habit of foreseeing, in each integral part, or (more plainly) in every sentence, the whole that he then intends to communicate’. Such emphasis on syntactical relationships proofed a co-ordinate intelligence, confident enough in its machinations not to get lost or dispersed amongst materials in a final display of the coherence requisite for genuine competence (CF I. 448-9, 451).

However, the committed assurance of Browne’s style is not exclusively a function of verbal ‘*arrangement*’. It is when his punctuation is proportionate to desire, at those times his subject appears to have taken him beyond the scope of rational enquiry, that Browne ‘*added...to the stock of our knowledge*’. In the *Hydriotaphia*, this desire was the product of

an innate faith which may have conditioned the repose of several sentences about death, taking on meaning it otherwise served to structure, and which is nowhere more candidly educated. Browne's dedication to 'the Metaphysics of true belief' offers one approach to gauge how his apprehension of the mysteries of being and knowing registers in the minutiae of his syntax as part of 'a theology of language'. With this phrase, Geoffrey Hill has proposed an examination into the claim 'that the shock of semantic recognition must be also a shock of ethical recognition; and that this is the action of grace in one of its minor, but far from trivial, types'.¹⁶ Another route into appraising the ethics of Browne's punctuation which is consonant with 'the Metaphysics of true belief' comes from Coleridge's notes to a lecture he gave in 1818, during which he succinctly defined the most valuable part of 'the act of thinking' as 'internal causality' or 'the energy of the will on the mind itself' (*LL II*. 194).

This force of critical determinacy was a hallmark of Coleridge's transcendental epistemology in the *Biographia Literaria*, where the will was assigned 'distinct powers' to 'control, determine, and modify' the mind's store of concrete perceptions. Volition was conceived as the dynamic agent of intellectual potentiality which 'by confining and intensifying the attention may arbitrarily give vividness or distinctness to any object whatsoever'.¹⁷ '[A]rbitrarily' has significant clout here: it decrees that no experience is too negligible to be transformed by the will whilst concurrently implying that the author cannot retrospectively account for the sum of creative operations set in motion by its free activity. The will's departures should unearth the unlooked-for, turning up originality in unexpected ways. Coleridge thus protects surprize as a gratifying element of invention, a blessing which complements Hill's notion of 'grace' reaching across the semantic-ethical plane. The reciprocal interaction of the will with its resources aims to achieve a fusion of artistic content with the imprint of its own likeness which, in triumphs of vitality, appears to have been assiduously engineered and yet could not have been completely anticipated. It is a kind of

creativity all the more genuine for not being entirely manufactured. In this instance, Browne's semicolons seem volatilized by the energetic impulse of his faith and have been transfigured into the smallest particles of imaginative consciousness as the residue of 'true belief'.

Coleridge was sympathetic to the bonding of punctuation and 'true belief'. In another lecture of 1818, 'On Style', he talked explicitly about the relationship between 'accuracy of style' and 'veracity and truthful habits of mind', conjecturing that there was some 'moral inconvenience' attached to the circumstance that 'he who thinks loosely will write loosely' (*LL II. 236*).¹⁸ The ethical shortcomings of vagueness had preoccupied Coleridge for many years. In a notebook entry of December 1803, he worried over the 'strange Illogicality of many even of our principal writers', denigrating 'our Crumbly friable Stile' as symptomatic of a society retreating from 'the *relations* of things' by returning to 'Proverbs & Apologues'.¹⁹ Coleridge deemed the French 'the beginners of this Style' and felt aggrieved by the deleterious effect that their 'multitude of Maxims' were allegedly having on a once natively rich and effusive English literature, exemplified for him by writers such as Bacon, Browne, Milton, Richard Hooker and Jeremy Taylor, and now threatened by a fragmentary foreign prose.²⁰ This vision had deep political repercussions. Shortly after hostilities resumed between England and France following the breakdown of the Treaty of Amiens in May 1803, Coleridge thought he detected signs of authoritarian thinking in the unilateral *tempo* of disjointed sentences. His patriotism held firm. In *The Friend*, 'French moulds' were again invoked as the progenitors of 'short and unconnected sentences' in whose limpidity Coleridge ostensibly heard the voice of indoctrination, not inclusivity;²¹ to him, they posed as cheerily incorporative but lacked 'the cement of thought' appropriate to enlightened assessment, which Coleridge understood as an 'intrinsic excellence' of the possible relations entertained in late sixteenth- and seventeenth-century English prose style (*CF I. 20*).²²

In an issue on the liberty of the press which first appeared in 1809, Coleridge discussed the motive of the State to regulate artistic property in terms of ‘the relation which the facts bear to its (the State’s) own instinctive principle of self-preservation’. He quoted from James Harrington’s *System of Politics* – with words originally applied to religious toleration – to defend literature from undue censure: “If it be said that in France there is liberty of conscience in part, it is also plain that while the hierarchy is standing, this liberty is falling” (*CF* II. 57-8). It is striking that Coleridge should have cited Harrington in this context, for whom French ‘hierarchy’ denoted the absolute monarchism of Louis XIV and not the constitutional monarchism of the Emperor Napoleon. Although the system of French government underwent radical change between the middle of the seventeenth century and the beginning of the nineteenth, Harrington and Coleridge were united in regarding ‘intire Liberty’ and not ‘Liberty by halves’ as the prerogative of real democracy.²³ Coleridge’s answer in *The Friend* to diminished expressiveness was to lay special emphasis on ‘the *relations* of things’, both as a cynosure of honest methodical procedure and as a sign of a healthy Constitution amenable to reform (*CF* I. 451).

Relationality was adduced as a verifying power of articulation by which the intellectual capacity of citizens and the pliability of the State could be measured. In the 1790s, Coleridge had been excited by the philological work of John Horne Tooke for precisely this reason. In *The Diversions of Purley*, the study of etymology was harnessed for radical politics since the practice of desynonymization was considered to have the power to challenge the government’s delimitation of the meaning of words. On this account too, puns and poetry were especially popular and important for the radical cause because they championed abundance and ambiguity over single-mindedness and literalism.²⁴ Dissenting interests were served by a linguistic theory which, according to H.J. Jackson, ‘held out the promise of a simple and comprehensive system of knowledge which could lead to social

reform'.²⁵ In later life, and despite the fact that by 1810 Coleridge had become disillusioned with the teachings of Horne Tooke, the practice of desynonymization remained important to him in other philosophical, literary and personal ways, as the final section of this article explores. Indeed, it informed his Shakespeare criticism and helped him to yoke together ideas without images or objects, thus bolstering Coleridge's anti-materialist conception of free will given that, as James C. McKusick put it, 'linguistic choice always entails moral choice' for Coleridge.²⁶

Moreover, relationality was a principle Coleridge pressed into poetic as well as socio-political service since it wholly informed his criticism of Wordsworth's avowed plainness in *Lyrical Ballads*. The ability to communicate was socially determined, Coleridge argued in the *Biographia*, so that whilst the 'rustic' was limited to conveying '*insulated facts*', the 'wise man' sought 'to discover and express those *connections* of things, or those relative *bearings* of fact to fact' in the hope of locating their 'indwelling *law*'. For this reason, Wordsworth's adoption of ordinary language was disingenuous because the magnitude of his most profound formulations was really only increased by their deceptive simplicity, ensuring that his 'homeliest composition differs from that of a common peasant' (*BL* II. 52-3, 56).²⁷ 'Our bodies feel' (l. 19), for example, drawn from the poem 'Expostulation and Reply', is an intransitive collocation intuiting an unexpected receptivity for coming to know the world, and whose permissive open-endedness ('feel *what*, exactly?') nicely avoided the pithy grandiosity Coleridge found objectionable in aphorism.²⁸

Whilst Wordsworth sometimes channelled a tone of unassuming perspicacity, especially in sensing the indeterminate, his brevity was not a typical feature of Coleridgean practice. In his periodical, Coleridge endeavoured to use this shortcoming to his advantage to mitigate the contemporary epigrammatic taste responsible for converting 'a popular Book' into a 'mere bag of marbles' (*CL* III. 234). To him, this development signalled a capitulation

to ‘*insulated facts*’, which in 1810 was indicative of a nation collectively oblivious to the impoverished state of its literary and political imaginings. ‘Have you read the Debate on the Address?’ Coleridge asked Thomas Poole in January that year, ‘What a melancholy picture of the intellectual feebleness of this Country!’ (CL III. 281). His contempt in *The Friend* for what he conceived as the ‘fashionable *Anglo-gallican* taste’ and ‘deplorable imbecility’ to which clichés and novels reduced the public understanding should not be ascribed to elitism (CF I. 21). Rather, it was a rebuke to the enervating passivity which Coleridge saw as an obstacle to envisioning a society founded on ethical and rational principles. As such, it was a petition for freedom.

III. ‘a passion for the unconnected’

For ‘an eloquence worthy of the Subject’ (CF II. 108), Coleridge steered readers of *The Friend* in 1809 to Wordsworth’s impassioned pamphlet *Concerning...the Convention of Cintra* in which, as he told Daniel Stewart, ‘such depth of Feeling is so incorporated with depth of Thought’ (CL III. 214). ‘[I]ncorporated’ was shrewdly chosen by Coleridge to suggest that the value of the tract lay in its synthesis of political principle with ‘the energy of the will on the mind itself’, making it exemplary of the committed argumentation he thought lacking in civic discussion. However, this was a mixed blessing. In polemical mode, Wordsworth was at his most exhortative and least brief, so that whilst a select few could follow ‘the chain of his Thoughts & the movements of his heart’, Coleridge anticipated that the ‘often alarmingly long’ sentences would pose problems to ‘the understandings of common readers’ (CL III. 214).²⁹ It was a vexing matter. The political imagination of the majority urgently wanted rejuvenating – having been made ‘effeminate’, Coleridge declared, by ‘the unremitted Action of great outward Events daily solliciting & daily gratifying the

appetite of Curiosity’ – but Wordsworth’s approach risked widespread confusion (CL III. 217).

Wordsworth tried to circumvent this by writing ‘according to the light of my conscience’, as he stated in the Advertisement to *Cintra*, persuaded that the unrestrained intensity of his political ardour would incite readers to share his decent indignation at the peace reached in 1808 between the English Generals and French forces in Portugal. His rhetoric was purposefully designed to challenge Napoleon’s dominance where it was purportedly most robust, ‘in the imaginations of men’. The submission of Sir Hew Dalrymple and Sir Arthur Wellesley to a truce outraged Wordsworth not because it presaged military failure – given the successful intervention of the British expeditionary force in the Peninsula – but because it epitomized ‘an utter want of *intellectual* courage’.³⁰ This was the quality Wordsworth was at pains to restore in *Cintra* and which his sentences were designed to stimulate through their commanding length.

Coleridge clearly understood this. He asked Poole to ‘only *try* to conceive’ Milton’s tracts or the superlative parts of *Cintra* ‘translated into the style of the Spectator’ (CL III. 281). The implication is that by 1810 Coleridge considered the immediacy of Addison’s prose as an inert form which had ‘*done* it’s work’ (CL III. 279). In the tenth issue of *The Spectator* from 1711, Addison announced his plans to recover the public mind from ‘that desperate State of Vice and Folly into which the Age is fallen’.³¹ This should dampen assent to Coleridge’s protestations to the contrary that *The Friend* and *The Spectator* had ‘very different Objects’ (CL III. 281). It is true that Addison’s paper was consistently more light-hearted; nonetheless, he judged it capable of reforming the age in 1711-1712, whereas a century later Coleridge reckoned it responsible for producing ‘a passion for the unconnected in the minds of Englishmen’ (CL III. 279). It was as much a discrepancy over style as over content which led Coleridge to see his own periodical as ‘very different’. A hundred years

before Coleridge, Addison too noted that the ‘general Taste in *England* is for Epigram, turns of Wit, and forced Conceits’, which he likewise endeavoured ‘to banish’.³² Coleridge, however, thought it was a literary predilection to which *The Spectator* had in fact ‘innocently contributed’ (*CL* III. 281).³³ Both Addison and Coleridge wrote to regenerate the nation, yet by 1810 *The Spectator* was perceived as promoting its degradation with a diet of ‘Reading made easy’ which *The Friend* was determined to end.

Coleridge deemed that the facility with which Addison’s periodical was digested made it incapable of bearing internal witness to ‘AWEFUL TIMES!’ (*CL* III. 281). What was needed was ‘gravity’. This was the quality Coleridge specified in 1818 as common to ‘the principal writers before the Restoration’ and he distinguished in Milton ‘perceptible traces of the sternness of republicanism’ (*LL* II. 234-5). He was reading Milton’s prose in 1808 in Thomas Birch’s 1738 edition. A tendentious annotation from that date debarred the French from appreciating Milton – the poetry, this time – on account of their ‘witty discontinuous Intellect’ (*CM* III. 883). Presumably Coleridge felt that the Latinate syntax and protracted meanderings of Miltonic blank verse required skills in ordering and retention that a nation which had purportedly invented the ‘Crumbly friable Stile’ had not adequately trained. It was the same fracture he identified in Addison’s narratives and which had become acutely troubling to him in the century since *The Spectator* was published. For Coleridge, the expansion of the Continental System in the Iberian Peninsula in 1807 called for syntactical rigour to engineer ‘gravity’ and to stir opprobrium.

Cue *Cintra*. Wordsworth’s ethical campaign for ‘victory in the empire of reason, for strong-holds in the imagination’ was not readily accessible to the credulous, unlike the basis of Napoleon’s appeal, which he contested had ‘neither been acquired nor is sustained by endowments of intellect...rarely bestowed’ (*PW* I. 261, 313). Accordingly, the syntax of *Cintra* fortifies the reader against naïve receptivity. This achievement lies in part with its

composition. *Cintra* was first drafted by Mary Wordsworth ‘from Wordsworth’s dictation’; its outbursts of principled fury are more reminiscent of direct declamatory address than periodical protest essay (*PW I*. 208). The sprawling parentheses chronicle Wordsworth talking out loud, in conversation with himself, engaged in a counterpointing technique Coleridge once referred to approvingly as ‘the *drama* of Reason’. Indeed, Coleridge believed an aversion to parentheses was ‘one of the numberless symptoms of a feeble Frenchified Public’, thus endorsing the texture of *Cintra* in his mind as undauntedly English (*CL III*. 282). Wordsworth was seen as the rightful inheritor of a Miltonic style which possessed the authority to challenge Napoleon. Coleridge even remarked that *Cintra* better suited ‘the oracular [tone] of impassioned Blank Verse’ (*CL III*. 215), as if it was the prosaic equivalent of Miltonic epic – not such a strange suggestion in light of the range of allusion in *Cintra* which cast Napoleon as Satan from *Paradise Lost*.³⁴

Wordsworth trusted in the potency of an expansively candid if convoluted style to defy the ‘narrow’ scope of ‘a Tyrant’s domain of knowledge’ (*PW I*. 298). It is exemplified, together with its rationale, below:

– Riddance, mere riddance – safety, mere safety – are objects far too defined, too inert and passive in their own nature, to have ability either to rouse or to sustain. They win not the mind by any attraction of grandeur or sublime delight, either in effort or in endurance: for the mind gains consciousness of its strength to undergo only by exercise among materials which admit the impression of its power, – which grow under it, which bend under it, – which resist, – which change under its influence, – which alter either through its might or in its presence, by it or before it. (*PW I*. 291)

The hiatuses arising in the composition of the text from oral recitation to manuscript page are transmitted by the dashes as a kind of energized *staccato* which retains the stamp of Wordsworth’s emotive strategizing. ‘[G]row...bend...resist’: the verbs delineate a

programme of cognitive awakening which the punctuation puts into action as a developmental lesson in connection to foster ‘strength to undergo’. The territory Wordsworth fought to regain in *Cintra* was cerebral; much as in *The Friend*, it was acquired through like-minded ‘effort or in endurance’ by contending with ‘the *relations* of things’, which was the same principle informing his positive appraisal of Browne’s more complex prose.

In the spring of 1809, Catherine Clarkson, wife of Thomas Clarkson the abolitionist, recalled the moment she received a copy of *Cintra*: ‘It was given into my hands with these words “It is not english there is no english feeling in it”. I fear this is true but it would have been english 150 years ago & I trust that it will yet be english’.³⁵ In this astute observation Clarkson reconciled her seventeenth-century reading with the ambition that *Cintra* might widely provoke public condemnation. At stake in this judgement was faith in the capacity for prose structure to reinvigorate what Edmund Burke called ‘the moral imagination’, by which he meant to align conscientious governance with an ethical code of conduct embodied in the practice of ‘antient chivalry’.³⁶ Clarkson sensed that a particular type of sentence which flourished before the accession of Charles the Second, once synonymous with ‘english feeling’, had disappeared. She considered its reintroduction desirable at a time of great socio-political instability and knew Wordsworth was dutifully undertaking this work in *Cintra*, though her discrimination equally recalls Coleridge’s proscriptions for the validity of *The Spectator*. These sentiments all invoked syntax as part of the social contract; in doing so they followed the emphasis Burke placed on historical connection, the precedence of established principle, and the scrupulous cultivation of national memory when he tackled Richard Price.

In *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (1790), Burke anticipated that the Revolution would give impetus to a programme of rule which substituted the reformist measures of ‘conservation and correction’ for ‘the decomposition of the whole civil and political mass’. He dreaded the effects of ‘the organic *moleculæ* of a disbanded people’ –

which he watched with increasing horror in France – on the cohesive durability of British constitutional policy.³⁷ Burke advanced this argument against Price's *Discourse on the Love of our Country* (1789) by censuring its disconnected style, thus forging an allegiance between the integrity of 'chivalry' and joined-up thinking. He concluded that Price's disquisition was 'a very extraordinary miscellaneous sermon, in which there are some good moral and religious sentiments...mixed up in a sort of porridge of various political opinions and reflections'.³⁸ Price's 'porridge' was unprincipled in its heterogeneity. Burke detected evidence of a willingness to break with tradition in Price's exploitation of the *non sequitur*.³⁹

It was not so much that Price repeatedly lost himself in details as it was that Burke found the sermon itself mostly off-topic as a religious address. The *Discourse* incited people to immediate political exploits in the name of God. Although on occasion Price acknowledged that 'I am digressing from what I chiefly had in view' and paused to 'add here', what really concerned Burke was that the adulation of the King was declared 'odious' worship more suitable to 'a herd crawling at the feet of a master', whilst the congregation was instructed to 'pour out...blood' in defence of liberty if required.⁴⁰ For Burke, a nonconformist meeting house was the last forum for views which expressed an urge to do away with the *status quo* quickly. Consequently, the *non sequitur* came to typify a recklessly illogical severance with the past which was to be avoided at all costs. Later on in the *Reflections*, Burke again noted warily that the revolutionary fervour of Price and his supporters was maintained by their disjunctive imagination:

A cheap, bloodless reformation, a guiltless liberty, appear flat and vapid to their taste. There must be a great change of scene; there must be a magnificent stage effect; there must be a grand spectacle to rouse the imagination, grown torpid with the lazy enjoyment of sixty years security, and the still unanimating repose of public prosperity.⁴¹

Burke's assessment of the popular cry for 'a great change of scene' which dismissed the old and welcomed the new was informed by his evaluation of Price's topical *non sequitur*. For him, the trope corroborated the extent of Price's prevailing confidence in the unknown to determine the fate of individuals better than the historical forces which shaped surviving institutions.

The above passage from Burke would not have looked amiss in the 'Preface' to *Lyrical Ballads* (1800), in which Wordsworth affirmed that the mind 'is capable of excitement without the application of gross and violent stimulants', though currently reduced 'to a state of almost savage torpor' (*PW* I. 128), or in *Cintra*, where he renewed the call to 'rouze' responsiveness with intellectual 'exercise' to demolish the foundations of Napoleonic authority. This is intriguing. In 1793, the only feeling Burke aroused in Wordsworth was 'indignation' (*PW* I. 48), made plain in the unpublished and vituperative *Letter to the Bishop of Llandaff*. In MS. D revision to *The Prelude* in the 1830s, Wordsworth asked Burke's posthumous forgiveness for having been 'seduced | By specious wonders' (VII. 512-13) as a young man when 'times were big | With ominous change' (VII. 534-5). He painted a retrospective picture of himself as an ardent Price supporter. In reality, this conversion had been germinating for decades as maturity, marriage and events in France bred disillusion with 'abstract rights' (VII. 524) and reverence for 'the vital power of social ties | Endear'd by Custom' (VII. 527-8).⁴² Wordsworth's poetic proposal to revive 'the discriminating powers of the mind' contributed to the cautious protocols of Burkean reform, thus initiating a transition in his political outlook. Both men were suspicious of 'specious wonders' and 'grand spectacle[s]'; the *Lyrical Ballads* and the *Reflections* were united in aiming to allay the 'degrading thirst after outrageous stimulation' (*PW* I. 128-30). Scornful of Wordsworth's long sentences in *Cintra*, one of which 'encroaches on 3 pages', Thomas Quayle left Henry

Crabb Robinson in no doubt as to whom he considered responsible in 1810, more than twenty years before Wordsworth's public *volte-face*: 'His Style resembles the worst of Burke's'.⁴³

In the same spirit as Burke's assertions against Price are Clarkson's wish that *Cintra* 'will yet be english'; Coleridge's anxiety that *The Spectator* had engendered 'the general taste for unconnected writing' and his command for 'laborious Effort' in *The Friend* (CL III. 281); his esteem for 'gravity'; and his vexed recognition in 'On Style' that the newly-commercialized 'common miscellaneous public' required 'a strong stimulus' in the wake of the Revolution (LL II. 236). The shock which disturbed Coleridge in reading Addison was the same Burke experienced in Price's sermon: both saw disconnection as 'a magnificent stage effect' which supposedly originated in France. Price would have better convinced Burke of the viability of his intentions if his ideas had not seemed so incongruous. To show an intrinsic respect for Burke's trust in tradition and the value Coleridge assigned to 'the *relations of things*' required an analogical intelligence. In the *Hydriotaphia*, Price could have discovered several perfectly equable semicolons as emblems of 'true belief'.

IV. 'the post-revolutionary standard of Length'

Coleridge aspired to demonstrate the 'indwelling *law*' of *The Friend* through its syntax. Although this set his periodical apart from *The Spectator*, at the start of the venture he was already sorely aware of 'an *entortillage* in the sentences & even the thoughts, which nothing can justify...a stately piling up of *Story on Story* in one architectural period' (CL III. 234). It was, nonetheless, a risk Coleridge decided worth taking when he first published *The Friend* in instalments between June 1809 and March 1810, keen to remind readers of the demands of a prose style loyal first to the rectitude of its own ambitions rather than to the universal requirement to be obvious. In the face of 'excessive stimulation' and the 'overwhelming Novelties' which Coleridge considered to have depleted the national and

individual spirit, he hoped to restore to society the mental ‘tone and elasticity’ which he felt had been seriously attenuated as a consequence of war and complacent reading (*CF* II. 300). His periodical would thus be friend to the self-delightingly plural logic of the imagination yet enemy to incoherence proper. If this sometimes made things tortuous or difficult, as it did, the rejoinder was that it confirmed salutary principles of critical business which Coleridge envisaged as decidedly English.

He made the point figuratively in the eleventh number from October 1809, concerned that his intention ‘of referring Men in all things to PRINCIPLES or fundamental Truths’ would make the first twenty copies or so ‘the driest and least attractive’:

Though I dared warrant for the pleasantness of the Journey on the whole; though I might promise that the road would, for the far greater part of it, be found plain and easy, that it would pass through countries of various prospect and that at every stage there would be a change of company; it still remained a heavy disadvantage, that I had to start at the foot of a high and steep hill: and I foresaw, not without occasional feelings of despondency, that during the slow and laborious ascent it would require no common management to keep my Passengers in good humour with the vehicle and its’ Driver. (*CF* II. 149-50)

The punctuation in this sentence delineates the steep topography of an analytical landscape in which the physics of breathing is analogous to the cerebral effort requested. By dint of more than ‘common management’, the commas and semicolons imitate the ‘various prospect’ promised by the range of *The Friend*’s enquiries. It is a performative labour modelled in the syntax as intellectual mountaineering. First there is the ‘slow and laborious ascent’ of the two subordinate clauses introduced by ‘though’, then a pause and ‘change of company’ as the semicolon prepares the path for the main clauses, before finally the prospect is pictured in the distance as a fusion of substantive and accidental: ‘: and I foresaw’.

Coleridge intended the punctuation to be complicit with his meaning. His distress at being asked to ‘improve the style’ of *The Friend* for the 1818 edition made this apparent. Although he accepted the paper was ‘more intangled and parenthetical than need is’, parentheses afforded protection from the ignominy of ‘a friable intellect’, and it was the ‘Crumbly friable Stile’ which Coleridge had considered insular and French in 1803 (CL IV. 685). In another letter, he disapprovingly reflected that the ‘cutting up and rounding of the long sentences’ amounted to ‘general popularizing’ (CL IV. 701). This simplification must have been especially galling given the importance he attached to the inclusion of the ‘Essay on Method’ for the third edition, restored from the *Encyclopædia Metropolitana* where it appeared in January 1818 as ‘a compleat Huddle of Paragraphs, without sub- or co-ordination’. Coleridge claimed to have expended four months in the ‘mere arrangement’ of this piece which, exaggerated or otherwise, certainly testifies to his investment in ‘the relations of things’ (CL IV. 820). An ordered and elaborate structure acted as a bulwark against an ‘amusing composition’ such as *The Spectator*, which Coleridge would not have credited as having ‘added either to the stock of our knowledge, or to the vigour of our intellect’ (CF I. 114). Book publication of *The Friend* in 1818 corresponded with Coleridge’s lecture ‘On Style’, wherein he remarked that the vogue for ‘triteness of thought with singularity and excess of manner of expression’ was solely directed ‘to soothe ignorance and to flatter vanity’. It cannot have escaped Coleridge’s notice that in amending the punctuation he was being compelled to comply with ‘the requisitions of the public taste’ which *The Friend* doggedly opposed (LL II. 236).

Here are two sentences from the 1818 edition in which Coleridge enjoined the reader to ‘exertion of thought’:

In the establishment of principles and fundamental doctrines, I must of necessity require the attention of my reader to become my fellow-labourer. The primary facts

essential to the intelligibility of my principles I can prove to others only as far as I can prevail on them to retire *into themselves* and make their own minds the objects of their steadfast attention. (*CF I. 20-1*)

And here is the same passage printed as a single sentence with extraneous specifics in October 1809:

All the principles of my future Work, all the fundamental doctrines, in the establishment of which I must of necessity require the attention of my Reader to become my fellow-labourer; all the primary facts essential to the intelligibility of my principles, the existence of which facts I can prove to others only as far as I can prevail on them to retire *into themselves* and make their own minds the objects of their steadfast attention; these will, all together, not occupy more than six or seven of my future Essays, and between each of these I shall interpose one or more Numbers devoted to the rational *entertainment* of my various Readers; and, partly from the desire of gratifying particular requests, and partly as a specimen of the subjects which will henceforward have a due proportion of THE FRIEND allotted to them, I shall fill up the present Paper with a miscellany. (*CF II. 151*)

It was not the same experience reading *The Friend* as a serialized paper in 1809-1810 and in book form nearly a decade later, which is to say nothing of the substantial changes made in the organization, insertion and excision of material.⁴⁴ In 1818, Coleridge was concise and clear, but somewhat straitened and programmatic. In 1809, he was prolix and repetitive, yet animated and urging. The ‘general popularizing’ had a pinching effect: the three semicolons and multitude of commas were removed from the later version. This is regrettable. Coleridge’s original punctuation compounds the tone of ‘necessity’ with which he pressed his argument during the Peninsular Wars, propelled by a compulsion to fight for

‘principles’ and ‘fundamental doctrines’ at a time of domestic crisis. A rallying cry is audible behind the authorial expectations in 1809 when effusiveness was honourably recast as an encouragement to holistic thinking and ‘stedfast attention’. Coleridgean gusto was reclaimed as much more than sounding off since detour had the potential to rewire ‘a passion for the unconnected’ by forcing readers to keep up with the syntax. This was still a vital message in 1818 with the war concluded. However, by making incursions into his curiously outward-looking monologues for the later edition, Coleridge dispersed the charismatic unity of his prose and he knew it. Tinkering with the punctuation of *The Friend* rendered Coleridge’s entreaty to the reader to ‘become my fellow-labourer’ progressively less authentic as his sentences were easier to assimilate; initially, it was a cause to which even his accidentals were dedicated.⁴⁵

Furthermore, the earlier edition attests to the pressures of rapid-fire composition. Dorothy Wordsworth relayed to Lady Beaumont in February 1810 that Coleridge had ‘written a whole *Friend* more than once in two days. They are never re-transcribed, and he generally has dictated to Miss Hutchinson, who takes the words down from his mouth’.⁴⁶ The stylistic ground ceded in 1818 masked the periodical’s distinct genesis. It was formulated whilst Coleridge was living with the Wordsworths at Allan Bank, shortly after two instalments of *Cintra* appeared in the *The Courier* over the winter of 1808-1809. Both projects relied on willing amanuenses to record the pitch of an ethically-inspired *copia* which refused to capitulate to sobering circumstance. In retrospect, it symbolized the valedictory embers of a creative partnership which first flamed at Alfoxden in the poetry of the 1790s. The kindred ideology of these projects was reflected in a profusely emotive and emboldened style which Coleridge subsequently diluted. In doing so, he succumbed to what he once ominously named ‘the post-revolutionary standard of Length’ in a defence of the ‘subtle yet

just and systematic Logic' of Jeremy Taylor's punctuation (*CM* V. 502). It was the spirit and not the sense of *The Friend* which was most curtailed.

V. 'exuberance of mind'

Although Coleridge was politically motivated to champion abundance, which is why he was loath to amend *The Friend*, he had philosophical, literary and personal reasons to do so as well. In the guise of Shakespeare criticism, the 'Essay on Method' distinguished between 'exuberance of mind' and 'sterility of mind' which allowed Coleridge generously to exculpate his own digressive practices from those he took to be less discerning displays of plenty. '[S]terility' was endemic to an intellect in thrall to the 'purely accidental' exigencies of time or place and Coleridge considered such indiscriminate noticing of the nearby as 'wholly destructive of Method itself'. '[E]xuberance', on the other hand, embodied the Coleridgean mode *par excellence*, prompting some fabulous and barely concealed self-appraisal. Far from overlooking 'all mental relations', the 'most intelligent man' saw significance everywhere – albeit never right in front of him – and had difficulty arbitrating amongst it. Such hyper-relationality disrupted the 'forms of Method' because the constantly incorporative speaker transformed conversation into a one-man show of 'soliloquy intermixed with dialogue', but that was surely a small price to pay for brilliance. Hamlet was ostensibly the case in point as his 'digressions and enlargements consist of reflections, truths, and principles of general and permanent interest', but as response to the literary lectures of 1812-1813 had already confirmed, Coleridge suffered from the same rare virtue as the Prince of Denmark (*CF* I. 454, 452).

John Payne Collier's lecture notes from 1812 contain Coleridge's sympathetic description of Hamlet as the arch-procrastinator, 'defeated by continually resolving to do, yet doing nothing but resolve', and members of the audience suspected the peregrinations of the

protagonist resonated with the lecturer. Henry Crabb Robinson, a stalwart attender of the series, incisively weighed the measure of Coleridge's focus on Hamlet's inaction in a letter to Catherine Clarkson: 'Somebody said to me, this is a Satire on himself; No, said I it is an Elegy. A great many of his remarks on Hamlet were capable of a like application' (*LL I*. 390-1). Coleridge well understood the drawbacks of being fearsomely clever and it may have been consoling to reshuffle his own sense of thwarting stasis into a recognition of Hamlet's stymied genius. Conscientiousness was of course very important, but too much rumination meant not getting on with things that needed doing, like writing the *Logosophia* or murdering a ruthless uncle. Hamlet's scheme to 'sweep to...revenge' with 'wings as swift | As meditation' (1.5.29-31) proverbially doomed him from the start,⁴⁷ since the King would not be thought to death and, as Coleridge perceived, the Prince's disposition was to get bogged down in the incidental, always finding contingencies 'for not acting' (*LL I*. 389). Meanwhile, Hamlet's hendiadic promise to store the Ghost's directive to kill Claudius 'Within the book and volume of my brain'(1.5.103) only illustrated the defective surplus of his rationalism; it was, after all, this pervasive inability to choose between options which resulted in such a costly delay during the prayer scene in Act Three.

When it came to the psychological ramifications of employing literary tropes, however, it was paronomasia and not hendiadys with which Coleridge pinpointed Hamlet's neurosis, citing his barbed opening line as representative of a determined double-mindedness: 'A little more than kin and less than kind – He begins with that Play of words'. Punning was endorsed as 'superfluous activity of mind', an artful prevarication which was also a sure sign of astuteness (*LL I*. 540).⁴⁸ Fixating on the semantically unimportant word was evasive, as Coleridge discerned in Hamlet's 'aversion to personal, individual, concerns and escape to generalization' (*LL I*. 541), but also his circuitous way of getting at 'the whole truth', which *The Friend* regarded as 'the best antidote to falsehoods' and which had first excited Coleridge

in the 1790s when, inspired by Horne Tooke, he brought punning and etymology into the arena of radical politics (*CF* I. 189). Hamlet used the comic's gift for equivocation with nihilistic acuity, relishing his aptitude to entertain several meanings simultaneously. In reality, however, it was self-defeating since multiple alternatives proved incapacitating for him.

Coleridge provided penetrating insight into Hamlet's psychosis by detecting an irredeemable stasis behind his linguistic opportunism, but reversing the analysis for a play of pure 'Rapidity' provoked unusual inaccuracy: 'I do not remember in *Macbeth* a single Pun or play on Words' (*LL* I. 529, 527). It is certainly true that Hamlet was 'pigeon-livered' (2.2.565) when he needed to exert control, whilst a little more thinking might have soothed Macbeth's urge to exploit conditions at all costs. Moreover, Macbeth's claim that things 'must be acted, ere they may be scanned' (3.4.141) only hastened his demise, but the same philosophy could have restored Hamlet's agency and saved him.⁴⁹ And yet, *Macbeth* is not notable for a 'complete absence' of puns, as Coleridge maintained (*LL* I. 540). In fact, Macbeth's plight is a consequence of his imperviousness to ambiguity altogether, which underscores his blinding ambition. Although he classifies the witches as 'imperfect speakers' in Act One, he naively credits their speeches as merely incomplete, not misleading. Macbeth's interpretive failures dramatize a greedy literalism which splits the transparency of his intentions from the intended implications of the witches' riddling. 'Are ye fantastical, or that indeed | Which outwardly ye show?' (1.3.53-4), asks a suspicious Banquo early on, yoking the apparitions to opacity in such a way that the witches allegorize misreading, virtually personifying puns in their persistent duplicity. Only in the last scene of Act Five does Macbeth belatedly renounce the prognostications of the 'juggling fiends' (1.3.70) as events force upon him a new linguistic awareness of how they 'palter with us in a double sense' (5.7.49-50).

Macbeth's 'recurrence to the *self-concerning*' struck Coleridge as the tragic core of the play. In 1819, he attributed Macbeth's impulse to seize 'the tempting half' of the prophecy that his children would be kings to 'the *catenating* tendency fostered by the sudden coincidence' (*LL* II. 307). Coleridge first invoked 'the catenating Faculty' in 1796, assessing John Prior Estlin's sermons as without 'the silk thread that ought to run through the Pearl-chain of Ratiocination' (*CL* I. 193). In this early instance, the 'silk thread' of reason was a useful resource for honing clarity and controlling diffusion, plotting a necessary route through a maze of otherwise unruly ideas. Macbeth's logic, however, was grossly deluded by a radical self-interest which disabled method and turned 'catenating' into a tool for tyranny. Associative thinking was given free reign in place of 'internal causality', Coleridge's name for the reflective process by which the supervisory will diligently selected imaginative material. In a desperate quest for self-fulfilment, Macbeth grasped at 'the tempting half' of words at the expense of wrestling with their complexity. This solipsism was nourished by 'sudden coincidence', an indication of the 'sterility of mind' responsible for his resolutely verbatim approach to language and the foundation for Coleridge's conclusion that punning was absent from the play. Evidently, 'catenating' was a harbinger of good and bad, a talent one did not want to be without entirely, for fear of foregoing cohesiveness, or to possess exclusively, for fear of a single-mindedness common to bores and tyrants. Where the motive power of Macbeth's actions was too obvious to be intelligent, Hamlet's acumen paralyzed him to act at all.

Coleridge's evolving conception of 'catenating' charts his move from an associationist model of the intellect fuelled by 'sudden coincidence' to a transcendental one guided by 'internal causality'. As Coleridge's philosophical commitments shifted, 'catenating' suffered in his estimations; the anti-materialist 'energy of the will' was preferred to protect the limitless reaches of the mind's imaginings from the magnetism of the proximate

world. *The Friend* put it like this: ‘where the habit of Method is present and effective, things the most remote and diverse in time, place, and outward circumstance, are brought into mental contiguity and succession, the more striking as the less expected’ (*CF* I. 455). On this basis, too, Coleridge tried to redeem the divagating spirit of Laurence Sterne in 1818 not as ‘wantonness’ but as ‘the *very form* of his genius’ (*LL* II. 177). Tristram Shandy and Yorick were made to look a lot like Hamlet despite the fact that by consistently following what was in front of them Sterne’s protagonists seemed to be ludic versions of Macbeth. If praising Sterne’s discursive style brought Coleridge close to a surprisingly late admission that the sensory philosophies of John Locke and David Hume were not completely dispensable after all, it should be remembered that for Coleridge association-at-a-distance was no longer association but something else entirely. Expansiveness could be refashioned as ‘exuberance’ so long as it was shaped by imaginative consciousness.

Richard Hooker was adduced as a powerfully methodical writer precisely because he gave ‘catenating’ short shrift. In the lecture ‘On Style’, Coleridge cited a particularly long sentence from *The Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity* to illustrate the point that Hooker’s ideas were not ‘merely strung together like beads’ but instead were arranged for ‘the dignity of the total impression’, conferring a unity on ‘the perpetual growth and evolution of the thoughts’ which imitated a unity in the author (*LL* II. 234 and n. 6).⁵⁰ It was a concord to which Coleridge was deeply attracted, though it cannot be assumed that the delight he took in the length of this sentence was necessarily of Hooker’s own making. Ever since the 1593 *editio princeps* the spelling and punctuation were not Hooker’s directly ‘but rather Hooker’s as refracted through the habits of his scribe, Benjamin Pullen, and through whichever compositor was at work on a given passage’.⁵¹ Nonetheless, Coleridge believed in *The Friend* that the ‘difficult evolutions’ of Hooker’s syntax exhibited an ‘intrinsic excellence’ which resisted his conception of the ‘pitiableness’ of all things French (*CF* I. 20).⁵² Coleridge

recognized in Hooker's unified style one of the main purposes of the *Laws*, which was to impress upon a divided Church of England the advantages of tolerance in relation to controversial elements of church practice. Hooker's achievement was to retain grace and gentility as prominent features of his strategy to attenuate Puritan grievances and press the benefits of collective worship: 'Thinke yee are men, deeme it not impossible for you to erre...That yee have been earnest in speaking or writing againe and againe the contrarie waie, shall be no blemish or discredit at all unto you'. He was prudent to maintain a sincere regard for Presbyterians as 'deere brethren' whilst acknowledging 'the common imbecilities which are incident into our nature'. This enabled him to implicate his own intellect in the struggle between 'force of reason' and 'vehemencie of affection' which made his position more convincing (*LEP* 51-2, 181).

However, this was not only a politic move. Hooker had in fact a profound respect for the arduousness of 'discerning goodness' in 'this present age full of tongue and weake of braine' when 'all shunne it, and had rather walke...in the darke by hap hazard'. Coleridge was alive to Hooker's emphasis on 'common imbecilitie' as the root cause stifling 'any curious or deep inquirie', copying out this passage from the *Laws* into a notebook of 1809 when *The Friend* was in its infancy (*LEP* 82-3).⁵³ The tenacity with which Hooker safeguarded real thinking from those who 'complaine of obscuritie' was a function of his conviction that 'in sundry the workes both of art and also of nature...that which hath greatest force in the very things we see, is notwithstanding it selfe oftentimes not seene' (*LEP* 57). In this judgement, Hooker conceded both the power of his rhetoric to persuade and his own capacity to be duped by rhetoric; his style was culpable and innocent at the same time. Coleridge absorbed the value Hooker placed on 'obscuritie' explicitly in a motto and implicitly in the structure of his periodical,⁵⁴ where sentences initially measured an honest commitment to explore the intricacy of ideas and also testified to the shape of an engagement

which had calculated how Hooker gently compelled readers ‘to lay aside the gall of that bitterness...and with meekenes to search the truth’ (*LEP* 51).⁵⁵

Thomas Browne likewise insisted that humility was indispensable for rational enquiry. In an excerpt from the sixth octavo edition of *Religio Medici* (1669) which Coleridge marked in the margin as applicable to William Godwin, Browne cautioned that not everyone was ‘fit to take up the Gantlet in the cause of Verity’, that ‘an inconsiderate Zeal unto Truth’ meant many ‘too rashly charged the troops of error’, and that ‘A man may be in as just possession of Truth as of a City, and yet be forc[ed] to surrender’ (*CM* III. 745).⁵⁶ The spiritual creed in *Religio Medici* that ‘age doth not rectifie, but incurvate our natures’ was the ultimate source for this warning; it completely informed Browne’s sense of our ‘deceptible condition’ in the *Pseudodoxia*, which contained his central epistemological contention that the ‘common infirmity of humane Nature’ was to blame for ‘common Error’.⁵⁷ Against ‘imbecillitie’ and ‘infirmity’, Hooker and Browne cultivated coordinate idioms to dispel the certitude of fundamentalist beliefs and the shrinking effects of bigotry and prejudice on expressiveness. Connection was a conciliating reprieve from the crabbed rhythms of partisanship which they conceived as an ineluctable and deleterious aspect of human nature.

Much like Hooker and Browne, Wordsworth and Coleridge endured charges of ‘obscuritie’ by bringing syntax powerfully to bear on our ‘deceptible condition’ in *Cintra* and *The Friend*, where sentence structure was tasked to reinvigorate the political imagination, banish intellectual complacency and encourage unity during crisis. The prose resisted ‘a passion for the unconnected’, iterations of which emerged in Burke’s calculated mistrust of Price’s *non sequitur*; Coleridge’s censorship of *The Spectator* and his broader reservations about aphorism, French thinking and the separatist effects of Napoleonic power; his account of the primacy of the will in creative activity; his changing relationship with ‘catenating’ and associative thinking; and his reluctance to modify the punctuation of *The Friend* in 1818.

Neither length nor complexity, however, were the sole guarantors of good method, as the semicolons in Coleridge's edition of the *Hydriotaphia* and his Shakespearean critique of paronomasia consolidated. Equally, Wordsworth's short collocations in *Lyrical Ballads* were qualitatively different to Addison's, in Coleridge's mind, because the former closely attended to 'the *relations* of things' whilst the latter neglected to do so. It was structure, then, that best announced a socio-political, religious or poetic vision capable of looking beyond itself.

During the turbulence of the first two decades of the nineteenth century, Coleridge frequently returned to Hooker and Browne as 'great patterns or integers of English style' (*LL* II. 234). From their writings he sensed what prose could accomplish to punctuate a divided culture with possibility and 'true belief'.

ⁱ *Marginalia*, ed. George Whalley and H.J. Jackson, The Collected Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge XII, 6 vols. (Princeton, NJ, 1980-2001), I. 765, 767. Hereafter cited parenthetically in the text (*CM*).

² I owe this point to Dr Jamie Baxendine at Queens' College, Cambridge.

³ Coleridge's affection for Browne was not total. In the lecture 'On Style' in 1818 he averred that Browne 'first effectually injured the literary taste of the nation by his introduction of learned words'. Nonetheless, 'with all his faults [he] had a genuine idiom'; see *Lectures 1808-1819: On Literature*, ed. R.A. Foakes, Collected Coleridge V, 2 vols. (Princeton, NJ, 1987), II. 234. Hereafter cited parenthetically in the text (*LL*). This measured praise is reminiscent of Samuel Johnson's assessment in his 'Life of Browne'; see *Biographical Writings: Soldiers, Scholars, and Friends*, ed. O M Brack, Jr. and Robert DeMaria, Jr., The Yale Edition of the Works of Samuel Johnson, vol. 19 (New Haven, CT, and London, 2016), 336-38. George Saintsbury somewhat rebuffed Coleridge's charges that Browne was undone by 'disorderly syntax' and 'corruption of vocabulary'; see *A History of English Prose Rhythm* (London, 1912), 182.

⁴ Browne, *Pseudodoxia Epidemica... Whereunto is added Religio Medici: and A Discourse of the Sepulchral-Urnes lately found in Norfolk. Together with the Garden of Cyrus...* (London, 1659), 'To the Reader', A4. For the methods of the *Pseudodoxia* as 'contrafactuality, digression, conversation – towards truth through non-truth'

see William N. West, 'Brownean Motion: Conversation within *Pseudodoxia Epidemica*'s "Sober Circumference of Knowledge"', in Reid Barbour and Claire Preston (eds.), *Sir Thomas Browne: The World Proposed* (Oxford, 2008), 187.

⁵ Morris W. Croll, 'The Baroque Style in Prose' (1929), repr. in J. Max Patrick and Robert O. Evans (eds.), *Style, Rhetoric, and Rhythm: Essays by Morris W. Croll* (Princeton, NJ, 1966), 226.

⁶ Sharon Cadman Seelig, "'Speake, that I may see thee': The Styles of Sir Thomas Browne", in Barbour and Preston (eds.), *Browne: The World Proposed*, 31. For the view that this is Browne's 'wonderful rhetorical trick' and that his prose is 'fastidious and relentlessly creedal' consult Kevin Killeen, "'When all things shall confesse their ashes": Science and Soul in Thomas Browne', in Andrew Hadfield (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of English Prose 1500-1640* (Oxford, 2013), 674.

⁷ For 1808 as the time of lineation see *CM* I. 762.

⁸ Browne, *Hydriotaphia. Urne-Buriall*, in *Pseudodoxia...et al.* (1659), 41-2, 45.

⁹ For the 1669 edition of the *Hydriotaphia*, for example, these semicolons were replaced by colons and full stops, either by the printer or by Browne himself. A dozen copies of the 1658 edition survive with varying numbers of unsystematic corrections by Browne; see David McKitterick, *Print, Manuscript and the Search for Order, 1450-1830* (Cambridge, 2003), 129. Cf. Daniela Havenstein, *Democratizing Sir Thomas Browne: Religio Medici and its Imitations* (Oxford, 1999), 143.

¹⁰ Browne, *Hydriotaphia*, in *Pseudodoxia...et al.*, 46.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 47.

¹² *Ibid.*, 47.

¹³ *The Friend*, ed. Barbara E. Rooke, Collected Coleridge IV, 2 vols. (Princeton, NJ, 1969), I. 114. All quotation from volume one is from the 1818 book edition; quotation from volume two is from the 1809-1810 serial edition. Hereafter cited parenthetically in the text (*CF*).

¹⁴ For further evidence of Coleridge's low opinion of novels see *CF* I. 179 and notes taken by John Payne Collier at one of Coleridge's lectures in November 1811 in *LL* I. 189. Lucy Newlyn has investigated how Coleridge's moral reservations about indiscriminate reading propelled his conception of the ideal reader as prepared to engage with syntactical complexity, though I differ from her characterization of this reading practice as 'elitist'; see *Reading, Writing, and Romanticism: The Anxiety of Reception* (Oxford, 2000), 49-90, 57. For the way in which Coleridge's 'elite interpreters' were supposed to model a new social order see Tim Fulford, "'Living Words": Coleridge, Christianity and National Renewal', *Prose Studies*, 15 (1992), 187-207, 190-1.

¹⁵ For the view that this was what characterized Coleridge's notion of the superiority of English prose before 1688 see Louis I. Bredvold's introductory essay in Roberta Florence Brinkley (ed.), *Coleridge on the Seventeenth Century* (Durham, NC, 1955), xxvi.

¹⁶ Geoffrey Hill, 'Language, Suffering, and Silence' (1999), repr. in *Collected Critical Writings*, ed. Kenneth Haynes (Oxford, 2008), 405.

¹⁷ *Biographia Literaria; or, Biographical Sketches of My Literary Life and Opinions*, ed. James Engell and W. Jackson Bate, *Collected Coleridge VII*, 2 vols. (Princeton, NJ, 1983), I. 116, 127. Hereafter cited parenthetically in the text (*BL*).

¹⁸ Coleridge had already alluded to 'the close connection between veracity and habits of mental accuracy'; see *BL* II. 143.

¹⁹ *The Notebooks of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, ed. Kathleen Coburn, Merton Christensen and Anthony John Harding, 5 double vols. (London, 1957-2002), I. §1759.

²⁰ In 1802, Coleridge's projected 'Examination of the Style of our English Prose Writers under Charles I. & the Commonwealth' was designed to take the strain against what he considered to be French influence. The book was never written, but Basil Montagu subsequently published *Selections from the Works of Taylor, Hooker, Hall and Lord Bacon...* (London, 1805); see *Collected Letters of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, ed. Earl Leslie Griggs, 6 vols. (Oxford, 1956-71), II. 870. Hereafter cited parenthetically in the text (*CL*). Cf. *CM* II. 1131. For an assessment of Coleridge's anti-French prejudice as a reaction initially to his own youthful Jacobinism and subsequently as a response to Napoleonic foreign policy see Michael John Kooy, 'Coleridge's Francophobia', *Modern Language Review*, 95 (2000), 924-41.

²¹ For the way in which *The Friend* 'gradually turns the handicap of obscurity into a virtue' to counter the supposed vices of French style see Jerome Christensen, *Coleridge's Blessed Machine of Language* (Ithaca, NY, 1981), 186-269, 208. Similarly, Madame de Staël resisted Napoleon in *De l'Allemagne* by insisting upon the power of rhetoric to counter French empiricism; like Coleridge, she stereotyped French superficiality. For an account of this see John Claiborne Isbell, *The Birth of European Romanticism: Truth and Propaganda in Staël's 'De l'Allemagne', 1810-1813* (Cambridge, 1994), 92-100, 159-64.

²² For Coleridge's wish that the periodical form of *The Friend* might have been more amendable to seventeenth-century English prose to counter the proscriptive concision Coleridge located in French style see Bredvold's essay in Brinkley (ed.), *Coleridge on the Seventeenth Century*, xxiv; Thomas Owens, 'Coleridge's Parentheses and the Question of Editing', *Essays in Criticism*, 64 (2014), 376-7. The laudable aim of Brinkley's useful

compendium is ‘to give as much unity as possible’ to Coleridge’s annotations on seventeenth-century writers by gathering his comments around ‘logical topics’ such as ‘Philosophy’, ‘The Old Divines’, and ‘Literary Prose’ (vii, xii-xiv). One difficulty with this policy is that the categories might appear to demarcate the specific area of Coleridge’s engagement with the authors of any particular group, whereas his interests were often more various than the subheadings are able to suggest. So, for example, Coleridge was especially intrigued by the prose style of ‘Old Divines’ like Hooker and Taylor, who do not also explicitly feature under ‘Literary Prose’, though they are mentioned in the section on ‘Coleridge’s General Comments on Prose Style’ (411-27).

²³ *The Oceana of James Harrington and his Other Works...* (London, 1700), 506. This quotation from *A System of Politics* is from the paragraph directly above the one Coleridge cited.

²⁴ Fulford, *Coleridge’s Figurative Language* (Basingstoke, 1991), 17-18, 25-8.

²⁵ Jackson, ‘Coleridge, Etymology and Etymologic’, *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 44 (1983), 75-88, 76.

²⁶ McKusick, *Coleridge’s Philosophy of Language* (New Haven, CT, and London, 1986), 92, 150; Jackson, ‘Coleridge, Etymology and Etymologic’, 86.

²⁷ Cf. *BL* II. 55: ‘The language of Hooker, Bacon, Bishop Taylor, and Burke, differ from the common language of the learned class only by the superior number and novelty of the thoughts and relations which they had to convey.’

²⁸ *Lyrical Ballads and Other Poems, 1797-1800*, ed. James Butler and Karen Green (Ithaca, NY, 1992), 108. Harrington wrote *A System of Politics* as a series of political aphorisms, a form which otherwise fuelled Coleridge’s Francophobia.

²⁹ Coleridge laid the blame in this letter on De Quincey’s ‘strange & most mistaken System of punctuation’ (*CL* III. 214) which Wordsworth, however, thought ‘admirable’; see *The Letters of William and Dorothy Wordsworth: The Middle Years, pt. 1: 1806-1811*, ed. Ernest de Selincourt, rev. Mary Moorman, *The Letters of William and Dorothy Wordsworth*, 2nd edn, vol. 2 (Oxford, 1969), 348.

³⁰ *Concerning...the Convention of Cintra*, in *The Prose Works of William Wordsworth*, ed. W.J.B. Owen and Jane Worthington Smyser, 3 vols. (Oxford, 1974), I. 223, 249, 256. Hereafter cited parenthetically in the text (*PW*). For the role Wordsworth assigned the imagination in discriminating ethical and political freedoms see Timothy Michael, *British Romanticism and the Critique of Political Reason* (Baltimore, 2016), 157-67.

³¹ Joseph Addison, *The Spectator*, ed. Donald F. Bond, 5 vols. (Oxford, 1965), I. 44.

³² *Ibid.*, III. 530.

³³ Geoffrey Hill is instructive on this point: “‘Innocently’ seems in every sense a judicious emphasis.

Coleridge’s suggestion seems to be that a style which, around the year 1710, issued from and upheld a genuinely humane sensibility had, by 1810, been run down into the “fixities and definites” of a mere “law of association”, into the inert “general taste” and cliché-ridden fancy that served to gloss over the barbarous prejudice of “the polished part of society”; see ‘Redeeming the Time’ (1972), repr. in *Collected Critical Writings*, ed. Haynes, 94.

³⁴ For ways in which Wordsworth imagined Napoleon in *Cintra* as Milton’s Satan see Simon Bainbridge, *Napoleon and English Romanticism* (Cambridge, 1995), 95-133.

³⁵ *The Correspondence of Henry Crabb Robinson with the Wordsworth Circle*, ed. Edith J. Morley, 2 vols. (Oxford, 1927), I. 54-5.

³⁶ *The French Revolution 1790-1794*, ed. L. G. Mitchell, *The Writings and Speeches of Edmund Burke*, vol. 8 (Oxford, 1989), 127-8.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 72.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 61.

³⁹ Cf. Owens, ‘Coleridge’s Parentheses’, 378.

⁴⁰ Richard Price, *A Discourse on the Love of our Country...* (London, 1789), 9, 15, 22, 44.

⁴¹ Burke, *Reflections*, ed. Mitchell, 115.

⁴² *The Fourteen-Book Prelude*, ed. W.J.B. Owen (Ithaca, NJ, and London, 1985), 151. Cited parenthetically in the text by book and line number.

⁴³ *Correspondence of Crabb Robinson*, ed. Morley, I. 59.

⁴⁴ For an account of the order, omissions and additions in 1818 consult Earl Leslie Griggs, ‘*The Friend*: 1809 and 1818 Editions’, *Modern Philology*, 35 (1938), 369-73.

⁴⁵ For the virtue of Coleridge’s ‘digressiveness’ in promoting the reader to reflective work see Christensen, *Coleridge’s Blessed Machine*, 215-16; Newlyn, *Reading, Writing, and Romanticism*, 88.

⁴⁶ *Letters of Wordsworth: 1806-1811*, rev. Moorman, 391. For the care Coleridge bestowed on the punctuation see *CF* I. lxxxvii-lxxxix

⁴⁷ *Hamlet*, ed. G.R. Hibbard (Oxford, 1987), 186. All quotation from *Hamlet* is from this edition, cited parenthetically in the text by act, scene and line number.

⁴⁸ This and the subsequent quotation are from Ernest Hartley Coleridge’s transcriptions of Coleridge’s notes for an 1813 lecture.

⁴⁹ *The Tragedy of Macbeth*, ed. Nicholas Brooke (Oxford, 1990), 160. All quotation from *Macbeth* is from this edition, cited parenthetically in the text by act, scene and line number.

⁵⁰ For a fine analysis of the sentence in question see John Barrell, *Poetry, Language and Politics* (Manchester, 1988), 71-2. It is unlikely Coleridge was using the 1682 edition of Hooker's works in 1818 as is generally supposed, even though he annotated this very sentence in this edition in the mid-1820s; see *CM* II. 1151. The reason for this is that the 1682 edition breaks Hooker's sentence into several sentences, whilst Coleridge explicitly copied it as a single sentence joined together by semicolons; see *The Works of that Learned and Judicious Divine, Mr. Richard Hooker, in Eight Books of Ecclesiastical Polity* (London, 1682), 94. Coleridge's admiration was contingent upon a differently punctuated edition.

⁵¹ *Of the Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity: Preface; Books I to IV*, ed. Georges Edelen, The Folger Library Edition of The Works of Richard Hooker, vol. 1 (Cambridge, MA, and London, 1977), xxxii, 367. Quotation from the 1593 edition is hereafter cited parenthetically in the text (*LEP*). Then again, Hooker was known to be sedulous in checking the text. For the fifth book, printed in 1597, 'Hooker went over Pullen's copy carefully, making additional notes marginally, with occasional, rare corrections, and revising details of punctuation'; see C.J. Sisson, *The Judicious Marriage of Mr Hooker and the Birth of The Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity* (Cambridge, 1940), 48.

⁵² For an assessment of Hooker's importance to *The Friend* see Deidre Coleman, *Coleridge and The Friend (1809-1810)* (Oxford, 1988). On Hooker's syntax see W. Speed Hill, 'The Authority of Hooker's Style', *Studies in Philology*, 67 (1970), 338: 'In its latinate inversions and convolutions, in the suspended meanings and mannered symmetry, it reflects Hooker's assurance that his subject matter – truth – is eternally fixed, although the paths to it are often circuitous.'

⁵³ Cf. *Notebooks of Coleridge*, ed. Coburn, III. §3574.

⁵⁴ *CF* I. 186; cf. *BL* I. 88.

⁵⁵ In 'Keeping to the Middle Way' (1994) and 'The Eloquence of Sober Truth' (1999), Geoffrey Hill addresses both the importance of the word 'common' to Anglican theologians and the nature of Hooker's politic style; repr. in *Collected Critical Writings*, ed. Haynes, 301-3, 329-31, 334, 342.

⁵⁶ Cf. *Religio Medici* in *Pseudodoxia...et al.*, 6. Coleridge annotated the octavo edition in 1802 and 1809.

⁵⁷ Browne, *Religio Medici* and *Pseudodoxia*, in *Pseudodoxia...et al.*, 17, 1. The origins of 'incurvate' most likely lie in an article of Lutheran soteriology which holds that 'our nature has been so deeply curved in upon itself because of the viciousness of original sin', drawn from Augustine's 'detortae in infima voluntatis

perversitatem' ('a perversity of will twisted away from the highest substance'); see *Lectures on Romans: Glosses and Scholia*, ed. Hilton C. Oswald, Luther's Works, vol. 25 (Saint Louis, MO, 1972), 291; Augustine, *Confessions*, ed. James O'Donnell, 3 vols. (Oxford, 1992), I. 84. For a translation of Augustine see *Confessions*, trans. Henry Chadwick (Oxford, 1991), 126.