iii.

Readers of superior judgment may disapprove of the style in which many of these pieces are executed it must be expected that many lines and phrases will not exactly suit their taste. It will perhaps appear to them, that wishing to avoid the prevalent fault of the day, the author has sometimes descended too low, and that many of his expressions are too familiar, and not of sufficient dignity. It is apprehended, that the more conversant the reader is with our elder writers, and with those in modern times who have been the most successful in painting manners and passions, the fewer complaints of this kind will he have to make.

MURDER BALLADS

EXHUMING THE BODY BURIED † BENEATH WORDSWORTH'S † *LYRICAL BALLADS*

DAVID JOHN BRENNAN

MURDER BALLADS

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EXHUMING

THE BODY BURIED BENEATH

WORDSWORTH'S *LYRICAL BALLADS*.

BY DAVID JOHN BRENNAN.

Quo usque tandem abutere, Catilina, patientia nostra ?

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EXHUMING THE BODY BURIED
BENEATH WORDSWORTH'S *LYRICAL BALLADS*.

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Thanks to the Hudson Strode Program in Renaissance Studies, for their generous assistance in making this project a reality.

The playlets contained within were first performed at the University of Alabama with the following cast:

Brian Oliu:	BRENNAN
Ryan Browne:	COLERIDGE
Jeremy Allan Hawkins:	WORDSWORTH
David Brennan:	RAND
Alissa Nutting:	various characters
Alyson Greenfield:	various characters

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THEN.

England, 1798. You buy a book of poems. An anonymous volume. You carry it home in your jacket pocket, set it on a table in your sitting room while you munch a midday meal of meat and bread. Later that afternoon, sunk in the cushioned chair beside the south-facing window, you open the book to its beginning. You read this:

LYRICAL BALLADS,

WITH

A FEW OTHER POEMS.

LONDON:
PRINTED FOR J. & A. ARCH,
GRACECHURCH-STREET.
1798.

And on the next page, an Advertisement. As you read your eye is caught by phrases such as

. . . *and if the answer be favorable to the author's wishes* . . .

or

. . . *the author has sometimes descended too low* . . .

Who is this Author? Your gaze skips to the next page, where it finds:

CONTENTS.

Over the course of several days you read the poems. They are quietly elegiac, quick and pleasing though never light, without political rant or erotic description to fire your passions or make you blush. Always an attuned reader, you hear the echoes between the book's first poem and its last. You are happy with your purchase. Curious, you piece together what you can of this Poet from the poems: it is a man, he has a young boy, and a brother, Jim.

Several reviews of the book are printed. *The Monthly Review* says: "The author shall style his rustic delineations of life, poetry . . . " And the *British Critic*: "The endeavour of the author is to recall our poetry, from the fantastical excess of refinement . . . " Yawn. You realize you are not a fan of criticism.

The months slip by. You return to the poems often, grow fond of them and their author. Then, in 1800, an expanded edition of *Lyrical Ballads* is released. As you purchase the book you see the author has revealed himself as W. Wordsworth. You are glad to have a name to put to the 23 now-familiar poems; you hurry home to your chair to peruse the new material this Mr. Wordsworth has added. Plunging into the Preface, you soon discover this:

For the sake of variety and from a consciousness of my own weakness I was induced to request the assistance of a Friend, who furnished me with the Poems of the ANCIENT MARINER, the FOSTER-MOTHER'S TALE, the NIGHTINGALE, the DUNGEON, and the Poem entitled LOVE. I should not, however, have requested this assistance, had I not believed that the Poems of my Friend would in a great measure have the same tendency as my own, and that, though there would be found a difference, there would be found no discordance in the colours of our style; as our opinions on the subject of poetry do almost entirely coincide.

Wait. What? Then:

Author.

Author became Wordsworth.

Author became Wordsworth plus Friend.

If Wordsworth and Friend wrote the 1798 poems, then neither of them is

the Author. The Author

Is

Or never was.

No, he was. He was real to you. You knew him. In poems you knew him.

He is dead.

Murdered.

Wordsworth a murderer.

PART ONE,

CONCERNING

THE YEAR 1798.

RIME AND RUIN.

The "experiments . . . to ascertain how far the language of conversation in the middle and lower classes of society is adapted to the purposes of poetic pleasure" are not the problem. Passion stutters, abandons itself. The language but a means to realize the true experiment. The language Wordsworth and Coleridge failed to agree upon. Hence W.'s eventual demotion of "The Rime of the Ancyent Marinere" from first poem in 1798 to Volume I's penultimate in 1800. Hence C.'s willingness to remain unnamed. They blinded us. They made us un-see what had been there all along. The friendship a decoy. The friendship a marriage consummated. A pregnancy carried to term. The experiment a birth. Look at the book. Examine. Where we see two, there is only one.

Begin. We are the readers of 1798, the time travelers. We must read as if THEN, not NOW. To return this book to infancy we must forget everything. If we are to do the impossible, to read without the knowledge we already possess, we must remember to forget.

The book itself. There are remaining, depending on the source consulted, between 14 and 17 original copies of the 1798 *Lyrical Ballads* in this world. The last buyer of one of those few originals paid $14,236.37 for hers. While grateful the book still exists, this paucity of copies and their relative cost makes it exceedingly difficult for me, or you, or most anyone to procure

the real thing. Online reconstructions exist, though in the digital they are rendered for most practical applications formless, especially if your wish is to handle and examine the book intensely, as mine is.

There are ways to circumnavigate this problem. Here is one solution, given to me by a Friend:

> To better your experience of reading the 1798 *Lyrical Ballads*, purchase the edition currently available for $21.95 U.S. from Oxford University Press, ISBN# 0 19 911006 9. It is important it be this edition, for these directions are to be adhered to:
>
> 1. With black electrical tape, or any non-transparent adhesive, cover all images and words on the front cover, back cover and spine of the book, excluding the title, *Lyrical Ballads.*
>
> 2. With a blade (razor works best), cut out all pages between the front cover and page XL; the same should be done with all pages between page 119 and the back cover of the book.
>
> 3. All text on page 118 should be removed from sight. Wite-Out is ideal, being less obtrusive than black marker or pen. The reader now owns a copy of *Lyrical Ballads* as close in form to the original as is likely to be found.

Let me describe to you the deconstruction of my copy of *Lyrical Ballads*, in the case you are not inclined to interrupt your reading to spend the time purchasing your own from the jungles of the interwebs. 4.5″ × 7.5″ × .75″, traffic-yellow text (authors, editor, title) and pictures (illustrations, of a sort) of W. and C. highlight the cover's clinical green background. The 20-grade paper is perfect bound in paperback, ensuring a limited lifespan. This matters little, for the havoc I am about to wreak upon it will considerably shorten its time on earth.

I begin with the cover. Rather than black electrical tape, as my Friend suggests, I use a royal blue edging tape. Across the back of the book I lay the rectangular strips of blue, one overlapping the next, four across, obscuring the yellow block filled with descriptive text and the scripted, lime-green *Oxford* that repeats around the perimeter of the block. With scissors I trim the excess blue tape drooping over the book's edges. The back cover is now a sea marred by patches of rigid waves. For the spine of the book I cut two thin medium-length strips of tape and blue-out everything but the words *Lyrical Ballads,* which hold center position along the backbone.

The front cover I attack at random, over- and under-lapping runs of tape horizontally and vertically, caring only for what not to erase, the title, which when I am done stares up at me willfully, a healthy patch of skin surrounded by the cross hatchings of a blue bandage covering a gangrenous appendage.

Cover completed, I open the book. The instructions dictate the removal of some 100 pages, 40 in the front, 60 in the back. Undertaking my first incision with the nearest blade handy (a steak knife), I quickly understand why my Friend recommended a razor blade. The knife tears and rips, rather than cuts; ten pages in I am left with a jagged, ugly edge I must pick and pluck at to remove. Abandoning the steak knife I go in search of something sharp, a pocket knife, scissors, any metal edge with bite. I locate a pair of kitchen shears; they are sharp enough to do the job, though the work is tedious and dredges up guilt: books are not built to be disfigured. Introduction, bibliography, commentary: I cut them out. Lastly I perform the appendectomy, setting the removed organ aside for later examination. The altered book now sits awkwardly, the spine grown too large for the body it supports, and the pages, with their new gaps, seem more susceptible to tearing, or dislodging unprovoked from their binding.

One more step. I dip into the Wite-Out, and begin to cautiously apply it to page 118. As I proceed line by line down the page my patience roughens, so by page's end I am laying down only the most cursory applications of white obscurity, the shades of ink

still visible beneath the clouds. They are there, the words, but removed from sight. Nearly. Good enough.

My copy of *Lyrical Ballads* 1798: Its one hundred and seventeen pages cling together between the torn remnants of a blade's rough work, its cover an assemblage of patched-together parts, a paper quilt. The book, bluntly, looks battle-worn, roughed-up, cut, shot-through, exploded, ruined thoroughly and then reassembled. And that, in more ways than one, is precisely what happened.

A PLANT IN WINTER.

A PLAY IN FRAGMENTS. ACT ONE.

A PLANT IN WINTER

Between WORDSWORTH *and* COLERIDGE *sits a potted* PLANT.

WORDSWORTH
I agree with the plant.
The cliffs of its looking are war-painted red, and
  a thorn
Is of little use.

COLERIDGE
You water it with snow;
The season reflects the injury.
Pretending innocence
Is a natural state
Will earn you a bid for sainthood.
When blessed with the irrational rhetoric of
  holiness
The plant will die
And people will grow close to it.

WORDSWORTH
The plant has not washed.
I must bathe it.

COLERIDGE
You have potted the plant
And placed it fireside while winter extends white
prettifications
To hills and wood-pile.

JOHN ASHBERY *enters. He stands behind the plant.*

JOHN ASHBERY
The effete vocabulary of summer
No longer says anything.[1]

He removes a dying leaf, leaves.

THE PLANT
Aaaah.

1. Here Mr. John Ashbery quotes Mr. Wallace Stevens.

BROTHERHOOD

A classroom. RAND *runs the show.*

LEONARD
My brother's dead!

COLERIDGE
Why did you do it?

WORDSWORTH
You were always on my mind.

BRENNAN
Coleridge is the brother?

RAND
Indeed.

BRENNAN (*to* RAND)
Are you my brother?

RAND
Self-negation
Ensures existence
Of an Other.

COLERIDGE
The Author was a better man than you!

LEONARD
My brother is dead.

WORDSWORTH (*bored*)
Yes, yes.

LEONARD
James!

WILLIE NELSON *enters and sings with* WORDSWORTH.

WILLIE NELSON & WORDSWORTH
You were always on my mind . . .

CASTING A ROMANTIC PRODUCTION

FRANKENSTEIN *the monster reads from a script as if auditioning.* WORDSWORTH *sits front row in the blackened auditorium.*

FRANKENSTEIN
Over and over mumbling
Electric epitaphs.
Fear of what can be
But half-reversed
Comes later.
I lived, I live.
Death is a hobby-horse.

Sensing he is bombing.

A slumber did—

WORDSWORTH
Thank you! Next!

HEART LEAP: BUCK NAKED

RAND *holds a mirror.* BRENNAN *holds a book. Both are wearing only the antlers and tail of deer.*

BRENNAN
If Time
Has collapsed
The walls of was,
It has shown me also
To enjoy the matter at hand.

RAND (*looking in the mirror*)
Do you recognize yourself in there?

BRENNAN (*looking in the book*)
I'm hardly aware of when I am.

RAND
The problem you now face
Is your face.

BRENNAN
I have a pimple.
A pimple on my nose.

RAND
Rudolph.

They bray, as in laughter.

On which page do you see it?

BRENNAN
On page twenty-two.
Oh! I have found myself,

In the pimple on my nose.
Eternal pimple.

A FABLE

Flamenco music. RAND, *played by Coleridge, atop a pedestal.* BRENNAN, *played by Wordsworth, sweeps the stage with a broom.*

RAND
A Poem unrooted from its Book
Is a plant removed from native soil
And stuck down in the fantastic landscape
Of fable. The plant is a miniature
Ecosystem, the Poem a miniature Book.

BRENNAN
Rand, tell me a story.

RAND
There was an oak tree on a lofty crag,
There was a broom below.
A storm.

BRENNAN
That was beautiful. Tell me another.

RAND
There were two men who wrote a Book
And called themselves one Man . . .

Enter COLERIDGE, *played by Rand, and* WORDSWORTH, *played by Brennan, dancing and handclapping. Following a great flourish of dance and handclap full of adolescent angst,* COLERIDGE *collapses, dead.* WORDSWORTH *continues to handclap and dance.*

WORDSWORTH
Better dead than juvenile.

RAND
. . . and so it was. And the moral of the story?

BRENNAN
Death? I can live with that.

BRENNAN AS CHERRY TREE

BRENNAN *imagines himself having imaginary branches.*

BRENNAN
I have made memory in my heart
To give you. Here it is.
It is here, in my body, for you.
Name it, so you will remember.
It is a gift to be forgotten.

INDICATIONS OF INTENTION.

ADVERTISEMENT

It follows immediately upon the heels of the title page, that page bereft of proper name. No author, only Author. And is consistent. Let's move beyond the "middle and lower classes": what else is there?

Or, what isn't there? There is no plurality. " . . . to the author's wishes . . . " " . . . the author has sometimes descended . . . " " . . . the Author believes . . . " Of the seven times the author is mentioned, all reference a single being, pronouns included. We, the readers of 1798, have to this point no indication of there being other than a single author of *Lyrical Ballads.*

In the second edition of *Romanticism: An Anthology,* editor Duncan Wu footnotes the Advertisement with this statement:

> It should be borne in mind that the volume was published anonymously, so that its first readers were unaware not only of who wrote what, but of the fact that it contained the work of more than one person.

In the context of the anthology this statement comes across as astute, not for its obviousness, but for the fact that this fact has been so critically ignored as to become an unfact. The anonymity is recognized, but its consequences remain blithely

unexamined. Yet fingers should not be pointed. W. and C. meant for it to be that way. The blame falls on them.[1]

The anthology also omits mention of specific "elder writers" the reader is expected to be "conversant" with. Wu footnotes Shakespeare and Milton, but here Spenser domineers as the elder presence, the voice *Lyrical Ballads* most directly converses with. "Conversant" the word of the hour. Remember it. Forget it.

One final omission of note: the absence of the word "poet," at least in regard to the author's self-references. He refers to himself only as an Author, even though he recognizes that the book is filled with "poems," though poems "to be considered as experiments." Why does he hesitate to apply the title of Poet to himself? What are these experiments, this experiment, that the author abandons the very word we expect him to define himself by?

THE MARINERE

Begin at the end of the beginning. In part VII of "The Rime of the Ancyent Marinere," the long poem that comprises our first encounter with the Author, we come across two references, on lines 555 and 568, set closely together so as not to be mistaken, that point us directly to the book *The Shepheardes Calender,* by Edmund Spenser.

The first reference lends us the most insight. The "Ivy-tod . . . heavy with snow," comes directly from the *The Shepheardes Calender* poem, "March":

1. Wu unintentionally makes this plain in his introduction to *Lyrical Ballads* 1798, when he says of the book: "It is presented separately here . . . preserving the distinctive form in which it was first published—a collaborative venture by Wordsworth and Coleridge." This, unfortunately, is simply false. There is nothing the least collaborative about the form of the initial publication. On the contrary, the book takes pains to inform the reader that it is the work of a single Author. To the public readership of 1798, Wordsworth and Coleridge had nothing to do with the book.

At length within an Yvie todde
(There shrouded was the little God)
I heard a busie bustling.

The "little God" is revealed as "Cupide the Poets God of Love," a God who prefers to remain hidden, the better to aim his arrows. In the poem, Thomalin, gone shooting, scares the God Cupide from his hiding place, and proceeds to attempt to shoot him, *with arrows.* Thomalin's aggression boomerangs, and the boy, unable to strike the God with his arrows, is in turn struck in the heel by one of Cupide's own shafts.

Boy shoots Cupide, Cupide comes after boy. Here is the understory of the Marinere.

"March" and "The Rime" contain broad yet striking parallels. In both poems the central character shoots at a winged creature with arrows, resulting in the shooter undergoing a period of suffering tinged with sweetness. Thomalin's suffering is summarized in his Embleme: *"Of Honye and of Gaule in love there is store: The Honye is much, but the Gaule is more."* Likewise the Marinere, suffering deprivation and the deaths of his crewmates, finds a manner of spiritual release beneath the moonlight, and later in the repetitious telling of his tale, the one-sided conversation he binds those he encounters in. A conversation much like the one the Author engages in with his elders; "The Rime" is simply a reading of the "March" eclogue, elaborating it within the Author's poetic education.

First published in 1579, the season of full bloom for the pastoral poem, *The Shepheardes Calender* overflows with shepherds and sheep, fields and hedgerows. Full of poems that look to pasture land and those who inhabit it as a source of inspiration, the poems are also models of the pastoral's hidden life: to function as an allegorical exercise concerning the writing of poetry. Pastorals are poems about poets and their poems.

The similarities between *Lyrical Ballads* and Spenser's book strike hard. *The Shepheardes Calender* consists of twelve pastoral poems, eclogues, based on the months of the year. These twelve poems were written in a pseudo-archaic English, much

like the English employed in "The Rime," echoing that poem's conversation with one's "elder writers." *The Shepheardes Calender* was initially published anonymously, and preluded with an epistle detailing what types of poems the reader will encounter within, which also refers to the book's "Author," much like the Advertisement in *Lyrical Ballads.* There even exists a mysterious second figure who inhabits *TSC*, E.K., who introduces each poem and at poem's end provides a glossary of notes, replete with opinionated comments. This strange format allows for an interesting layering within each poem: the poems are built of characters conversing, and on top of those conversations rests the conversation between E.K. (whom we must assume is not the poet) and the poems, as well as an implied conversation between E.K. and the poet. The book becomes layered with conversations within conversations within, if we add the use of archaic language and way it speaks to the Author's elders, a larger conversation.

"March," then, is a poem in which two shepherds (poets) discuss the "Poet's God" and that most poetical of subjects, Love. Though the shepherds speak specifically of Cupide, the notion of a Poet's God resonates: what manner of Being, the shepherds conjecture, might this be?

One other line in "March" deserves mention, though whether it influenced the creation of *Lyrical Ballads* is purely speculative. Line 38: "My selfe will have a double eye," becomes curious when placed in context with the question "What is an Author?" or "What is a Poet?" Why shouldn't a self be composed of multiples, for instance two distinct selves, that minimum number needed for conversation?

These references to "March" come at a crucial time in the structure of "The Rime." Though near the end of the poem, they actually occur immediately prior to the start of the Marinere's recitation. In lines 611–18, the Marinere, in answer to the Hermit's question "What manner man art thou?," relates this:

> Forthwith this frame of mine was wrench'd
> With a woeful agony,

Which forc'd me to begin my tale
And then it left me free.

Such was the Marinere's initial act of speech following his ordeal. And after:

Since then at an uncertain hour,
Now oftimes and now fewer,
That anguish comes and makes me tell
My ghastly adventure.

This proclamation of repetitious recitation throws us backward in the poem to line 10, where we first encounter the Marinere beginning his tale. The poem then becomes locked in a loop of conversation via recitation; that we are given the references to *The Shepheardes Calender* directly before being thrown into this loop of poetic conversation appears to indicate the Author means us to be aware of what type of poem this might be: a poem locked in conversation with itself and with its elders, a poem that shares some rather important characteristics with a certain pastoral poem written centuries earlier, a poem about poetry and poets, the process of becoming a Poet—the structure of "The Rime" exactly reflects the Author's situation, as any reader of any present moment is always, necessarily, at the end of his tale, and must return to what came prior to learn to speak and respeak his own story.

THE HUMAN MIND IS THE INTEREST OF THE HUMAN MIND

"The Rime" begins with an argument of which two words bear particular importance: "tropical Latitude." These words signal the poem's ambition. That the poem's Ship will head toward a tropical setting, a place populated with tropes, warns the reader to be ready to enter a world of metaphor, synecdoche, metonymy, a world of poetic language. That the Ship will cross many Latitudes in the process indicates a flexibility of some type to be present within these tropes; there is, perhaps, something

unexpected or odd to be found in them? We have been prepped for a journey into the strange world of language, and what it might do to a person.

Repeated twice in the first forty-some-odd lines:

> The wedding-guest . . .
> He cannot chuse but hear:
> And thus spake on that ancyent man,
> The bright-eyed Marinere.

Repetition. Hypnotization. Speech bewitches. Is powerful. We must listen, we must. The narrator tells the Marinere's tale, and tells of the Marinere's telling.

Part I places us in the circumstances of the Marinere's journey. A tempest drives the ship into a sea of ice and fog. White and cold cover all; it is a place of indistinctness. A blank page, an unrealized thought. More: "Ne shapes of men ne beasts we ken—"; it is a place without nature; the natural world has been removed. And with the removal of the natural world, so go nature's laws.

Then appears the albatross, a white bird in a white scene. A shade of white on white, yet still distinct. The seamen hail its appearance as if it were a "Christian Soul," an angel, a creature of God (a divine being, such as Cupide). They feed it, it flies around the boat, and as it flies the ice splits and they are able to escape its freeze. Here occurs our first true encounter with a tropical, metonymic moment—because of the albatross' appearance, the ice breaks. Reason by association. Because of the albatross, "a good south wind sprung up behind." The bird even "perch[es] for vespers nine"; it worships alongside the Ship's crew, an additional reason for the seamen to attribute the Ship's fortune to the albatross. There is nothing to disturb this association of creature to fortune; we are able to accept the logic of this trope. The scene remains enshrouded in white, however, and is touched with "the white moon-shine" through the end of Part I, when the act that drives the poem occurs.

I SHOT THE ALBATROSS

The crucial act is also the critical act. It is, let's say, a form of reading. By taking aim with his crossbow, the Marinere reads the albatross. It is not an easy form of reading. The albatross remains a white bird on a white background, a moving target barely visible, an unpenned thought circling the empty page. The Marinere, unsatisfied with this state of being, of non-resolution, desires a knowledge beyond acceptance. Is the albatross the cause of the ice's cracking and the wind's blowing? The Marinere looks beyond superstition to cause and effect. If the albatross no longer exists, will the wind still blow? Let's find out, the Marinere says, and shoots.

He kills the albatross; he is competent. He is an able reader, an able critic. No small achievement, this. The job of a critic is to question the text, and he has done his part. By shooting the bird he has disabled the stability of the tropes introduced to us in Part I. His, and our, education is about to commence.

Part II challenges the consistency of the albatross trope almost immediately. The bird is dead, yet line 85 tells us "the good south wind still blew behind." Then a few lines later the Ship's crew chimes in with a criticism of their own: "For all averr'd, I had kill'd the Bird / That made the Breeze to blow." We are being confronted; the crew believes the albatross brought the wind, and to kill it was an evil deed, yet the wind still blows! Their trope of cause and effect doesn't pertain. The crew changes tack:

> Then all averr'd, I had killed the Bird
> That brought the fog and mist.
> 'Twas right, said they, such birds to slay
> That bring the fog and mist.

This changing of mind by the crew signals their instability. They are engaging in an elemental error of logic; the competent critic must therefore be wary of the crew's ability to ascertain cause and effect. As readers our footing unsteadies. If we can't trust

tropes, those foundations of a literary work, we are indeed becoming lost at sea.

And still the "breezes blew," until line 103, when "Down dropt the breeze, the Sails dropt down." This is expected, but our cause for the wind's disappearance has disappeared. The breeze blew for too long after the albatross' death to link its vanishing to the bird's death.

The scene turns ugly. "Yea, slimy things did crawl with legs / Upon the slimy sea," and "The water, like a witch's oils, / Burnt green and blue and white." The crew, with "every tongue . . . wither'd at the root," returns to their initial belief that to kill the albatross was to kill the wind, and for this they blame our critic. Hanging the albatross around his neck they frame him, within the proof of his ability as a critic and within the fault of their logic, as the cause of their distress. His achievement, his ability to perform a difficult critical reading, the crew uses to vilify him. The public, the poem tells us, does not trust a critic, nor can a critic count on the public to be accurate readers.

Part III opens with the Marinere, the critic, doing what he does best, observing:

> I saw a something in the Sky
> No bigger than my fist:
> At first it seem'd a little speck
> And then it seem'd a mist:
> It mov'd and mov'd, and took at last
> A certain shape, I wist.
>
> A speck, a mist, a shape, I wist!
> And still it ner'd and ner'd;
> And, an it dodg'd a water-sprite,
> It plung'd and tack'd and veer'd.

As the object transforms, with his eyes the critic tracks the object's transformations as a text is tracked; he plays detective.

With throat unslack'd, with black lips bak'd
Ne could we laugh, ne wail:
Then while thro' drouth all dumb they stood
I bit my arm and suck'd the blood
And cry'd, A sail! a sail!

Language has left the crew, but the Marinere, keen in his observations, through the self-determined act of biting himself and wetting his mouth with own blood, is able to put forth and introduce language into the community. He does it in the form of a trope, synecdoche, the sail introducing the approach of an entire ship. It is, momentarily, a joyful moment, but as tropes have abandoned their reason, we find the Marinere's description becoming confused as he watches the approach of the ship:

Alas! (thought I, and my heart beat loud)
How fast she neres and neres!
Are those *her* Sails that glance in the Sun
Like restless gossamers?

There is a she to whom *she* belongs:

Are these *her* naked ribs, which fleck'd
The sun that did behind them peer?
And are these two all, all the crew,
That woman and her fleshless Pheere?

A confusion of connection; the woman on the boat and the boat itself seem to share the characteristics described. Even the critic has trouble handling his tropes.

Of the woman and her companion skeleton who inhabit the ghost ship, she is the one we must keep an eye on, for "she is far liker Death than he," with her still fleshy body. She resembles the future: Death awaits. When picturing death we envision the newly dead, a body still composed of its living features. The skeleton is death as we don't see it, buried and hidden death,

forgotten death. He is the Death we don't wish to recall; it is better to be remembered in death as still living. Possessing a body that persists throughout death's future is the strangest, coldest of beautiful existences.

A game of dice is played. The woman wins, and with this victory she decides the crew, all of them save one, must die. And so they do, all except the Marinere. But we must not mistake her intentions; surely, if she had wished death upon the Marinere he too would have died. Rather, she spares the Marinere, she desires him to live. Death rewards the Marinere.

A strange type of reward it seems, initially, as he laments that "Christ would take no pity on / My soul in agony." Yet the fact that he is "Alone, alone, all all alone" allows him a sense of freedom he did not before possess. With the crew gone, he is given relief from their accusations, relief from public judgement. Not at first aware of his new independence, he sees a world ugly with "a million million slimy things" and "the rotting Sea." He attempts to pray, but cannot.

Meanwhile, strange magics are at work on deck. The dead men "Ne rot, ne reek did they." Their bodies do not follow the natural order of decay; the ship has undergone a shift, a changing of space; it exists now in a post-natural world, in which possibility is limitless; the reader can't know what to expect, being unable to trust cause and effect. We have entered an imaginative state of being.

"Seven days, seven nights" pass. In keeping with the Christian references that dot the poem, we should keen to the significance of the amount of time gone by. The world of the Bible was created in seven days, and the Marinere, living through these seven days and nights, is also in the midst of a personal creation story.

Enter the moon:

> The moving Moon went up the sky
> And no where did abide:
> Softly she was going up
> And a star or two beside.

Her beams bemock'd the sultry main
  Like morning frosts yspread . . .

Where before the moon appeared shrouded behind mists, now it appears in full glory, coolly bathing the waters, enacting a change in scene similar to the change in space that occurred several stanzas earlier. The Marinere, ever watchful, ever a reader, turns his gaze to the waters and finds that where before he saw "a million million slimy things," now he sees

  . . . the water snakes
They mov'd in tracks of shining white;
  And when they rear'd, the elfish light
Fell off in hoary flakes.

Within the shadow of the ship
  I watch'd their rich attire:
Blue, glossy green, and velvet black
  They coiled and swam; and every track
  Was a flash of golden fire.

The moon, in conjunction with the space and freedom from judgment the death of the crew allotted him, has given the Marinere new eyes. A burst of emotion overtakes him:

O happy living things! no tongue
  Their beauty might declare:
A spring of love gusht from my heart,
  And I bless'd them unaware!
Sure my kind saint took pity on me,
  And I bless'd them unaware.

A multitude of shifts occur in this stanza. The Marinere's tone turns prayerful: "O happy living things!" A prayer is a form of language oriented toward the future, mindful of what will be, in life and also in death. Here the Marinere too begins to see and relate to language as a beautiful thing. As he tracks

and reads the movement of the snakes, newly beautiful beneath the moon, so do the readers of those stanzas track in their snaking lines a beauty of description new to the tale. The Marinere, who forty lines earlier found himself unable to pray, after passing through a period of (tropical, hot) incubation and new birth (sight) beneath the cool light of the moon, suddenly finds himself spontaneously blessing the creatures and scene before him. Prayer has been visited upon him, and what is prayer if not one of the oldest and surest forms of poetry? The Marinere has begun his transformation into a Poet. And with this welling of poetic feeling and action, the bonds of judgement placed upon him by the public fall away:

> The self-same moment I could pray
> And from my neck so free
> The Albatross fell off, and sank
> Like lead into the sea.

Part IV ends with the transformation of the Marinere from reader/critic to reader/critic/poet, but just as important as his transformation is his survival. Death indeed rewards him, creating for him a personal space in which to reflect and philosophize. This personal space and time are essential to his metamorphosis into a Poet, but another question nips at the Marinere's heels: what exactly does one do with all that time?

One rests. The Marinere drifts into a "gentle sleep." Sleep puts the Marinere in a curious state; his wake and dream lives begin to overlap: "I dreamt that they were fill'd with dew / And when I awoke it rain'd," and "Sure I had drunken in my dreams / And still my body drank." His imaginative and rational minds mix. And more:

> I mov'd and could not feel my limbs,
> I was so light, almost
> I thought that I had died in sleep,
> And was a blessed Ghost.

The blend of dream and reality, the lightness of body, the sensation of being blessed, all are signs that the Marinere has entered and is experiencing a poetic state.

A fit of strange weather again strikes the scene. "Fire-flags sheen," but there are no clouds; the wind roars, but is only a sound; "lightning falls with never a jag," as lightning never does; the wind comes close "And dropp'd down, like a stone!" Everything he says about the weather is unnatural, almost as if his powers of description have not yet been tamed within the framework of his newly bestowed poetic perceptions. As the Marinere describes, dream and reality collide to unexpected effect; the real becomes unreal, the unreal real.

"It had been strange, even in a dream / To have seen those dead men rise." As the crew become the living dead, their ship begins to move again, though without benefit of wind. It has become like the Death ship, powered by forces its crew cannot sense. Again the Marinere is plunged into the midst of a public, but in a different way:

> The body of my brother's son
> Stood by me knee to knee:
> The body and I pull'd at one rope,
> But he said nought to me—

This altered community pays the Marinere no heed, despite his proximity to them. This is a necessary step in his education. Any poet must, for a time, do their work unnoticed; though he works alongside others, a poet works in solitude, for awhile as if amongst the dead. As a poet, the Marinere needs time to find his sea-legs. He is not yet ready to perform the poet's act of speech: "And I quak'd to think of my own voice / How frightful it would be!"

It becomes evident the Marinere is not alone in this poetic state; the entire ship and crew exist within it as well. The crew

> . . . cluster'd round the mast:
> Sweet sounds rose slowly thro' their mouths
> And from their bodies pass'd.

Around, around, flew each sweet sound,
  Then darted to the sun:
Slowly the sounds came back again
  Now mix'd, now one by one.

Sometimes a dropping from the sky
  I heard the Lavrock sing;
Sometimes all little birds that are
How they seem'd to fill the sea and air
  With their sweet jargoning

The noises the crew make sound like and behave like birds. Birds speak through song; poets speak through song:

And now 'twas like all instruments,
  Now like a lonely flute;
And now it is an angel's song
  That makes the heavens be mute.

This stanza's series of metaphors confirms the poeticness of the crew's song, and of the poetic space the ship has become. What does it mean, that a dead crew and a ship moved by an unnatural power are the setting this poet comes to realize his powers within? That to move within the haze of poetry is as close to death as a living person can get? As if on cue, the Marinere "[falls] into a swound," a state of unconsciousness, between life and death. And when he awakes, as if his unconsciousness took him a step closer to death, someway solidified his relationship with death, the dead crew can now see him, and they recognize him as the one who shot the albatross. Their take on the shooting of the albatross has changed, however:

"Is it he?" quoth one, "Is this the man?
  "By him who died on cross,
"With his cruel bow he lay'd full low
  "The harmless Albatross."

The crew now moralizes the critical act of shooting the albatross. Where before it was an act against the crew and ship,

now it is an act against the bird itself. For them the albatross has turned harmless, without power to affect cause. The shooting has become, in their eyes, simply a wicked deed. Yet they are not overly concerned with the Marinere or what he has done. As the second of the two speaking crew members says: "[T]he man hath penance done, / And penance more will do." They then turn their attention to the matter they are more interested in, namely what force moves the ship in the absence of wind.

The first voice assumes the ocean powers the ship. The second thinks the ocean's tides the explanation, though the first dismisses this reasoning due to the speed the ship moves at. The first then urges the ship on, claiming the ship will cease to move when the Marinere's "trance is abated." The passage strange. Several crew members notice the poet and discuss him, yet talk still of the ocean, then turn again to the poet and relate the breaking of his trance with the slowing of the ship. The crew's poor analytical ability persists. Following this reasonless conversation the Marinere wakes, and finds "we were sailing on," despite the crew's claim to the contrary. They now see him fully, and "fix'd on [him] their stony eyes / That in the moon did glitter." He begins to experience the crew's lingering curse, their public judgement, in his new role as Poet. Not yet accustomed to such gaze, it limits his ability to pray, to be poetic. The crew's gaze, their curse, continues indefinitely, until "in its time the spell was snapt." By what, we are not told.

Land is sighted, land that happens to be the Marinere's home; the poet is returning to a place of socialization, yet he still desires to maintain his poetic state, as he prays: "O let me be awake, my God! / Or let me sleep away!" It seems to not matter to the poet which state he is in, dreaming or waking, only that his newly perceptive state persists. This state resembles both the real and the dream, both of which he deems essential for his poetic self to persist.

The Marinere has returned to his country a Poet, and now must go through the process of socialization in his new role. The crew, the public, who in their death have taken on a distance behind which the poet can take shelter, help guide him through this reintroduction to society.

The process is twofold:

I turn'd my head in fear and dread,
  And by the holy rook,
The bodies had advanc'd, and now
  Before the mast they stood.

They lifted up their stiff right arms,
  They held them strait and tight;
And each right-arm burnt like a torch,
  A torch that's borne upright.

The crew members herald the ship's return to land by gathering and together raising their fists, a revolutionary sign. The burning light each arm emits raises the Marinere's neck hairs. He is afraid. What will they do? How will they respond? With revolt? The poet's first experience with the public is tinged with fear and uncertainty; the Marinere looks away. And when he looks back:

Each corse lay flat, lifeless and flat;
  And by the holy rood
A man all light, a seraph-man,
  On every corse there stood.

This seraph-band, each wav'd his hand:
  It was heavenly sight:
They stood as signals to the land,
  Each one a lovely light:

This seraph-band, each wav'd his hand,
  No voice did they impart—
No voice; but O! the silence sank,
  Like music on my heart.

This second experience with his public stands in opposition with the first; now angels stand over the crew's bodies, composed of a light that shines without fire—it is a vision of peace for the

poet, a civil exchange with this crew who serves as his judge. And it is in this peaceful, musical state that the crew and Marinere part, for "Eftsones I heard the dash of oars, / I heard the pilot's cheer." The Marinere again moves amongst the living.

And again we approach line 610, when the Hermit asks of the Marinere, "What manner man art thou?" The Marinere gives an interesting answer:

> Forthwith this frame of mine was wrench'd
> With a woeful agony,
> Which forc'd me to begin my tale
> And then it left me free.

Or: I am a Poet, and being a Poet is difficult. As an artist the Marinere realizes the agonizing catharsis, the entrapment and freedom, that defines him. He is enslaved by his art, but in that very enslavement he understands the freedom of purpose, the purpose of telling his tale. The poem demonstrates this in the very next stanza, where it sends us into a loop of the Marinere's rhyme retold, again and again into the unforeseeable future.

I HAVE STRANGE POWER OF SPEECH

If ever there was a poet's declaration, it greets us in line 620: "I have strange power of speech." And what pleases this Marinere now, who wanders from land to land telling his powerful tale?

> 'Tis sweeter far to me
> To walk together to the Kirk
> With a goodly company.
>
> To walk together to the Kirk
> And all together pray,
> While each to his great father bends . . .

To walk together (walking the movement of feet, poetically metrical feet) with company (with whom the poet would converse)

to pray (be poetic) "each to his great father" (tempting to read as God, but there are many kinds of fathers, all of whom might be great: who is a poet's father, if not those poets who came before?). Are these not the very things the Author sets out to do in the book's Advertisement? To write "poems" using "the language of conversation," while also maintaining a conversation with the author's "elder writers"? So far so good; our author has shot his arrow and hit his mark. We have reason to believe him to be an able reader and critic and poet. Now, what of the rest of the book?

INTENTION AND DOUBTS

In their respective reflective writings, jotted many years after the publication of *Lyrical Ballads,* both Wordsworth and Coleridge allude to an overarching artistic collaboration, kick started by a joint planning of "The Rime of the Ancyent Marinere," that led to the creation of *Lyrical Ballads.* This allusion is purposeful. They mean to distract with the word "collaboration," with the talk of who wrote what, with the petty intricacies of creation. They managed their cover-up impeccably, until the end. Beyond the end. For the past two centuries, in fact.

Biographers and writers of introductions like to fuss over the details of how *Lyrical Ballads* came to be published, and have crafted many speculative passages about potential wranglings between W. and C. and their publishers over what would be printed and in how many volumes and for how much. Viewed from our angle, however, it seems quite clear that the two men knew exactly what they wanted to include in the book, and any vagueness on their part or confusion on the part of the publisher was due to the fact that they didn't want to be explicit about their aims; they desired to keep the Author on the down low. Here follow a few potential pieces of evidence marking their discreet intentions:

1. Coleridge wrote in a summer 1798 letter to Joseph Cottle, would-be publisher of the *Ballads,* in response to Cottle's

idea that the poems be published in multiple volumes, "We deem that the volumes [*sic?*] offered to you are to a certain degree *one work,* in *kind tho' not in degree,* as an Ode is one work—& that our different poems are as stanzas, good relatively rather than absolutely." W. and C., from the spring of 1798 on, seem quite intent on publishing their poems together, under the guise that the publication of one of the men's poems separately would "want variety," as Coleridge states in the same letter and Wordsworth repeats in his Preface to the 1800 edition. A curious excuse, since both men display ample ability to compose poems of various natures across the 23 works contained in the volume. A better explanation of the insistence of "variety," other than as reason to convince the publisher that one volume was best, is as further method for establishing the Author: a multitude of form and tone combined with a consistency of theme are typical of a singular Author obsessing over his subject.

2. The whole Wordsworth-and-Coleridge-went-on-a-walking-tour-together-and-there-conceived-the-idea-for-"The Rime" story is fine and all, but after Coleridge actually wrote the thing and showed it to Wordsworth, Wordsworth perked up like a man bit in the ass and through the spring of 1798 wrote insane amounts of poetry, wrote poetry like only a man *bent on creating something very specific* can write poetry. Like a man possessed. Obsessed. And where did most of the poems written during that time end up? You guessed it. In *Lyrical Ballads.*

3. Rather soon before the book went into official production mode, the two men decided to replace the poem "Lewti" (penned by Coleridge) with "The Nightingale" (also penned by Coleridge). The reason being that "Lewti" had been previously published under the *nom de plume* Nicias Erythracus, and more than one person knew Coleridge to be its author. This may be the most telling pre-publication move the two made in their effort to establish the Author; for if their intention was simply to publish some poems they wrote during a

certain span of time, wouldn't the subtle leaking of authorship provided by "Lewti" have been a good thing? Wouldn't they have wanted the world to know their names sooner rather than later? While the last minute removal of the poem may be a sign some doubts existed about whether or not they wanted to go through with the project, to actually make the switch was a move both necessary and final. It allowed for the birth of an Author such as the two men could only imagine, an Author whose very existence drove Wordsworth to attempt literary double homicide.

INDICATIONS OF REALNESS

Two things:

1. The poems' engagement of the reader makes the poems real.

2. If real poems make the book real, then the real book makes the Author real.

The temptation, given what we know, to read the poems in *Lyrical Ballads* in terms of who composed them, to seek out the differences between a Coleridge poem as compared to a Wordsworth poem, is strong. But if we forget what we know, as we must, our reading changes: instead of searching out differences, we begin to scan the poems for similarities, for consistencies, for we want to know who this Author is; and, given his anonymous state, the only way we can achieve such knowing is through the poems themselves.

We have been told by the book's Advertisement that these are "experimental" poems, but they are soft experiments. They do not flame up in frenzies of political hatred or unbridled lust; on these pages passions are worn lightly. In poems such as "The Thorn," "Goody Blake and Harry Gill," and "The Female Vagrant," tragic situations are made pleasurable

through meter, rhyme, word, a healthy distance always maintained between emotional unpacking and poetic language. The poems often read like the embodiment of some obscure Zen koan:

> Q: How do you make waves quietly?
> A: You don't make waves loudly.

And the conversations. Yes, we are told the poems were written "with a view to ascertain how far the language of conversation in the middle and lower classes of society is adapted to the purposes of poetic pleasure," but "language of conversation" fails to prepare us for the sheer amount of conversation present. In these poems characters speak. Poems speak. Poets speak. In case you require convincing, here is a quick rundown of each poem's conversational nature:

"The Rime of the Ancyent Marinere"
Takes the form of a conversation between the Marinere and a Wedding Guest.

"The Foster-Mother's Tale"
Subtitled "A Dramatic Fragment," the poem is a conversation between Maria and the Foster-Mother, and through its telling of a youth who "set sail by silent moonlight" strikes up a conversation with "The Rime."

"Lines left upon a Seat in a Yew-tree"
The narrator, through written word, speaks to a certain "Traveller" of a man who used to sit in this spot and "gaze / On the more distant scene; how lovely 'tis / Thou seest, and he would gaze till it became / Far lovelier, and his heart could not sustain / The beauty still more beauteous," which, being an apt description of reading, directs the conversation toward the removed reader, the one who via book is reading over the shoulder of the Traveller who is reading the lines left at the site described in the poem.

"The Nightingale: A Conversational Poem"

Q: If you hear the Nightingale's song, how do you respond?
A: In the Nightingale's language. The problem: How does one answer the Nightingale while maintaining contact with the English language?

"The Female Vagrant"

The second line of the poem: "The Woman thus her artless story told." As the poem is an artful thing, this line sets the poem up as a collaboration between the woman and the narrator, the narrator and the reader, the reader and the poet.

"Goody Blake and Harry Gill"

An unfortunate series of events: (1) Goody issues a malediction against Harry, which (2) causes Harry's teeth to chatter, which (3) causes the poem to chatter, which (4) causes the poem to be written in trochees, that most chattery linguistic foot.

"Lines written at a small distance"

A conversation in letter form with the narrator's sister; also echoes the concerns of the Advertisement that a poem elicit pleasure through its form.

"Simon Lee, the Old Huntsman"

A conversation with the reader which describes the narrator's collaborative act with Simon Lee, a summation of which can be found in the penultimate stanza:

> "You're overtasked, good Simon Lee,
> Give me your tool" to him I said:
> And at the word right gladly he
> Received my proffer'd aid.
> I struck, and with a single blow
> The tangled root I sever'd,
> At which the poor old man so long
> And vainly had endeavour'd.

A poetic tale: the word a tool that severs. This stanza (and the one following) reads as premonition for all that is to come.

"Anecdote for Fathers, Shewing How the Art of Lying May be Taught"

An idle conversation between a father and son: idleness leads to conversation, and thus to poetry? The one with the name (the son) is forced into telling a lie, a lie out of which the narrator suffers an agony of self-realization. Premonitions of "The Child is father of the Man."

"We Are Seven"

A strange little poem, in which the narrator addresses "dear brother Jim" and relates the tale of his interaction with a young girl who tells of how she yet speaks to her two dead siblings and continues to count those two amongst the living, so that the five siblings in fact number seven. Absences abound: who is brother Jim? Is Jim perhaps dead? Is this a conversation about an absence tucked inside a more immediate absence? Can it possibly be coincidence that the absent siblings number two?

"Lines written in early Spring"

A wondering at the mental space in which "pleasant thoughts" birth "sad thoughts." The narrator comes to understand that pleasure is willfully discerned; reads as a conversation with those poems in the volume that lighten tragedy with the pleasures of poetic language.

"The Thorn"

An elliptical tautology that presents various textual problems as a means of tracking the problems the reader has in reading the poem. The poem takes the form of a conversation between the narrator and Martha Ray; the narrator reads Martha Ray reading the scene she describes; the narrator's interlocutor reads the narrator reading Martha Ray reading;

the reader reads the narrator's interlocutor reading the narrator reading Martha Ray reading . . . "The Thorn" may be viewed as the model upon which all poems in the volume are to be read.

"The Last of the Flock"

To the narrator a Shepherd relates a tale of wealth gained and wealth lost. Read as a pastoral poem, the Poet/Shepherd raises intriguing questions about unearned prosperity (property) and the guilt that follows one into the ownership of such riches.

"The Dungeon"

"And this place our forefathers made for man!" begins the poem, a harking back to how the "The Rime" has a discussion with its literary forbearers, and perhaps, given the topic of the poem, a speaking out against "The Rime." As well "Lines Written In Early Spring" returns to our minds, echoing the contrast of nature's pleasurably healing powers and the ever present "reason to lament / What man has made of man."

"The Mad Mother"

The titular Mother, revealed via a certain linguistic propensity across the course of the poem to be a poet herself, raises the question: Who is the author of this poem? The Mother? Yes. The Poet? Yes. The poem's voice a collaboration between the two. Again: the poem as a study of conversation.

"The Idiot Boy"

In the vein of the "The Rime," a tale of becoming a Poet: Johny, our Idiot, sets off to wander idly beneath the moonlight, idleness and moonlight both presented in earlier poems as indicators of poetic states of mind—only in this case the one turning poet is composed of two parts: the boy and his pony. The boy's mind wanders through states of poetic wonder while below him the pony does the hard work, carrying

the boy up the mountain's incline, performing the difficult, powerful, vertical act of creating. This collaboration echoes closely a collaboration between two men whose names we now know: one who dreams idly, and one who gets the work done.

"Lines Written Near Richmond, Upon the Thames, at Evening"

The narrator, using the Thames river as a medium, speaks to other poets, both past and future.

"Expostulation and Reply"

A conversation that details the struggle between naming the Author or remaining under the guise of the "experiment"—Wordsworth's issues with this project already are coming into focus, the reader just doesn't yet know that there is a problem. The first stanza alone brings into sharp relief the issue at hand:

> "Why William, on that old grey stone,
> "Thus for the length of half a day,
> "Why William, sit you thus alone,
> "And dream your time away?"

William, a man with a name, sits on what is likely a gravestone. The name sits on a grave: the Author's grave? William sits alone, as his name alone will emerge from this experiment, and yet all he does is dream—claiming his name will mean the Author has been halved, and without the other half William seems unsure how to proceed. In his reply William speaks of "this mind of ours," an odd singularity born of a duplicity, and in the following stanza speaks of the power of conversation, how from it things and ideas (minds? Authors?) are born without the struggle an individual might face. Yet he sits alone, lacking the second mind necessary for the conversation he desires. Where is it? Is it nature? Is it a hidden form, one he doesn't wish to call attention to? Is the mind he seeks the one buried beneath the stone?

"The Tables Turned, an Evening Scene, On the Same Subject"

Again the author struggles with a perceived sense of the twinned self, especially as pertains to the literary life. "Up! up! my friend, and quit your books, / Or surely you'll grow double," he chides, this doubleness the product of "Our meddling intellect / [which] Mis-shapes the beauteous forms of things; / —We murder to dissect." That last one of the grimmest lines in the volume—one senses a plan being hatched, or a plan revealed.

"Old Man Travelling: Animal Tranquility and Decay, a Sketch"

The portrait of the Old Man resembles that of an old poet, one who "moves / With thought," and in whom "All effort seems forgotten." And to where is this Old Man traveling? To take "A last leave of my son, a mariner / Who . . . is dying in an hospital." "The Rime" again returns to our focus, this time portrayed as a son (youthful creation) the poet is now ready to bid farewell too.

"The Complaint of a Forsaken Indian Woman"

In the Indian Woman, left behind by her tribe to perish, we hear a voice similar to that of the Mad Mother, a poetic voice in conversation with her offspring, in conversation with the poet, in conversation with the reader . . .

"The Convict"

The narrator, in the first stanza enjoying some pleasant poetic activity, (seemingly alone, but then the "we" in the first line of stanza two gives us pause: who is he with?) decides to go see the Convict, though is not very happy to do so. He looks upon the convict (reads him), but seems unmoved until the Convict "half-raises his deep-sunken eye, / And the motion unsettles a tear." The Convict knows remorse, is "a sadder and a wiser man." Here conversation takes the form of emotion shared, the revealing of the sympathetic feeling needed for one to be morally unprejudiced.

"Lines Written a few miles above Tintern Abbey"

"Five years have passed; five summers, with the length / Of five long winters! and again I hear" those same sounds he heard five years past: the poem a conversation with the author's past self, in this revisitation of a scene. There is almost too much to say here, so we'll say it at length quickly:

Stanza 1: The author reads the scene before him. E.g., "Once again / Do I behold these steep and lofty cliffs, / Which on a wild secluded scene impress / Thoughts," that is, the cliffs (elevated space, elevated thoughts) are part of the scene; they affect other parts of the scene; one part makes a difference on the whole; it is a composed scene, a composition; a part of the work impresses thoughts upon the whole of the work; the emphasis on the powerful composition of the scene is impressed upon the reader immediately. "Hedge-rows, hardly hedge rows, little lines," recall the hedge-rows of "Goody Blake and Harry Gill" and begin to draft the scene, the hedge-rows on the landscape mirroring the action of enjambment upon the lines of the poem, a landscape with lines of movement equaling lines of syntactic movement. Or at stanza's end the calling up of the book's first poem through inference of the hermit who "sits alone." Really the author's reading of the landscape in the first stanza is not so different from our reading of the book; after all, this first stanza happens to run a convenient 23 lines, and as there are 23 poems in the book, perhaps the subtle signal sounded here is that in "Tintern Abbey" can be found a retrospective of all the poems in the book.

Stanza 2: The author remembers the gift of remembrance, the "sensations sweet" his reading of the landscape in 1793 impressed upon him, and feels gratitude for that gift. More, he credits his recollections of this landscape with "that blessed mood" in which "the heavy and the weary weight / Of all this unintelligible world / Is lighten'd" and "we are laid asleep / In body, and become a living soul," a state of being

that soundly echoes Part V of "The Rime," where the Mariner describes himself:

I mov'd and could not feel my limbs,
I was so light, almost
I thought that I had died in sleep,
And was a blessed Ghost.

Here sits a perfect illustration of our reading problem: the two poems call to one another across the span of the book, blending into a single note that, because of our need to break them into the categories of "Coleridge poem" and "Wordsworth poem," we fail to hear. If we can remember to not hear the distinction, the notes chime as one: there is no distinction.

Stanza 3: Remembering the gift of the blessed mood called up to stem the calamitous ire of living.

Stanza 4: The author realizes that revisiting the scene he so well remembers does not stir the same intensity of feeling; yet this second viewing is useful in its own way, as a lesson for discerning the difference between passion and the abundance of reflective thought. The author then proceeds to compare the reading habits of his youthful 1793 self , who read with "An appetite: a feeling and a love, / That had no need of a remoter charm," and his present day 1798 self, who has "learned / To look on nature, not as in the hour / Of thoughtless youth, but hearing oftentimes / The still, sad music of humanity." These elevated thoughts enable him to read all things as connected, as imbibed with "A motion and a spirit, that impels / All thinking things, all objects of all thought, / And rolls through all things." In this "language of sense" all that we see is textual, contextual, legible; disparate parts hang ably together. Everything can be read; we celebrate the syntactical linkage of things composed.

Stanza 5: The poem becomes a conversation with the author's sister, in whose "voice I catch / The language of my

> former heart, and read / My former pleasures in the shooting lights of thy wild eyes." In her visage is mirrored his remembered self; she possesses the passion he once felt. And as she is as he was five years ago, it stands to reason that she will become as he is today, her "wild ecstasies . . . matured / Into a sober pleasure." As he reads her, so she will read the company she brings to this place, and will too remember him and "these my exhortations!" She will remember his poetic self, will become in effect his future reader who, when he "can no more hear / Thy voice," remembers that "on the banks of this delightful stream / We stood together." She, in living to repeat his exhortations, his poems, becomes us, his readers, who with him revisit this landscape and read it, at first passionately, then later more reflectively, that we might share our readings with those who follow us. In a conversation with his reader, the author plumbs his potential poetic legacy.

Can there remain any doubt concerning the consistency of the poems in *Lyrical Ballads* 1798? The poems establish the book, the book establishes the Author. The Author is real.

Yet with the establishment of the Author, new questions arise. Why in the Advertisement is the Author never referred to as a Poet? Again we return to conversation: conversation in *Lyrical Ballads* is not a simple exploration of the "language of the middle and lower classes," as "Tintern Abbey" makes plain (as do several other poems) with its contradictory use of elevated language; conversation, as the poems repeatedly demonstrate, is about learning, about considering and understanding a problem, and these poetic conversations are obsessed with the idea of how one becomes a Poet. The Author, then, is in essence a Poet on probation—throughout the book Wordsworth and Coleridge repeatedly ask, "Is this how a Poet is made? Were our hypotheses correct?"

All too correct. Correct to the point that with the Author's successful creation the men began sounding a new tune:

> Q: Where do we fit in?
> A: ????????

A PLANT IN WINTER.

A PLAY IN FRAGMENTS. ACT TWO.

THE MAD MOTHER

The participants stand in a semi-circle around a bathtub. All mouths move continuously, as if talking or gasping for air.

ANDREA PIA
Before I drowned them in the tub
I took a bath myself.
Checked my breasts, scrubbed my nails,
Made a goldfish mouth.

A chorus line of topless women performing breast self-examinations high-kicks across stage front beneath a rain of goldfish crackers.

KIDS
Before she drowned us in the tub
Mom made us mac & cheese.
We fed a spoonful to the cat.
Dessert, we popped some Pez.

HUSBAND
I was at work
While she drowned them in the tub.
Heard the news that afternoon.
It didn't register.

On a screen behind the participants is projected actual footage of the initial reports depicting the incident. The revolving strobe of police flashers disorients the AUTHOR *as he struggles over the legs of several well-dressed audience members in an attempt to reach the aisle.*

ANDREA PIA
While I drowned them in the tub
I sang each one a song.
"Lovely baby, do not fear!"
While water filled their lungs.

A singular wail rises from the back of the theater as several participants begin to vomit water.

HUSBAND
I ate lunch with Jack.
She drowned them in the bathtub.
We talked about the game. I paid
What I owed him back.

KIDS
While she drowned us in the tub
Her face was thin and wavy,
Like Sunday turkey topped
With watered-down gravy.

The AUTHOR *storms before the stage front, hoop-eyed and gripping his hair in the tradition of wronged playwrights. "Alex! Alex, you bastard! You've ruined my play!"* ALEX *is the director. The participants are, understandably, distracted, and miss their cue as behind them giant*

marionette china dolls dance in, slowly falling limp and then collapsing to the stage as their strings, one by one, are cut.

NARRATOR
After she drowned them in the tub
She laid them out like dolls
And dressed each body on its bed,
Did their hair in curls.

The AUTHOR *climbs onto the stage and kicks at one the dolls. He doesn't see the figures in flame-retardant suits enter and with blowtorches begin to set the dolls on fire.*

COP
After she drowned them in the tub
She made plain that was the plan:
She said, They needed to be dead,
Those damaged-through children.

ANDREA PIA
After I drowned them in the tub
I grabbed the old steak knife.
But I can't bear the sight of blood;
I couldn't do it twice.

HUSBAND
After she drowned them in the tub—
What do I have to do with this?
I work till I hurt, have to lug
My prick to take a piss.

Twelve men bearing a mikoshi upon which sits a giant erect penis that two women in surgical dress saw at the base of move across stage front.

PROSECUTION
Since she drowned them in the tub,
Why not have her fixed?

Better that we have this pair
Always shoot and miss.

NARRATOR
After she drowned them in the tub
60 Minutes asked
To interview the husband.
She received poor care
And medical treatment,
Was his overt defense.
My kids are the best of what God grants,
He said, in present tense.

ALEX *laughs at the spectacle from the catwalk above the stage. Images of Ronald Wallace and God flash, gradually juxtaposed to reveal . . . ? A noose lowers.*

DEFENSE
She drowned them in the tub:
A chemical imbalance?
It's obvious she suffered
From postpartum psychosis.

Howls.

INVESTIGATOR
After she drowned them in the tub
Their heads all were bruised.
Contusions on rear of cranium.

ANDREA PIA
Why I drowned them in the tub—
Have you ever had a child?
I loved as best I could, but—
Yes, I see it in your eyes,
You recognize the feeling,
You also get the gag!
You're horrified; don't be, it's easy,
Once you've got the hang—

The AUTHOR *continues to kick the burning dolls until his pants ignite.* ANDREA PIA *is lynched by the noose that has dropped from above. The participants kneel before her as she thrashes. Newspaper headlines.*

HUSBAND
She drowned them in the tub.
She really pulled a good one.
I was hoping for kid number six,
Now I'm back to none.

The AUTHOR *climbs into the tub to extinguish himself. He relaxes there. Scattering the participants, a team of firemen rush in with a ladder and cut* ANDREA PIA *down. She collapses to the floor, then rises to stand over the tub.*

KIDS
After mom drowned us in the tub
We don't feel so bored.
We don't feel much anything.

ANDREA PIA *pushes the* AUTHOR*'s head below the water's surface.*

ANDREA PIA
After I drowned them in the tub
I sang them each a song.
"Thou art thy mother's only joy,"
I heard them sing along.

FANCY DIGS

WORDSWORTH *and* BRENNAN DRESSED AS SHEEP *recline in an outhouse.* COLERIDGE *lingers outside.*

COLERIDGE
I can't believe you take naps in an outhouse. Doesn't it stink like shit and piss?

BRENNAN DRESSED AS SHEEP
Who is this jerk? He's rude.

WORDSWORTH
Don't mind him. He's dead.

BRENNAN DRESSED AS SHEEP
He won't go to rot on us, will he? I hate the smell of rot.

WORDSWORTH
It's possible. He's not so well put together.

COLERIDGE
William, it's raining. May I come in?

WORDSWORTH
All right, come on.

BRENNAN DRESSED AS SHEEP
Baaaaaa.

COLERIDGE
It's warm.

WORDSWORTH
The sheep are warm.

COLERIDGE
William?

WORDSWORTH
Yes, Samuel?

COLERIDGE
This is a crappy house.

SPACE MONKEY

Outer space. The AUTHOR, *inserted into a spacesuit so that no part of body or face is visible, hangs suspended above the stage. A disembodied voice speaks the following in surround sound, accompanied by changing music.*

FRANTIC FRANTIC I'M FRANTIC THE BUBBLE HEAD *a*
BOBBING IN INHUMAN UNTOUCHABLE DARK MATTER
WHERE SUN FORGOT NIGHT AND STILL AIN'T HOT
STARS AND STARS AND BAUBLES AND CORN COB GNAWED CLEAN
WHO AM I? I'M LONELY WHO AM I? ALONE *b*
I'M DEATH BY DESERTION I'M THE STING TO GET THE HONEY *c*
SERIAL KILLER PRISON COT URINATED ON AND BURNED
WITH BODY STILL HUGGING SLEEP SOAKED IN THE CROTCH
BECAUSE HANDCUFFS AND NO KEY EQUAL LACK OF LOCOMOTION
WHY AM I HERE AT ALL? WHY AM I HERE AT ALL? *d*
IT'S NOT MY PLACE TO BE WHERE I COULD CONVERSATE
BREATHE THE NOSE RING OF A TEENAGE FACE *e*
DRIVE DUMP TRUCKS THROUGH PEDESTRIAN CROSSWALKS
STOP TO BAG AND DISPOSE OF THE RUBBISH
I'M SPACE TRASH *f*
I'M NOTHING NOBODY WANTED AROUND
I AM BUT AM
RELEGATED TO UNDECOMPOSING PAST *g*
NOBODY SEES ME THROUGH TELESCOPE
NOBODY SEES ME THROUGH BINOCULARS
NOBODY SEES ME THROUGH MICROSCOPE

IT'S NOT POWER OF ZOOM BUT EYE'S ANGLE *h*
A MIRROR THAT CAN BREATHE WHERE NO AIR IS
PERFECTLY PRESERVED AND PURPOSELY
MISPLACED
EYE GLASSES FOR BLIND EYES GROUND BENEATH
HEEL
AND CLAIMED ACCIDENT
HOW KIND OF YOU *i*
I'M THE ANSWER TO WEATHER
WITHOUT FACE TRACE THE FOOTSTEPS I'VE
NEVER WALKED THE MOON
EARTH ORBIT INCHING ME TOWARD ATMOSPHERE *j*
HUMAN PROXIMITY VAST LIVING CEMETERY
IF DESCENDING I SLASH A PARABOLA BRIGHT
ENOUGH PERHAPS
I'LL BE INSCRIBED IN THE ASTRONOMER'S LOG *k*
BOOK WITH NUMBER AND TIME *l*

Music cues: (*a*) *Symphony*; (*b*) *Trip-hop*; (*c*) *Metal*; (*d*) *New Age*; (*e*) *Reggae*; (*f*) *Glam Rock*; (*g*) *Muzak*; (*h*) *Explosions*; (*i*) *Lounge*; (*j*) *Beatbox*; (*k*) *Grime*; (*l*) *fades into Sinatra's "Love and Marriage."*

RAND. *A cemetery.*

RAND
To make a distanced pain of
A leaf of paper,
Tear it.

He tears a sheet of paper into tiny pieces.

Enter BRENNAN, *as played by Robert DeNiro.*

BRENNAN
Look. My pockets are full of coins.

He begins emptying handfuls of coins from his pockets onto the floor.

RAND *drops the torn paper. The bits flutter down, dancing.* RAND *exits and returns bearing a large gravestone on his back. He struggles beneath the weight. He staggers forward. He staggers backward. He walks to the edge of the stage and stands there.* BRENNAN *quits emptying his pockets to watch.* RAND *stands. Totters.*

A SUPERIOR GARDEN

RAND *and* BRENNAN *ride rocking horses.* NUNS *in habit float across the rear of the stage, occasionally stopping to light or blow out one of many hundreds of candles.*

BRENNAN
A garden of the dead?

RAND
Consider two types of garden.
One: the common flower garden. Rose and lily.
Two: the cemetery.
A superior, more useful garden.

BRENNAN
Graveyards are creepy.

RAND
True. But they are a good place to put flowers.

Rocks harder.

The flower a blossom of mourning, and mourning
Remembrance. The truth of afterlife, Heaven,
Is bull. The graveyard the body's best
Hope at immortality. At least, to live
In memory. Death is to be future and past.
I am a baby. I am pre-born. I am
A very old man. The dirt of my grave has been
patted down.

BRENNAN
So where's your grave?

RAND
The Book. The Book is grave, is graveyard,
The Book is death, decay, the Book is grave
And epitaph, remembrance and monument,
erection
Of monument, ruin and poem and death
And monument of quiet, ruin, death, epitaph.

BRENNAN
You said erection!

RAND
The Book is the well-tended garden
Of the dead. It is a superior garden.
It is a superior grave. A superior grave
Contains multiple bodies. Bodies intimately
engaged
In death. Bodies in death classified
Beneath a single name. Flowers fade while the
stone remains.
The sexton piles bones.

BRENNAN
You said bone! What's a sexton?

RAND *ceases his rocking.* BRENNAN *rocks harder. The* NUNS *break into song, a hymn. Each raises a lit candle to her face, where instead of face a skull hangs, jawbone clacking.*

PART TWO,

CONCERNING

THE YEAR 1800.

NON-REDUX.

The publication of the second edition of *Lyrical Ballads* in 1800 was no simple reissuing of a small book of poems. A different book emerged out of that year, vastly different, as different as a book can be that bears the same name as its predecessor. The title page looked like this:

LYRICAL BALLADS,

WITH

A FEW OTHER POEMS.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

BY W. WORDSWORTH.

Quam nihil ad genium, Papiniane, tuum !

VOL. II.

LONDON:
PRINTED FOR T. N. LONGMAN AND O. REES, PATERNOSTER-ROW,
BY BIGGS AND CO. BRISTOL.
1800.

Followed by this content:

VOLUME I.

VOLUME II.

The book exploded. As in, got huge. As in, ruined. In no way does it resemble the book of 1798; though the poems of Volume I remain largely the same, they have been shuffled, rearranged, revised to different effect. This is not a repetition. The book decimated and rebuilt. The book a death; a grave with a stone erected on top.

BOY.

"Or the poem that separates 'Hart-Leap Well' and 'The Brothers'—'There was a boy'? It's not so different from the two that surround it," Rand said, scraping beneath the fingernails of his left hand with the tip of a letter opener. In the near dark of his office it was easy to imagine the thin metal tool as a knife, Rand keeping it handy just in case I proved too much the idiot, to drive me away or finish me off with a quick stab to the chest.

"But it's so short compared to the others. They seem much more engaged with the problem."

"Length doesn't matter. Come on, poet, poetry is compression, right? The length of the other two poems is more a matter of narrative than subject—those stories need space to unfold."

"This poem haunts the page much more than the others."

"Oh, yes—it carries a much spookier tone. Tone alone does not dictate subject matter, however."

"I'm not seeing it."

"Look at the poem. How many paragraphs does it have?"

"Two." The math, at least, was simple.

"What are they about?"

"The first seems to be about the Boy—the second about a graveyard?"

"Ok. The first paragraph. What is the Boy doing?"

I scanned the poem. "He goes out in the woods, or down by the lakeshore, where he calls to the owls."

"He calls to the owls. And what do the owls do?"

I read: "'And they would shout / Across the wat'ry vale and shout again / Responsive to his call, with quivering peals, / And long halloos, and screams, and echoes loud / Redoubled and redoubled, a wild scene / Of mirth and jocund din.'"

"Yes—they respond. The owls articulate an answer. It's as if the Boy and the owls are practically intelligible to one another. And when one party calls and another responds, what term do we give that?"

"A conversation?"

"Exactly. They converse. And more, it is a successful conversation. As successful as the conversations between humans in the other poems, I would hazard." Rand began working on the fingernails of his right hand, a dense accumulation under the nail of his index finger distracting him for a moment. "What happens after the conversation?"

"Uhh . . . 'pauses of deep silence,' 'a gentle shock of mild surprise' . . . "

"A strange thing occurs here," Rand said, tossing his letter opener onto his desk. "This silence that he hears is something else as well, for it 'carried far into his heart the voice / Of mountain torrents.' The question arises—if it is silent, is he actually hearing the torrents? It is unclear where the torrents are—perhaps they are a remembered sound, or a sound born of some remote place within the Boy? This uncertainty is echoed in the next line, when 'the visible scene / Would enter unawares into his mind,' that 'enter unawares' implying that the scene in a sense isn't there, or is an inward landscape—or rather, there are two voices, two landscapes combining within him, the visible and the invisible, and it is this combination that so surprises him. Look at the final line of the paragraph, where the landscape is 'received / Into the bosom of the steady lake,' as a reflection, the lake's bosom mirroring the bosom of the Boy, who has received into his heart something deeper than one receives from merely talking or merely seeing."

"Then the owls, how do the owls fit in?"

"Yes—the owls portray a fanciful conversation, 'a wild scene.' There is conversation, and there is what follows conversation,

imagination. While conversation comprises a necessary part of the equation, imagination works at a much deeper level than fancy; it makes out of silence the sound of mountain torrents, and instills in the Boy something akin to a spiritual reprieve, though it is an 'uncertain heaven' that lingers over this strange mixing of the scene, the seen and unseen." Retrieving his letter opener, Rand began running a fingertip up and down the semi-sharp edges of the blade. "Now tell me about the second paragraph."

I stuck my nose back in my book. The second stanza—what did he want to hear? What could I say that would please him? Something smart but not too smart, something witty but reverent. "It's short," I said.

"Astute observation," Rand said, pushing the tip of the letter opener into the soft flesh of his palm. "Who is speaking here?"

"I don't know, I guess the author of the poem?"

"Exactly, the poet speaks. More specifically, the poet of 1800 speaks, and out of the blue makes the announcement that the Boy, this conversing, imaginative Boy, is dead. What do you make of that?"

"It's sad."

Rand turned a withering gaze my way, sighed. "Well, sure, it is mournful. But what of the graveyard? Why is the poet spending a 'full half-hour' minding this Boy's grave? Did you notice the verb usage here?"

"Verb usage?"

"In that same line, 'A full half-hour together I have stood,' the use of the present perfect to indicate an ongoing action, something begun in the past and carried into the present, echoing the Boy's own experience—remember the Boy 'Has carried into his heart the voice,' present perfect again, as if the Boy is still engaged in that action—"

"But the boy is dead."

"Dead, but not entirely dead. He is being given a second life by the poet who mourns him. Remember 'The Brothers'? After death we live on in the memories of others? So it is with the boy and the man—the man reads the Boy's epitaph on his grave, and through the use of the present perfect we readers

are signaled that some affinity exists between the Boy and man standing at his grave."

"So the Boy is—"

"The Author of 1798. Look how he resembles a poet, engaging in fanciful conversations, possessed of a deeply imaginative sensibility—Wordsworth has killed that immature, experimental Author, but the man who has taken his place would have him remain alive, in memory. As the Boy's conversation with the owls is 'redoubled and redoubled,' as his reading of the seen and unseen landscape is mirrored in the lake, so the poet's reading of the Boy's epitaph is mirrored in the poem itself—as we read we read the epitaph of the Author of '98, the book the gravestone, the poem its inscription."

"The Author of '98 is dead, but not dead?"

Rand slid the blade beneath his fine gray hair and gave his scalp a scratch. "More or less. Look, what Wordsworth realized was this—when you survive an event, you are the afterlife of that event. Though the Author is dead, he lives on in Wordsworth, and in the book itself, this monument Wordsworth erected to remember him by, even if it was an artfully disguised memorial, the Author buried in a place no one would think to look."

"Where?"

"Beneath someone else's name."

"W. Wordsworth?" I said.

Rand pointed the letter opener straight at me. "W. Wordsworth," he said.

NOTES FOR READING THE FIRST AND LAST POEMS OF VOLUME II.

1 A worthwhile project is one that can be projected so far forward it cannot be finished.

1.01 *The Recluse*.

1.1 In "Michael," the final poem in Volume II of *Lyrical Ballads* 1800, the sheep fold being built by Michael and his son Luke takes the form of an infinitely long project, one that might never be finished.

1.12 The sheep fold, in that it was a planned as a collaborative project, one that won't be completed by father or son alone, reveals the two incompatible yet necessary demands plaguing Michael: (1) The claim of child on parent; (2) The claim of the land on Michael.

1.13 Michael reasons: If you sell half the land, you can only keep half the sheep; if you only keep half the sheep, you starve.

1.131 This argument also appears in the Volume I poem "The Last of the Flock."

1.14 If you read the land as you read poetry, you will read about people who worked the land.

1.15 Men who wear coarse clothes feel deeply.

1.2 Luke is an episode in the life of Michael.

1.21 This episode includes conversation, collaboration, and instruction.

1.22 The episode ends. Michael has debts, and sends Luke away to earn money, that he might keep the land. Their partnership comes to a close.

1.23 Land or son: either decision Michael makes is bound to be a disaster.

1.231 F. Scott Fitzgerald: *Nothing any good isn't hard.*

1.24 To sell the land would be to sell his history, his memories.

1.25 Michael possesses a strong connection with the land; he has spent more time with the land than with Luke. It makes sense to him to use Luke as currency to trade in exchange for keeping the land. To exact repayment for the gift of Michael's raising him.

1.251 An unfair debt to log.

1.26 A strong sense of history also infuses Michael. He feels he should do as his forefathers did: die and pass the land down to Luke.

1.27 He remembers: the infant Luke singing at his mother's breast; chasing his laughing son through the sheep pastures.

1.271 Singing: the boy is a born poet.

1.272 Old and young playing together: such as the Daniels in "The Two Thieves."

1.273 As shepherds should be, removed from the economic grind. A shepherd is one not bound by matters of business, who meditates, who gives attention to practice and vocation.

1.274 Otium: a time of leisure. Negotiation: a system bereft of leisure.

1.2741 Josef Pieper: *Leisure is a form of that stillness that is necessary preparation for accepting reality; only the person who is still can hear, and whoever is not still, cannot hear.*

1.3 The landscape and language of the poem duplicate the experience of reading the poem.

1.31 The hills and fields are archival. The certainty of the Shepherd is the certainty of the act linked to the result.

1.32 The poem a distribution of horizontal and vertical motion. Vertical motion challenges the body, yet yields a reward horizontal movement can't give—it enables vision, a view; the big picture is rendered visible.

1.321 Milton: *The top of speculation.*

1.322 Thomas De Quincey: the Literature of Knowledge vs. the Literature of Power.

1.323 De Quincey differentiates: *All the Literature of Knowledge builds only ground nests, that are swept away by floods, or confounded by the plough; but the Literature of Power builds nests in aerial altitudes of temples sacred from violation.*

1.33 The reader takes steps.

1.331 The first lines of the poem: . . . *turn your steps / Up.* We step up the landscape of the poem. We become Shepherds. Poets.

1.4 I am the Second Self.

1.5 Ln. 17: *There is a straggling heap of unhewn stones!*

1.6 A difficulty of language defines the description of the affinity between Michael and Luke, such as that it becomes unapparent to whom which characteristics are attributed.

1.61 The identity of the characters is destabilized.

1.62 Collaboration is fusion.

1.63 Wordsworth: *The Child is father of the Man.*

1.64 Michael is born of Luke's youthful emanations. The mature Poet is formed from his collaboration with the immature poet.

1.65 Ursula K. Le Guin: *Words are events, they do things, change things.*

1.7 Play vs. Responsibility.

1.71 "The Idle Shepherd Boys" tells the story of two shepherd boys, James and Walter, engaged in a dangerous form of play: the crossing of a treacherous rock bridge that spans a deep gulf. The boys are so engaged in their play they fail to hear the cries of a lamb trapped at the bottom of the gulf, until Walter, midway across, identifies the lamb's cry and sees it below.

1.72 Play is abandoned.

1.73 There follows a conversation between the lamb and its mother, a purposeful, vertical series of cries that rise from and plunge into the gulf.

1.74 Before the boys are able to save the lamb a third character arrives, a Poet who plucks the lamb from the gulf and proceeds to chide the boys for their irresponsibility.

1.75 Given that the poem is a pastoral: the boys act poetic in a poetic context.

1.76 The act: crossing the rock bridge; engaging in a dangerous experiment. The context: *Lyrical Ballads* 1798—a hazardous act that doesn't fit with the business of being a Shepherd.

1.77 With the arrival of the Bard the men are mocked by their own creation; for here is a Poet more capable of gathering in the cries issuing from the depths than either of these immature shepherds.

1.78 The poem a bridge between.

1.8 "Michael" is a poem about real estate.

1.81 The question Michael must reckon: Who is worth more to the property itself?

1.82 Two notions of ownership are present: (1) Luke, who we might read as Coleridge, has a claim on the property as Michael's proper heir; (2) Michael, who we might read as Wordsworth, claims ownership by sending Luke away, thinking he has found a solution that will spare them from poverty.

1.83 Only: Luke abandons his responsibility and runs away. What does it mean, that he abandons ship?

1.9 The poem "Hart-Leap Well" is the first of Volume II. It takes the form of a bridge between.

1.901 In the poem Sir Walter (a possible mirror of young Walter in "The Idle Shepherd Boys"?) engages a Hart in an epic chase. He wastes three horses, his dogs die. Eventually the Hart dies on its own. How? We don't know.

1.902 Contemplating the dead Hart, Sir Walter declares that if not for the Hart, no such chase could have occurred. Such a grand chase, Sir Walter feels, is an event that should be memorialized.

1.903 Sir Walter's wonder is triggered by the three marks the Hart left scratched in the earth. The Hart writes; Sir Walter reads the Hart's writings.

1.904 In commemoration of the Hart Sir Walter will erect a pleasure garden.

1.905 Such gardens serving as a standard trope for the study of poetic literature: pleasure gardens have water, shade, are amiable, pleasant places where poets are free to write about the context, content, and destiny of poetry.

1.9051 E.g., the Bower of Bliss in Spenser's *The Faerie Queene.*

1.906 Sir Walter builds his garden and predicts it will stand forever. Signals of his ambition.

1.907 A poem should outlast the language it was written in.

1.908 Part II of "Hart-Leap Well" introduces the beginning of the poem, chronologically. Part I is contained within Part II. Here a poet, our narrator, encounters a Shepherd at

the site of Sir Walter's pleasure garden. They converse. The Shepherd tells the story of Sir Walter; the poet responds:

1.91 Don't blend Pleasure and Sorrow.

1.911 The poet demonstrates this notion within the poem: Part I features the celebratory chase, Part II the mournful contemplation of the decaying garden.

1.912 Except, Part I is included in Part II; yet the mournful air of Part II is not included in Part I. Why the separation? Why not mix elegy and celebration?

1.913 A correlation: *Lyrical Ballads* 1798 is included in *Lyrical Ballads* 1800. They are not mixed.

1.92 The pleasure garden will eventually be lost completely, will be rendered unable to be read; so it is with the English language; so it is with everything.

1.93 Part I of "Hart-Leap Well" echoes back to "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner." Both poems begin with a hunt: in one an albatross is hunted, in one the Hart. The hunting of the Hart replicates the hunting of the albatross.

1.931 As "The Rime" served as catalyst for the 22 poems that followed it in *Lyrical Ballads* 1798, and as *LB* 1798 led to *LB* 1800, given the strikingly similar nature in which the original versions of the two volumes begin we are apt to read Part I of "Hart-Leap Well" as the story of *LB* 1798.

1.932 *LB* 1798 is represented in the poem by the pleasure garden, the monuments erected to the Hart by Sir Walter.

1.933 Sir Walter authors the pleasure garden.

1.94 When Sir Walter dies the Author of 1798 is no longer present.

1.95 Sir Walter builds an artifice and we witness the decay of that artifice.

1.951 *There is a straggling heap of unhewn stones!*

1.96 The poet reflects on what is now over. *LB* 1798 is over.

1.961 *Here in old time the hand of man hath been.* The ruins the present artifact, the archived memory of what once was and is no more.

1.962 Bertrand Russell: *It is difficult to imagine anything less interesting or more different from the passionate delights of incomplete discovery.*

1.97 What happened? 1798 is over, but how should the poet think of the event of 1798?

1.971 Elegiacally. As evidenced by the 37 poems that follow.

1.98 The Shepherd puts forth an argument concerning the Hart similar to one found in "The Rime" regarding the albatross: The death of the Hart is what killed the landscape. Something killed the Hart, but the Hart should not have been killed. The Hart was crucified.

1.9801 Luke was crucified.

1.981 The poet answers: In this thinking we differ slightly.

1.982 Nature allows the pleasure garden to decay slowly, so that people will know what has been by reading the ruins, by pondering the ruins, so they may go on to create further ruins.

1.9821 Susan Sontag: *Time exists in order that everything doesn't happen all at once . . . and space exists so that it doesn't all happen to you.*

1.983 We would not know Time without ruins.

1.984 Ruins project us into the future.

1.99 To contemplate the ruins of a thing signals the worth of that thing.

THE BOOK IS THE EPITAPH OF THE POET.

BROTHERS

The poems in Volume II of *Lyrical Ballads* 1800 were composed between the years 1798 and 1800. All were composed by Wordsworth. The man plainly had a thought to think. The nature of that thought? What, exactly, happened in 1798, and how he would move forward following that event.

The third poem in Vol. II, "The Brothers," like many of the Vol. II poems, serves as an allegory for the relationship between Wordsworth and Coleridge—their collaborative, poetic relationship. The poem centers around two brothers, one of whom, Leonard, is a Mariner, taking us back to the Marinere of "The Rime," the critically able seaman who becomes a Poet. The form of the poem, a dialogue, holds echoes of part VI of "The Rime," in which two Voices attempt to figure out the situation they find themselves in. These dialoguing Voices resemble the conversation that Leonard, returned home after years at sea, has with the village Priest, as he attempts to figure out what happened while he was away.

The poem opens with the Priest describing several types of Tourists, Tourists being people who read the landscape:

1st reader: the kind that "glance[s] along."
2nd reader: the ones that "Sit perch'd with book and pencil on their knee": the close reader.

3rd reader: “that moping son of Idleness”: the melancholic and fanciful reader.

Leonard appears to the Priest as a Type 3 reader, but as these three types each compose a part of the unavoidable procedures all readers go through, we realize the Priest, in dividing the Tourists into such distinct categories, is himself an inexperienced reader, his judgment erroneous. The lesson: everyone reads, and most read badly.

Though away at sea for twenty years, Leonard carried his home with him the entire time. He often sailed “Between the tropics,” that is, between tropes: he thinks tropically, or metaphorically: in ocean waves he saw his home, the “mountains . . . the forms of sheep that graz’d / On verdant hills”: he is a Poet.

On returning home Leonard notices the errors present in his memory of home. He is very attentive to the landscape, the changes in the landscape, his gaps in recognition. Leonard wanders the graveyard, where he looks for what might be new graves, in particular for a grave that might be his brother’s, being unsure whether his brother is alive or not; but as all the graves in the village cemetery are unmarked he grows confused, unable to discern if what he remembers is true or not. His description of his confusion, the “Strange alteration wrought on every side,” describes a reading problem: the passage of time. Changes to a landscape happen so frequently and are so similar they often go unnoticed, unless one hasn’t visited a given landscape for a long time (“Tintern Abbey”). Death happens to scenery. Landscapes, those syntactical creatures, articulate history; they link past to present.

Leonard tells the Priest of his experience of time; the Priest disagrees with Leonard, then agrees—he tells Leonard the story of the two springs, one of which was “rent with lightning” and wiped out—the Priest knows the natural history, the changes and deaths of this place intimately.

And yet, Leonard counters, your graveyard has no stones. Such careless tending of the past proves you are no historian.

What silliness, says the Priest. We have no need of gravestones. The people of the village bear the record of what has happened.

Or: we are carried past death as we remain alive in the thoughts of others. Imprinted in memory, as text is printed on a page.

It happens the grave Leonard stands on is that of Walter Ewbank, his Grandfather, the man who raised him and his brother James. The Priest begins to tell Leonard the story of Leonard's family; the Priest, we discover, is a true historian of Leonard's past.

Walter, the Priest says, "was a father to the boys, / Two fathers in one father." Several connections spring to mind: Sir Walter, the Poet figure from "Hart-Leap Well"; as well as Walter's duplicity, being composed of two men in one man's body, much like our Author of '98 was singular yet born of two.

The Priest, prompted by Leonard, shares the story of the two brothers. This is the story of Wordsworth and Coleridge, Wordsworth portrayed by Leonard and Coleridge by James.

The brothers collaborate intimately.

Leonard carried James to school on his back—a partnership reminiscent of "The Idiot Boy," the workhorse and the dreamer.

The Priest, unaware of Leonard's identity, shares with him the story of Leonard's own childhood—he lives a second life through the Priest's memory.

The boys went to church together, they explored the landscape "like roe-bucks," they "could write, aye and speak too, as well / As many of their betters": they came close to being Poets, did these boys. They conversed with school books, with scripture, with nature, with each other, as did Wordsworth and Coleridge.

This is the obsession of *Lyrical Ballads* 1800: remembering the experience of collaboration between W. and C.

The Priest tells Leonard the story of James after Leonard had gone to sea: James, who remained home and worked as a Shepherd, without Leonard grew listless, fragile, emotionally delicate, dependant on other people. The Priest reveals James died in a fall from a precipice (vertical death—a fall out of poetry), and conjectures that he fell asleep in a high pasture and rose in a sleepwalk in which "to the margin of the precipice [he] / Had walked."

Leonard leaves the Priest, and, sitting beneath a cluster of trees, reviews

> All that the Priest had said: his early years
> Were with him in his heart: his cherish'd hopes,
> And thoughts which had been his an hour before,
> All press'd on him with such a weight, that now,
> This vale, where he had been so happy, seem'd
> A place in which he could not bear to live.

This collaboration, this event of 1798, spooked Wordsworth. "The Brothers," and the rest of 1800, is largely a denial of Wordsworth's initial dependence on Coleridge as the inspiring force behind the collaboration and its success. How would Wordsworth continue? By turning the tables on Coleridge, by killing him off again and again through means of the very gift Coleridge bestowed upon Wordsworth—poetry itself.

With James dead, Leonard returns to his life as a Mariner. He will sail the tropics until he dies.

A PLANT IN WINTER.

A PLAY IN FRAGMENTS. ACT THREE.

MARRIAGE MART

RAND *and* BRENNAN *prepare to be married in a Wal-Mart parking lot.*

PREACHER
Do you, Rand, take Brennan to be your?

RAND
My what?

PREACHER
Do you, Brennan, take Rand to be your?

BRENNAN (*wearing a smiley-face mask*)
I do.

PREACHER
I now pronounce you.

RAND *and* BRENNAN, *with very different facial expressions, exit the parking lot through the backdrop,*

which is a Wal-Mart storefront. As they leave, Wal-Mart employees shower the couple with smiley-face confetti and broken shoelaces.

RACE TO THE PRIZE

Sunrise. The theme music to Chariots of Fire. RAND *and* BRENNAN *enter in the middle of running a race. They run in slow motion. Enter, stage opposite, a* POET, *bearing a dead lamb in his arms. He lays the lamb on the stage and, drawing a knife from his belt, severs the lamb's left ear and places it between his front teeth. Facing the audience his face is an expression of intense biting. He leaves. As the two men continue to race their movements grow increasingly slow until, motionless, night falls.*

FLEXIBILITY

RAND *and* BRENNAN *sweat it out in a gymnasium.*

RAND
Triangle.

BRENNAN *attempts to form a triangle with his body. A* RICHARD SIMMONS LOOK-A-LIKE *bounces behind him, ready to assist.*

RAND
Square.

BRENNAN *attempts to form a square with his body.*

RAND
Circle.

BRENNAN *attempts to form a circle with his body.*

RAND
Octagon.

BRENNAN *attempts to form an octagon with his body.*

RAND
Line.

BRENNAN *stretches in a line on the floor.*

RAND
The body is the mind.
The poem a geometric proof.
A stimulant is wanted, such as
Exercise.

Thought is now present and abundant.
It is not a happy time.
Rigor and problem are learned.

AN ARGUMENT

RAND *holds* BRENNAN *at gunpoint.*

RAND
Give them back!

BRENNAN
I can't.

RAND
You stole my thoughts. I want them.

BRENNAN
I don't have them.

RAND
Where are they?

BRENNAN
I thought them.

META FOUR

Darkness. WORDSWORTH, BRENNAN, COLERIDGE *and* RAND *stand shoulder to shoulder. Each man holds a flashlight that he lights under his chin as he speaks.*

WORDSWORTH
A woman's breast
Awaiting its unborn's warm milk

BRENNAN
Noon's grass
Wanting night's wet

COLERIDGE
The moon, new

RAND
Trout in too shallow a stream
Writhing the sound of rainfall in mud

WORDSWORTH
Torch in the high hand of a diver
At cliff's edge, caring not for what dent
It bends into the darkness
But for the fall, the relentless
Exhilaration of extinguishing

BRENNAN
A tea kettle gathering
Into itself those clouds
That know how to whistle

COLERIDGE

The lover's hair pinned
Up on the fine
Skull when let down
Blankets her back
Like fragrant fall
Leaf

WAIT TILL PLEASURE INTERVENES.

PREFACE

Embedded in the front matter of the the 1800 edition of *Lyrical Ballads* is a long-winded, tautologically-driven Preface, written by W. Wordsworth. Its central arguments are as follows:

Passion by definition cannot be verbalized. When you have too much to say and no words to say it, but if you try anyway, if you try to say what you have no words to say because you have too much to say but because to verbalize your passion is to squelch it you don't want to say it, but anyways if you try to say it and you have no words to say it

you will repeat yourself.

Words oft repeated in the Preface:

feeling

passions

impulses

thought

pleasure

pain

excitement

Pleasure is irreducible, it cannot be contested—we all take pleasure in pleasure.

Q: How does pleasure happen in literary language?
A: By writing in verse.

A Poet has a contractual obligation to both reader and to language—a Poet must possess a purpose, and each poem must speak to that purpose.

Q: The purpose of poetry?
A: To impart pleasure.

To share the experience of pleasure is difficult, but poetry employs special tools to do this work:

METER and RHYME

render passions plausible.

Meter adds effect to insufficient passion within the words themselves, allowing the reader to more easily access the passion the Poet wishes to convey.

“emotion recollected in tranquility”: a pathetic: the absence of pathos needed in order to recall, or invent, pathos

THE POWER TO OVERCOME THE DISABLING POWER OF THE MIND

PREFACE (POET REMIX)

In 1802 something strange happened. Another edition of *Lyrical Ballads* was issued, similar to the 1800 version, except that Wordsworth snuck a substantial addition into the middle of the book's Preface. In that addendum could be found these lines:

I ask what is meant by the word Poet? What is a Poet? To whom does he address himself? And what language is to be expected from him? He is a man speaking to men: a man it is true, endued with more lively sensibility, more enthusiasm and tenderness, who has a greater knowledge of human nature, and a more comprehensive soul, than are supposed to be common among mankind; a man pleased with his own passions and volitions, and who rejoices more than other men in the spirit of life that is in him; delighting to contemplate similar volitions and passions as manifested in the goings-on of the Universe, and habitually impelled to create them where he does not find them. To these qualities he has added a disposition to be affected more than other men by absent things as if they were present; an ability of conjuring up in himself passions . . . whence, and from practice, he has acquired a greater readiness and power in expressing what he thinks and feels, and especially those thoughts and feelings which, by his own choice, or from the structure of his own mind, arise in him without immediate external excitement.

Tautology = Passion: see how many times he uses the word "more" or the word "greater" in describing the kind of person a Poet is? A Poet, framed within W.'s passion, must be a "more" person, a self greater than one's everyday self. A capital "P" Poet. An invention, a figment existing outside one's self in a higher, purer realm of being: the imagination—and wouldn't it be easier to create this Poet if he didn't have a name? An absence necessary for an invention?[1]

1. Remember "Kubla Khan"? That visionary fragment of a poem visited upon Coleridge while his brain was or wasn't soggy with opium? The one his attention was so famously wrenched from in the middle of composing, whose flown lines he could never recapture? Remember when "Kubla Khan" was composed? In 1797. Immediately prior to the whole *Lyrical Ballads* explosion. Where was Coleridge's mind at this date? Engaged in perpetual conversation with his friend. Thinking. Thinking in his poems. Can "Kubla Khan" be read as a piece of this conversation?

That question, if you read the poem with *Lyrical Ballads* in mind, with this reading in particular in mind, quickly becomes: How can "Kubla Khan" not be read as part of the *Lyrical Ballads* conversation? The poem charts a blueprint for the project. Coleridge was visited with a vision, but rather than a vision unrealized, it became a vision realized perfectly. It just happened that Wordsworth did most of the realizing, which Coleridge knew was the only way the idea would be born out. He was a man in touch with his limitations.

The poem, in brief: In the first stanza we meet Kubla Khan the Poet in the act of creating a poetic landscape (a pleasure-dome populated with gardens, rivers, etc.). Within that landscape is nestled a "deep romantic chasm," the verticalness of the cavern an indication of some serious poeticalness in the works. Sure enough, we find the chasm a "savage place . . . holy and enchanted," rich with the poetic state of being, and within that chasm lives a "mighty fountain" whose "swift half-intermitted burst" proceeds to enact some strange action on the rocks and the sacred river, and in the after-effects of this fountain's poetic outpouring Khan hears "ancestral voices prophesying war!" (elder poets) and then our gaze returns to the pleasure-dome. Oh, what has the pleasure-dome become? It appears "a miracle of rare device, / A sunny pleasure-dome with caves of ice!" The dome has been rendered into disparate parts: the "sunny" dome visible for all to see, coupled with the dark, hidden caves within. The visible, poetic dome is endowed with the invisible in "mingled measure," mingling suggesting conversation, measure suggesting song, or poetry: a poetry of conversation. In these three stanzas lies *Lyrical Ballads* 1798.

Then the poem swerves sharply. We leave the third-person description of Poet Khan and his pleasure-dome and are thrust into a first-person POV, the narrator or poet speaking directly to his readers. He describes a vision (a vision nested within a "vision") of an "Abyssinian maid," a bard, a poetess, whose song is the poetry he wishes he could revive within himself. The maid, someone who can sing easily and sweetly, is what Coleridge needs; someone able to "revive within me . . . symphony and song." Coleridge understands that his poetic powers are weak; he is unable to produce poems in scope or scale to match his grand vision. He needs a maid; he finds that maid in Wordsworth. The poet tells us that with a collaborator he "would build that dome in air, / That sunny dome, those caves of ice!" Together they create a place of pure poetry, a place untethered to the earth or marred by human baseness; they would create a book (for in books we find the true landscape of poetry) unbound to the gross humanness of its writers. Together they would make a Poet.

But wait—this Poet instills in those able to see him a strange reaction: "Beware, beware!" they cry. "His flashing eyes, his floating hair! / Weave a circle round him thrice, / And close your eyes with holy dread— / For he on honey-dew hath fed / And drank the milk of paradise." (Does he not remind you of the Marinere, with his "glittering eyes"?) This Poet is no weakling; he is rather a force to be reckoned with, a dangerous creation. Having "drank the milk of paradise" he is more than human; who knows what he is capable of? Upon being created he must be contained, encapsulated, so "Weave a circle round him thrice." This second half of "Kubla Khan" mirrors *Lyrical Ballads* 1800; the realization of the experiment must be confronted, the Poet must be managed, brought back down to earth, even buried within it.

The vision of *Lyrical Ballads* is Coleridge's through and through, but he knew he couldn't manage it alone. He knew the Poet would bring with him a treacherous reality, one that would perhaps need to be done away with. What he couldn't foresee was how thoroughly Wordsworth would enact that birth and death, or that he himself would be a casualty of the *LB* battleground.

Wordsworth's description of the Poet perfectly fits the Author of 1798, except that Wordsworth, in stamping his name upon the book, is telling us that he wrote the Preface, and that he is the Poet described within. He misleads us from this simple fact: the Preface, a portrait of the Author of '98, ensures the Author's existence, ensures the Author's erasure.

The Poetic self. The figment is what is real.

A PLANT IN WINTER.

A PLAY IN FRAGMENTS. ACT FOUR.

IN MEMORY OF HAL

The AUTHOR *hangs suspended above stage in space-suit. The* POET *enters holding the dead lamb, dripping blood where its ear was severed. The opening bars of Strauss's* Thus Spoke Zarathustra *play in loop.*

POET
Being human, this makes you happy.

AUTHOR
RE-SOUND

POET
Being human, this makes you happy.

AUTHOR
REPETITIVE VOCALIZATION
FORMS HARMONIOUS
SPEECH REDONE IN WAVELENGTHS

POET
Where a theme of sound exists,
Behind it lives a theme of thought.

AUTHOR
EXPECT FROM SYNAPTIC RECEPTORS
AURAL ECHOES OF CURIOUS
VOLUME

POET
From some depth,
A theme to spring.

AUTHOR
THEORIZED RECALL AS SUBCURRENT
OF BASE MODE REFRACTION ACROSS
TYPICAL NEURAL RESPONSE
IDENTIFIES KEEN INVOKATION
  FOCUSED
ONTO EPIGLOTTAL EXTENSION

POET
Being human, this makes you happy.

The AUTHOR *descends to the stage. The* POET *sets down the lamb and stands next to the* AUTHOR. *He removes the helmet from the spacesuit. There is nothing inside. The* POET *places the lamb inside the empty spacesuit and launches it skyward.*

NO COLOR HERE

Behind a backlit screen stand two shadow figures: DEATH I *and* DEATH II. *While the narrator speaks the two* DEATH*s repeat these three actions, in random order:*

- *They kiss passionately.*
- *They draw swords and fight.*
- *They separate. They converge. They wail like dogs.*

NARRATOR
His songs of war
Are casually mistaken
For songs of calm *amor*.

Like a dog's urinations,
Here
Is his territory.

His songs have earned
A remote celebrity.
He won't sign autographs.

He is Danish.
That undead feeling.
Feline, unenterable.

Repeat until shadow-figures have exhausted possibilities.

As the NARRATOR *waxes silent, the two* DEATH*s stand directly in front of/behind one another, so as to appear like one Man.*

SELF RECOVERY

BRENNAN, WORDSWORTH, RAND *and* COLERIDGE *stand in garbage cans. Each can is spotlit. Behind them stand three figures in silhouette.*

WORDSWORTH
The garbage can the hole where your self is
thrown.

RAND
Espial.

WORDSWORTH
For hours at the oblation table
Inventing loss.

COLERIDGE
Talk with the boy
Alive minus living.
Bored with his company
Talk to yourself.

RAND
Autumn keeps happening

WORDSWORTH
To fall away . . .

Spotlights shift to shadow figures, effigies that immediately melt.

WHERE IS THE CAPTAIN?

The Santa Maria. MONA LISA, *as played by Kate Winslet, stands at the prow, arms spread in flight.* BRENNAN *stands on deck, with spyglass. He dictates to* MONA LISA, *who repeats after him.* CHRISTOPHER COLUMBUS *is nowhere to be seen.*

BRENNAN
Dear Rand,

Apology for the book debacle.
Heat of mind a jalapeno seed.
Nature's hatchet double-bladed.
However happily epigrammatic in duration, still a blight when face-to-face.
Boy but is keen-felt.
If books remain erupted gladly I to their prior standing will return them.
Let it not be too late.
I say let it not be while thinking let it be.
Let books find new order.
Spines in strange-to-the-eye arrangement.
Read different.
Lines drawn between dots reveal unexpected objects and animals.
As if spirit-life.
Mine anger told me mine spirit I am escaping.
Said spirit, You.
Specific moment of wide unearthly feeling.
I pick through plotted particulars.
Understand if you want we to meet no more.
You say good riddance.

Thank you in advance for preceding past with future.
Wasn't it all along your intent, I think.

Passed into face,

Brennan

ADVENTURE STORY

PETER PAN, *on his knees. His wrists and ankles are bound. On the stage behind him wait a cloth sack and a machete.*

PETER PAN
I once knew a girl.

HEATHCLIFF
Was she cruel? Did she snip by snip trim the heart from your body with a pair of slow scissors? Has your manhood been a long revenge for her careless disposal of your boyhood? Does her spirit wrap its legs around your head?

PETER PAN
Her name was Wendy.

HEATHCLIFF
Why do you hate her, Pan? Why do you love her forever?

PETER PAN
I sent her flying on a kite. I've never been a man.

HEATHCLIFF
Answer the question!

PETER PAN
She was a gift. I gave her away willingly.

HEATHCLIFF
That's a lie.

PETER PAN
Yes.

HEATHCLIFF
I knew it! My face is ablaze with it.

Is distracted. Reaches out a hand, as if to touch.

Is it you?

PETER PAN
What is it? What do you see?

HEATHCLIFF
Some food I cannot eat. Pan, it's time

PETER PAN
Am I going to die?

HEATHCLIFF
You are.

PETER PAN
To die will be an awfully big adventure.

HEATHCLIFF *slips the cloth sack over* PETER PAN*'s head. They prepare for the execution.*

A HALFPENNY WILL DO.

ANDREW JONES HAS A NAME

"I'm just not seeing the why of it all," I said.

Rand slumped lower in his chair. "The why of what all?"

"Why Wordsworth did all this. Why he got all poetically murderous. What's his motivation?"

"Well—It's all spelled out in the last stanza of 'Tintern Abbey,' really, where the Author of 1798 makes it clear he is concerned with his legacy, with how future readers will perceive him, and read him. But Wordsworth realized he was not the Author of '98. Which raises a problem—what would become of his legacy? Would anyone know of him and his work, if he continued to let the Author live? And if he killed the Author, his relationship with Coleridge must come into the light, and what was he to do about that? Did he owe Coleridge for the idea, or was the whole *Lyrical Ballads* endeavor really his, as he had done 90% of the actual work? Imagine you're working on a group project: you do almost all the work, but then someone else convinces you to not take credit for any of it. You're not happy, right? Property was at stake, and Wordsworth was set to make a move to claim it as his own."

"Through the poems?"

"Of course through the poems. How else could it be done? Let's look at one—how about 'Andrew Jones'?" Scratched, torn, its innards spotted with unidentifiable stains, Rand's copy of *Lyrical Ballads* looked like it had been tossed into the middle of a cockfight. He flipped pages. "It comes across as a toss-off on first read, but there's some interesting stuff happening here.

"Before delving into the text itself," Rand began, "let's get our bearings with the poem as a physical object. Look at it: it's short. Seven stanzas of five lines apiece. A quick line scan reveals the meter to be in iambic tetrameter for the first four lines of each stanza, with the fifth line varying between tetrameter and trimeter. This jaunty four beat line, especially when coupled with the occasional swerve into the three beat line, reminds us of the kind of line and rhythm more often seen in the first volume of *Lyrical Ballads*. Whether this echoing of Vol. I bears any significance—we shall see.

"The title, the first words of the poem that we encounter, appear on the page as such: 'Andrew Jones.' A period is included in the title. Whether or not this period was an inclusion of Wordsworth's, or if the publisher added it, or if it's merely a convention of this text, I don't know. It is not a common feature in all the editions of *Lyrical Ballads*, I've noted. The period provides an interesting starting point for the poem, however. The period causes us, governed as we are by the rules of punctuation, to halt. We are forced to stop and regard the title not simply as the introduction to the poem, but as its own semantic phrase endowed with its own unique structure and meaning; the title is, in effect, a sentence. This gesture is especially subtle in the case of this poem, as the sentence we are provided is one of the most recognizable types of phrase in any language, a proper name. That the name is introduced to us as its own sentence hints at the notion that the name may be a more complex structure than we are apt to consider it.

"And if a single title can act as a sentence, so too can an entire book. Poems linked syntactically, to be read as parts of a whole. Take 'Andrew Jones.' The poem previous, 'To a Sexton,' makes mention of 'Andrew's whole fire-side,' an Andrew who

could be the same as the one in the following title; and the plot of the title following, 'The Two Thieves,' is closely linked to the action in 'Andrew Jones.' The poems are given an ingenious physical arrangement, which allows them to converse with one another without being overly obvious about their chatter. Are you with me?"

I nodded.

"Good. Onward. Before we continue into the text of the poem let's return to the title. While we have already discussed certain ways in which the title is doing work, we have not discussed it in relation to the poem it is the title of. As we begin to read the poem we realize that the most important fact about the title 'Andrew Jones' is its status as a name. To begin to see the role it plays, we must first consider that the title of a poem, any poem, is a proper name. So by being designated title of the poem, 'Andrew Jones,' the proper name of a person, becomes a proper name within a proper name. While we are not yet ready to delve into the significance of this fact, it plays an important role in our reading of the poem. We'll get back to it.

"The poem. The first two lines of stanza one present us with a quick study of Andrew Jones. Four facts are given straight away: the narrator of the poem hates Andrew Jones, there is a man named Andrew Jones, Andrew Jones has children, he is going to bring his children up 'to waste and pillage.' The common thread connecting these facts? They are all things that Andrew Jones possesses. He possesses the narrator's hate, he possesses a name, he possesses children and the ability to 'breed [them] up' in a certain manner. All of these things point to Andrew Jones' status as a man of society. That he has acquired somebody's hate (and the fact the narrator wishes to 'sweep him from the village!') shows his role within a community. To have a name may not seem unique, but when looked at in the small community of the poem we notice that Andrew is the only character to be given that distinction. That he has children implies that he has or had a wife, that he has a family implies a house, a house implies all the things that fill a house, a family and house imply a job, etc. In short, he is a man of property.

"'I hate that Andrew Jones: he'll breed / His children up to waste and pillage.' Here the narrator seems to be setting us up for the familiar story of the man of property who becomes possessed by his possessions, or who, because he possesses much, thinks little of losing. Immediately following, though, we encounter these three rather mysterious and wonderful lines: 'I wish the press-gang or the drum / With its tantara sound would come, / And sweep him from the village!' The press-gang and the drum, coming so early in the poem, are as yet difficult to get a grip on; we shall return to them when they recur later in the poem. For now we are concerned with that third line. Is the narrator, by claiming his dislike for Andrew Jones, also claiming his dislike for ownership of property, and in turn, by wishing to expel Jones from the village, calling for a community in which property is eschewed?

"The narrator, while providing further reason for his dislike of Andrew Jones in stanza two, sketches a brief yet interesting scene. The narrator first feels the need to make it clear that Andrew's everyday behavior is not the cause of his dislike; the fact that Andrew 'loves / Through the long day to swear and tipple' he has no problem with. Rather, it is 'for the poor dear sake of one / To whom a foul deed he had done,' that sours the narrator's mouth. And to whom was this deed done? To 'A friendless man, a travelling Cripple.'

"The character of the Cripple provides a stark contrast to the sketch of Andrew Jones drawn in the first stanza. Whereas we found Andrew to be a man of considerable property, the Cripple seems a man who has claim on nothing. He has no name, other than the designation of 'the Cripple,' a characteristic of his physical state rather than of owned property. He is friendless, and so has no claim on his fellow men. He is also said to be traveling, so it could be assumed that he hasn't a home, either. No name, no friends, no home: he is a man without community, perhaps even a man without conversation. Here lies the central conflict of the poem: an incident that occurs between Andrew Jones, a man with a claim on much property, and the Cripple, who has virtually no property of his own.

"The narrator, in the first line of stanza three, makes sure to draw our attention to the hapless state of the Cripple: 'this poor crawling helpless wretch,' he calls him. He emphasizes the Cripple's inability to act for himself, his physical limitation of movement, as well as paints a figure who arouses pity in others. The Cripple bears every disadvantage.

"The result of the pity roused by such a pathetic figure appears in the next lines: 'Some Horseman who was passing by, / A penny on the ground had thrown.' The Horseman plays a central enigmatic role in this poem. He appears for only this moment, yet his act of tossing the penny provides the catalyst for the incident about to take place. He also seems to share characteristics with both Andrew Jones and the Cripple; that he rides a horse and possesses money to give indicates that, like Andrew, he too is a man of property, yet like the Cripple his distinguishing traits are revealed through his physical circumstance. At the moment he appears in the poem he happens to be on a horse, and so becomes the Horseman. His tossing the penny to the Cripple might also indicate that he believes everyone to be equally capable of possessing property, and that wealth should be distributed. But there are facts which hinder this distribution of property: 'the poor Cripple was alone / And could not stoop—no help was nigh.' The penny has been tossed from a high place to a low place. Vertical movement, a common theme throughout *Lyrical Ballads*—this verticality once again brings to mind Thomas DeQuincy's notion of the Literature of Power, of deep and/or lofty intellectual thought and prowess. The Cripple, unable to move vertically, has no access to the gift of property, of power, of poetry, that the Horseman has thrown him. He is unable to access it because 'no help was nigh,' an implication that if the Cripple had help, if he had someone to collaborate with, he would be able to access the penny and all that it signifies.

"'Inch-thick dust lay on the ground / For it had long been droughty weather.' Why this sudden attention to the ground? The ground takes on importance because it is the setting into which the penny has fallen. If we take the penny to signify property of some type of value, be it simple monetary value, or

as we entertained in the preceding paragraph, an intellectual or poetic property, then the narrator's emphasis on the situation this property has entered becomes clear, as the situation will determine the value placed on the penny. The 'inch-thick dust' and 'droughty weather' indicate the setting of the poem to be one of little economic prosperity for its inhabitants, or, if we continue to read the penny as an intellectual vessel, the coin may represent a worthy poetic endeavor nestled amidst a barren contemporary poetics.

"The Cripple then performs an interesting act: 'So with his staff the Cripple wrought / Among the dust till he had brought / The halfpennies together.' That the Cripple has a staff makes sense in light of his plight, but in the context of *Lyrical Ballads*, a book filled with poems of a pastoral nature, the staff calls to mind the staff of a Shepherd. Indeed, it is almost as if the Cripple were a Shepherd, one who has lost his faculties for shepherding. He reminds one of the shepherd of the poem 'The Last of the Flock,' who has lost all but one of his flock and is on the verge of ruin. As both poems take place on a public road, it seems reasonable the Cripple could be an incarnation of that Shepherd, only one who has continued down the road to ruin, who has lost everything and encountered added ill-fortune besides. The echoes of the pastoral give added weight to the notion of the penny having an intellectual and poetic value. Further, this association becomes unavoidable when we notice how the Cripple uses his staff to '[bring] the halfpennies together.' He shepherds the coins. Though possessed of a Shepherd's, or a Poet's, nature, due to his infirmity the Cripple is unable to possess the property, the value, of his work. He hasn't the physical wherewithal to complete the act his shepherding intention implies, namely, to pick the coin(s) up.

"Look what happens here. A strange and subtle action occurs, literally under our noses. We see, in the third stanza, a Horseman throw 'a penny to the Cripple.' 'A penny' produces for the reader the image of a single coin. In the next stanza, though, we find the Cripple working to bring 'the halfpennies together.' The penny has divided, and has not only physically

split but each half has become of lesser value. If we look ahead, after the Cripple has brought the halves together, in the fifth stanza the halfpennies have returned to being 'the penny,' a singular coin. At this point it's difficult to know what to make of this strange morphing, so let's keep moving.

"Stanza five opens with a coincidence: 'It chanc'd that Andrew pass'd that way / Just at the time.' Timing is an important part of the poem's central conflict. It is the combination of timing and setting that allows Andrew to do what he does. Having established the timing, we next experience the scene as Andrew encounters it: 'he found / The Cripple in the mid-day heat / Standing alone, and at his feet / He saw the penny on the ground.' Order is important: first he finds the Cripple, the man who has done a certain amount of work in bringing the halfpennies, these separate pieces of property, to a single place. The Cripple is also alone, and Andrew finds himself in a position to help the Cripple, much as the Horseman did, by performing a vertical act, the action of stooping to pick the penny up. By doing so Andrew would assist the Cripple in laying claim on the intellectual and poetic property of the halfpennies the Cripple has managed to herd into a single coin of greater worth.

"So what does Andrew Jones do? 'He stoop'd and took the penny up.' Now Andrew faces several choices. Our philanthropic hope would be that he gives the penny to the Cripple and goes on his way, reversing the Cripple's utter lack of worth. But given the foreshadowing of Andrew's hatefulness, this seems unlikely. A second possible option would be the dividing of the penny between the two; Andrew keeping a halfpenny for himself, and giving one to the Cripple. It is difficult to tell if such division is possible, however. Is there one penny, or are there two halfpennies? Can this property be divided?

"Andrew picks up the coin, and the Cripple 'nearer drew,' as if to claim ownership of the coin. But Andrew is quick, and has this reply: 'Under half a crown / What a man finds is all his own, / And so, my Friend, good day to you.' As a defense for his claim to the coin, this sentence is flawed in almost every way. To begin, it is not a factual statement. There is no law

that allows men to keep what money they find, based on the found money's value. The logic contains rather childish undertones, and brings to mind the phrase 'finders keepers, losers weepers,' that we so often hear from children. The statement is essentially a value judgment, and fails to take into account that the value of an object may differ from person to person, that Andrew's simple penny may be a treasure for the Cripple.

"There is also the problem that Andrew did not actually find the penny, as he claims. The Cripple was more than aware of the penny's existence, and had worked hard to bring it to the place where Andrew first sees it. What Andrew 'finds,' then, is in fact the Cripple, without whom he would never have seen the penny. But here the issue of who has claim on this property gets slippery. What in fact is finding? Is the Cripple, who has done some bit of work to bring the penny to its current easily-seen state of value, able to make a claim of ownership toward the penny when he cannot physically stoop to claim it? Or does Andrew, with his ability to bend and pick up the penny, with his ability to put it to use and, being a man of property, with his notion of the penny's value, actually have a greater claim on the penny? These are questions the poem will not disclose answers to. Rather than address who has proper claim on the property, the poem's interest lies in how that claim is made.

"The final line of the sixth stanza perplexes: 'And so, my Friend, good day to you,' can be read several different ways. On first read it sounds dismissive. Andrew monopolizes this brief conversation, and desires to end it as well as begin it, not allowing the Cripple time to relate his side of the tale. Andrew's sense of urgency dominates, as if he is already aware of the Cripple's response, and recognizes the validity of the Cripple's claim. Surely he has seen the marks on the ground from the Cripple's staff, the inch-thick dust a perfect surface to, shall we say, write upon?

"This line can also be read as possessed of a gentler manner. The key words in this reading are 'my Friend.' Earlier in the poem we were introduced to the Cripple as 'a friendless man.' Andrew's naming of the Cripple as a Friend bestows upon him

a property he didn't previously possess. Rather than read the phrase as purely dismissive, we are able to view it as Andrew's act of compensation in exchange for the penny, the property that the Cripple enabled him to see.

"The poem's narrator seems less likely to agree with this second reading, however, as in the last stanza the claim made at the poem's outset is again emphasized: 'And *hence* I said, that Andrew's boys / Will all be trained to waste and pillage.' The placement of the word *hence* gives specific attention to the just narrated event as the sole reason behind the narrator's dislike for Andrew. The emphasis placed on this event raises several questions: Why is the narrator so moved by this occurrence? What stakes does the narrator have in the tale? If so upset by it, why did he not intervene? And how, if the Cripple and Andrew were, as reported, alone on the road, does the narrator know what happened? Where do we look to answer these questions?

"Let's begin at the end. In the second line of the final stanza the subject of 'Andrew's boys' arises for the second time. Who are these boys? They are, as the poem tells us, his children, upon whom Andrew has great influence; they are also his legacy, his second life, his life after death. They are his imitators and his perpetuators; they will keep his name alive after he is gone. It is not Andrew's act of taking the penny from the Cripple the narrator finds so horrifying, then, but rather the effect that act will have on Andrew's legacy. A negative impact on future generations is what the narrator hopes to avoid, in wishing 'the press-gang, or the drum / With its tantara sound, would come / And sweep him from the village!'

"Up to this point we have almost entirely ignored the narrator. To give him a proper look, we should first jump briefly ahead to the next poem in the volume, 'The Two Thieves.' The premise of this poem involves an old man and a young boy who share a name, Daniel, and an occupation, that of thieving. Theirs is an innocent, accepted sort of thieving, as the old man has 'a daughter at home / Who will gladly repair all the damage that's done.' The Daniels are collaborators, and could be seen as opposite ends of a single person, the old man cunning

and seasoned and cognizant of his actions, the young boy innocent and clueless as to what is happening.

"If we recall how earlier we talked about the poems in the volume being syntactical assemblages, meant to be linked, one to another, as if a sentence, a chain, we must assume 'The Two Thieves' to be linked to 'Andrew Jones,' and that any similarity between these poems should be read as more than coincidence.

"In 'The Two Thieves' there are two thieves. Andrew Jones also is a thief. But to complete the linking of the poems, we feel the need to find a second thief in 'Andrew Jones.' Where is he?"

I stifled a yawn with the back of my hand. Rand paused, shot me a glance. Straightening in my chair I pressed the end of my pen against my pursed lips to demonstrate my unerring interest and attention.

"Let us backtrack another step," Rand continued. "You will recall that we previously discussed the title 'Andrew Jones' and how it functions as a proper name within a proper name, or a name within a title, the title itself being a proper name. This is important: proper names are fragile indicators of singularity. Recall the relationship of the two thieves in 'The Two Thieves.' They are as two parts of a single being, sharing even a name. Then transfer this idea to 'Andrew Jones.' Andrew is a thief. He has appropriated someone else's property. Andrew's name, a property belonging to Andrew, is also the title of the poem. Someone had to appropriate his name for it to become the title. And who alone is able to do this? The narrator, or the poet, is. So our second thief is the narrator of the poem. We can go one step further. Again, we'll recall that the Daniels are two people inhabiting a single name. 'Andrew Jones' also serves a dual function. It is a proper name inhabiting the poem's title, which is a proper name with direct ties to the poet, or narrator, if we choose to designate them as the same. So, by placing that name in the title, the poet/narrator is directly identifying himself through the guise of Andrew Jones.

"This both clarifies and complicates our reading. It clarifies it in regard to the narrator's intense dislike of Andrew Jones, and the concern he has for the effect Andrew's actions

will have on his legacy, for if the narrator and Andrew share a name, this negative legacy will taint the narrator's name as well. Yet when we take into account the entire poem, things get complicated: How does a linking of names change the way we view Andrew's actions if Andrew is also the narrator, who is also the poet? While initially confusing, this multi-layered relationship Andrew seems to be having with himself and with the other characters in the poem takes on greater clarity when we consider the poem within the context in which it was written.

"Here we introduce Wordsworth, our poet, and of him we must ask: What is it about this misdeed of Andrew's, this appropriation of what could be called a near worthless bit of property, that is of such concern to the poet?

"Around the time *Lyrical Ballads* was written, Coleridge was working through some varying ideas concerning property and ownership. The two men were almost certainly reading books like Adam Smith's *The Wealth of Nations*, and surely felt some affinity for its notions of the benefits of self-interest and local economy. Coleridge was entertaining the idea that property should be done away with altogether, down to and including proper names. In place of names people would be designated by their central contribution or position within society. A shepherd becomes the Shepherd, a prisoner the Convict, a seaman the Mariner. While these ideas about property are loosely reflected and rebutted throughout the two Volumes, they come into sharp focus in this poem. Of the three characters in the poem, two of them are called not by name but by their physical state: the Horseman, the Cripple. The penny also is presented as fluid, localized property, with all three characters at some point coming into possession or semi-possession of it.

"So what do we make of the fact that Andrew Jones has been given a name? To what end? In a society that identifies its citizens by occupation, that occupation in a sense becoming their highest form of self, by being named doesn't one become an anomaly? An incongruity? Yet in that incongruity there rests a certain quality of power: the ability to declare one's self as a named individual manifests in a person an identity outside

of one's occupation, introduces complexity into the individual, allows us to forgive them for any uncouth actions they might undertake. In other words, a name makes a person human, and humans aren't perfect. Andrew Jones' name allows him the power of appropriation through his imperfect humanness."

I lifted the pen from my lips. "So then why Wordsworth's concern about Andrew stealing this coin? Is he making excuses for him? Criticizing him?"

Rand nodded. "Sure—let's review the situation Wordsworth found himself in. In 1798 a book entitled *Lyrical Ballads* was published. The book had no name attached to it. Rather, mention is made of the Author in the Advertisement for the book, a declaration from which it is safe, even necessary, to assume the book written by a single author. The consistency of the poems within certainly speak to that fact. The book, somewhat surprisingly, is rather well received by the public.

"Then in 1800 a second edition of *Lyrical Ballads* was released, which included, in addition to the original twenty-three poems, a second volume of thirty-eight additional poems, a Preface, and most significantly, a title page that now contained a name. W. Wordsworth. So the Author stepped forward and claimed that these poems belonged to this name. Only, in the Preface, very brief mention is made of a certain 'Friend' who helped write several of the poems contained within *Lyrical Ballads*. Startlingly brief mention of the man who provided the seed from which the book grew.

"That Wordsworth and Coleridge happened upon a powerful experience of collaboration in creating the 1798 *Lyrical Ballads* is evidenced by the strength and mystery that the book retains over two hundred years after its initial publication. It is this event of 1798, the collaboration of Coleridge and Wordsworth, and how that event became 1800, that Wordsworth cannot reconcile himself to, and that occupies him consistently throughout the poems in the second volume.

"'Andrew Jones' is no exception. As we have already linked Andrew to the narrator of the poem, and thus to the poet, it is a small stretch to see Andrew as a sort of self-portrait of Wordsworth. If this is the case, the poem becomes much

more interesting, as Wordsworth declares 'I hate that Andrew Jones.' Why the self-loathing?

"His reasons become clear as we enter into the interaction with the Cripple. We must remember that the poem dwells upon the Cripple's actions for some time before Andrew enters the scene. In the context of Wordsworth's collaboration with Coleridge, it seems right to read the Cripple as a portrayal of Coleridge. And while not a flattering portrayal, it fits the event of 1798.

"The Cripple is thrown a penny by a Horseman. If we view the penny as a piece of intellectual property, an idea, of which the Horseman was in possession, then it becomes easy to read the Horseman as the Author of *Lyrical Ballads* '98, a passing, elevated figure who, though temporarily in possession of this piece of poetic property, is destined to relinquish it. He does so, and there appear two men who have the ability to claim this piece of property: Andrew Jones (Wordsworth) and the Cripple (Coleridge).

"The Cripple, upon whom the property is bestowed, struggles to fully possess it. The penny, in the transaction, seems to have splintered. So the Cripple uses his staff to write in the earth until he has brought the halves together. The Cripple writes in order to create something of coherent form and value. The Cripple writes but is unable to own the product of his writing.

Here Andrew enters the scene. He finds the Cripple, and in finding the Cripple finds the penny. Wordsworth, through his meeting Coleridge, also happens upon this idea of Coleridge's, this notion of written Authorship rich in poetic value. The Cripple needs help in order to possess the penny. Coleridge needs help in order to see his idea bear full fruit. Collaboration is necessary, and Wordsworth, or Andrew Jones, finds himself in position to be that collaborator.

"He takes up the challenge. And here arises the tension of the poem, not in the fact of the collaboration, but in what Andrew Jones, or Wordsworth, does with it. He appropriates it for himself. As Andrew picks up the Cripple's penny, so Wordsworth picks up Coleridge's idea and runs with it. The penny,

this piece of intellectual and poetic property, is thus attached to the name Andrew Jones, much as *Lyrical Ballads* is subsequently attached to the name W. Wordsworth.

"So why does Wordsworth dislike Andrew Jones? Because Andrew is base. He steals from a cripple. And who exactly is Andrew Jones? Remember that the poet gives voice to the narrator who relates the exploits of this man, Andrew Jones. Remember that the title 'Andrew Jones' is a proper name inside a proper name—a direct link between Andrew and the poet. Andrew is base. Andrew is a Man. Andrew is a Man couched within the construct of a Poet.

"What's so wrong with being a Man? Wordsworth tells us exactly what's wrong with it in the Preface of the 1802 *Lyrical Ballads*, where he describes a Poet as one 'endued with a more lively sensitivity,' who 'rejoices more than other men in the spirit of life that is in him,' who has 'a disposition to be affected more than other men,' etc. In short, the Poet is *more* of a man than other men. If we couple this with the idea that 'Poetry is the breath and finer spirit of all knowledge,' we see that Wordsworth is describing the Poet and Poetry as being, essentially, not base. The Poet is not a Man as we know men to be; the Poet, born of his words, is purer and greater than any ordinary Man can claim to be.

"So Wordsworth's worries come to light. He dislikes Andrew Jones because Andrew Jones has a name, a name that is associated with the base actions of a Man. Wordsworth, in giving his name to *Lyrical Ballads*, fears the poems will be read with the man Wordsworth in mind, rather than the Poet Wordsworth in mind, a problem that didn't exist with the nameless, pure Author of 1798. So the narrator's, or Poet's, desire to 'sweep [Andrew] from the village!' The Poet wants to get rid of the Man, whose baseness will contaminate the poetry.

"Now the last stanza comes clear. As we are aware of Wordsworth's preoccupation with a second life, a life after death, being carried out in future readers and poets, we can read Wordsworth's concern that 'Andrew's boys / Will all be train'd to waste and pillage,' as worry that his legacy as a Poet will be tainted by himself, by the unavoidable baseness of his

human self. The 'press-gang' and the 'drum / With its tantara sound,' then—representations of order and sound, or of meter and rhyme, those parts of poetry which cause pleasure and excitement, those parts of language that turn rote prose into powerful Poetry—that they are what will drive Andrew Jones from the village is Wordsworth's wish for his Poetic self to eclipse the Man he cannot help but be."

Rand lapsed into meditation. Was he finished? Scared to disturb him I sat and waited. The silence total, unmoving, absent even of a ticking clock.

Q: Why did Coleridge allow Wordsworth to lay claim to *Lyrical Ballads*?
A: Who is worth more to the property itself?

A PLANT IN WINTER.

A PLAY IN FRAGMENTS. ACT FIVE.

KA-BOOM

Dancers, in hard hats and overalls, perform a synchronized dance in hip-hop style. They exit to reveal the stage constructed to resemble a blasting site. WORDSWORTH *spray-paints the word "Author" on a giant rock, around which can be seen bundles of dynamite attached to a fuse that leads to a blasting box, the T of the lever raised and ready to plunge, where* RAND *and* BRENNAN *stand.*

BRENNAN
Is the dust-smoke ghost?

RAND
Blasting is a stranger
Art than constructing.

BRENNAN
What is the remainder
Of the equation?

RAND
Diagrammatic graffiti on stone. Perverted
Pleasure-act exploded.

BRENNAN
I blast away?

RAND
My body pocked with dark
Matter projectile. Stopgap emergency.
I've put on some distance

BRENNAN
Mistaken breath of my chest

RAND
Heap of me unfinished

BRENNAN
Here

RAND
The bright

As BRENNAN *prepares to plunge the lever the dancers enter, again obscuring the scene. This time they perform a sort of ballet.* Swan Lake, *sans scissor-kicks.*

FILM STUDY

THE FLY, *as played by Jeff Goldblum, swings from side to side of stage, disappearing momentarily into the wings and reappearing to continue his speech. Below him* RAND, BRENNAN, WORDSWORTH *and* COLERIDGE *cower. Tied together at the wrists, they perform an interpretive Dance of Fear.*

THE FLY
Passion cannot be verbalized.
When too much needs saying, and words
Submerge, but you need, you try
To say, you harp, you cheep, you are bird
With single song and wrong vocabulary,
You say and you say:

Please, Please
Be finished with me,
Please finish me off with this
Nothing litany,
Nothing if not pain
Tempered into study.

It preoccupies your body like a mind.

Fear is realized.

THE LONG WALK

A giant casket, stretching the length of the stage. At each corner of the casket stands a young child. These children are the PALLBEARERS. *Behind the casket stands* THE GREAT HOW.

THE GREAT HOW
The oval moon
Wears a carnival face
To gaze down upon
This casket for the longest bone
That ever fit a man.

PALLBEARERS *do the hand-jive.*

Placebo muse
Grinning dimples of fire.
The skin melts.
The form crumples.
The box is a feather,
Hollow and in flight.

PALLBEARERS *do the hokey-pokey.*

Sam! Will! Dave! Rich!
Lift the wood
To your shoulders.
We will walk from here.
I have been told
The trail is worn at one end only.
How about
The rest of the way?

BRENNAN WITH DEAD LAMB

A dead lamb, discarded on one side of the stage. BRENNAN *is wearing a spacesuit. He attempts to walk, but collapses under the weight.*

BRENNAN
I HAVE FOUND

HERE, WITHIN MY
NAME
IT IS A GIFT TO BE

The dead lamb begins to stir.

GROUP MEDITATION

All characters are bouncing on pogo-sticks. At intervals they fall off, climb back on. There is the sense of both futility and elation.

ANNE CARSON[1]
What is the holiness of conversation?
It is
To master death.

BRENNAN
Tubings
Siphon and spurt, speed and spit bits

COLERIDGE
I'm sorry that you contradict yourself.

WORDSWORTH
I'm sorry that you *suck!*

BRENNAN
Of woven line,
The crisscrossed
Look of plaid

RAND
If you read the land, you will read
About people who worked the land.

WORDSWORTH
It's time you repaid the gift

1. Throughout this playlet Ms. Anne Carson quotes Ms. Anne Carson.

ANNE CARSON
Of your death which will one day walk up to you

BRENNAN
And penance should be done

COLERIDGE
I made you.

WORDSWORTH
Fool, I own you.

RAND
Men who do not wear fine clothes feel deeply.

BRENNAN
For talk enables emotion. Decoy
To hide my
Horror at this happiness

WORDSWORTH
Why don't you die?

RAND
To be in a system which has no leisure.

COLERIDGE
I am in good health!
I am pure,
As when others have given of themselves.

ANNE CARSON
A thing like this can save a stranger's life.

RAND
Have you ever seen a magician?
Has anyone ever
Pulled a coin from your ear?

WORDSWORTH
Grow up! *Grow up!*

BRENNAN
And penance should be done.
I really can't

ANNE CARSON
Short silence!

All stop pogo-sticking. DOROTHY[2] *walks to the front of the stage.*

DOROTHY
Intensely hot. I made
Pies in the morning. William
Went into the woods
And altered his poems.

2. Dorothy as in William's sister, not Dorothy of Oz fame. From her journals.

A PUBLIC APPEARANCE

RAND *and* BRENNAN *party in an ornamental garden that somewhat resembles an afterlife.*

RAND
We walk the garden path
Unsteadily, past flames
Enwreathed by colored glass
Pluming atop wrought-iron
Posts. Their shifting pallor—
Does it cause in you contractions
Of feeling deeply felt?

BRENNAN
For sure. It's a wonder it doesn't break my ribs!

RAND
Take that fountain, the potbellied
Youth forever pissing
Into a pool—
What bird washes itself in dust?

BRENNAN
The one that disapproves
Of tin in puddings and pies?[3]

RAND
Coin it.

BRENNAN
Cha-ching!

3. Here Brennan quotes Ms. Beatrix Potter.

RAND
Like you, I am entertained and bored
With this society of ourselves,
Sitting on a granite bench in bliss's
Voiceless corner, digressing.

BRENNAN
I wish I could have a little garden and grow
potatoes.

RAND
Tomorrow, then, is the day
To put my rabbit babies in the oven.

BRENNAN
And the day to put to sleep
My old worm-eaten window shutters!

RAND
Kudos. Shall we give the game a name?

BRENNAN
How about "This looks like the end
Of the story, but it isn't"?

BRENNAN
Rand, tell me a story.

RAND
There were two men who wrote a Book
And called themselves one Man . . .

MURDER BALLADS

In 1798, William Wordsworth and Samuel Taylor Coleridge were engaged in a top secret experiment. This was not, as many assume, the creation of a book of poetry. A book emerged, to be sure—the landmark *Lyrical Ballads*. But in *Murder Ballads*, David John Brennan posits that the two poets were in fact pursuing far different ends: to birth from their poems a singular, idealized Poet.

Despite their success, such Frankensteinian pursuits proved rife with consequence for the men. Doubts and questions plagued them: What does it mean to be a poet if your work is not your own? Who is best fit to lay claim to a parcel of poetic property that was collaboratively crafted and bequeathed to a fictitious Poet? How does one kill a Poet born of one's own hand?

Blending critical examination with jocular playlets-in-verse featuring the authors of the two books in baffled conversation, *Murder Ballads* reopens a 200-year-old cold case that never received a proper investigation: Who was the first true Author of *Lyrical Ballads*, and how exactly did he die?

Brennan, David John

Murder Ballads: Exhuming the Body Buried beneath Wordsworth's Lyrical Ballads

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