# “Tread softly! All the Earth is Holy Ground”: An Environmental and Materialist Interpretation of Selected Works by Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Christina Rossetti, and Gerard Manley Hopkins

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# Abstract

This thesis examines selected works by Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Christina Rossetti, and Gerard Manley Hopkins through a materialist rather than a philosophical approach. These writers lived at a time defined by Eric Hobsbawm as the "Long Nineteenth Century", characterised by industrialisation, revolution, and commodification. Coleridge, Rossetti, and Hopkins represented a push against secularisation, and all held a degree of high church-leaning, orthodox views. This research highlights and analyses their response to the environment, religion, and society, which I argue was far more intricate than a clear, uniform understanding of good, bad, right, and wrong - all of which are fundamental aspects of Christian belief. Through an exploration of their writing, I demonstrate that they attempt to take account of the transgressions of society and apparent immoral activities that they witnessed by trying to understand it within their own personal parameters relating primarily to orthodoxy. In doing so, I argue that the comfort they found in the natural world was influenced by their religious leanings. The complicated relationship with the nineteenth century cityscape presents an opportunity to view Coleridge, Rossetti, and Hopkins through a materialist reconceptualisation of the human experience and human interactions with the environment. This is achieved by using the ecocritical and sociological framework offered in Mary Douglas' *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of Concepts of Pollution and Taboo* (1966), Jane Bennett's *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things* (2009), and Heather I. Sullivan's article "Dirt Theory and Material Ecocriticism" (2012). This ecocritical and materialist approach allows for an investigation and interrogation of life as viewed and represented by Coleridge, Rossetti, and Hopkins against the backdrop of an increasingly complex and changing world.

(274 words)

# Contents

# Abbreviations

The following are abbreviations of key texts relating to Coleridge, Rossetti and Hopkins, which are used in this thesis and represent the frequently cited editions used by academics and researchers.

These citations appear in the text in parenthesis following a quotation with the relevant volume number (if applicable), and then the page number, e.g. (*CL* 1, 42) would indicate *Collected Letters of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, volume one, page forty-two.

Some volumes, such as *The Collected Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, include sub-volumes. For example, Volume 7 (*Biographia Literaria*) is split into two books and will be listed in the text as either *CW* 7.I or *CW* 7.II, followed by the page number.

If an alternative edition is referenced, then this will be entered as a footnote, and further explanation will be given.

**Coleridge**

| | |
|---|---|
| *CL* | *Collected Letters of Samuel Taylor Coleridge.* Edited by Earl Leslie Griggs, 6 Volumes. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1956-71. |
| *CW* | *The Collected Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge.* General Editor: Kathleen Coburn. 16 Volumes. Great Britain: Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd, 1971-2002. |
| *Notebooks* | *The Notebooks of Samuel Taylor Coleridge.* Edited by Kathleen Coburn, 3 Volumes. New York: Pantheon Books, Inc., 1957-73. |
| *LR* | *The Literary Remains of Samuel Taylor Coleridge.* Edited by Henry Nelson Coleridge, 4 Volumes. New York: AMS Press, 1967. |

**Rossetti**

| | |
|---|---|
| *CP* | *The Complete Poems of Christina Rossetti: The Complete Poems*, Text by R. W. Crump, with Notes and Introduction by Betty S. Flowers. London: Penguin, 2001. |
| *Letters* | *The Letters of Christina Rossetti.* Edited by Antony H. Harrison, 4 Volumes. Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1997-2004. |
| *PW* | *The Poetical Works of Christina Rossetti with Memoir and Notes by William Michael Rossetti.* London: Macmillan, 1904. |
| *TF* | *Time Flies: A Reading Diary. London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1902.* |

**Hopkins**

| | |
|---|---|
| *J* | *The Journals and Papers of Gerard Manley Hopkins*. Edited by Humphry House and Graham Storey. London: Oxford University Press, 1959. |
| *LI* | *The Letters of Gerard Manley Hopkins to Robert Bridges.* Edited by C. C. Abbott, 2nd edition. London: Oxford University Press, 1955. |
| *LII* | *The Correspondence of Gerard Manley Hopkins and Richard Watson Dixon.* Edited by C. C. Abbott, 2nd edition. London: Oxford University Press, 1955. |

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|---|---|
| *LIII* | *Further Letters of Gerard Manley Hopkins, Including His Correspondence with Coventry Patmore.* Edited by C. C. Abbott, 2nd edition. London: Oxford University Press, 1956. |
| *Poems* | *The Poems of Gerard Manley Hopkins.* Edited by W. H. Gardner and N. H. Mackenzie, 4th edition. London: Oxford University Press, 1967. |
| *SD* | *The Sermons and Devotional Writings of Gerard Manley Hopkins.* Edited by Christopher Devlin. London: Oxford University Press, 1959. |

## Stylistic Note

Source materials are quoted verbatim. As such, archaic spellings, Americanised spellings, italicisation, and capitalisation are written as they appear in the original text being referenced, unless otherwise stated.

Square brackets within a quotation typically indicate my own edits, additions, or clarification, unless otherwise stated.

# Acknowledgements

This PhD thesis was mainly written during the COVID-19 pandemic and the subsequent confusion, bewilderment, and isolation that followed. From March 2020 until September 2021 (and indeed for many months and even years after), life was put on hold due to lockdown and various restrictions. The PhD continued despite access to many libraries, museums, and archives being heavily restricted for a significant period. I recall a conversation with a PhD friend at another university where I paraphrased Gertrude Stein by saying: "We are the Pandemic Generation". This research truly is the product of the pandemic, which has made it a unique experience.

I am deeply grateful to my supervisors, Professor Susan Oliver and Dr. Chris Bundock, for their unwavering support and guidance throughout this PhD journey. Your wisdom and assistance have been invaluable, leading to numerous stimulating conversations, discussions, and reading recommendations. I also extend my appreciation to Professor Katharine Cockin and Dr. Joanna Rzeppa, whose enthusiasm and passion have greatly influenced the direction of this research.

My thanks to Gill Yates, my secondary school English teacher who taught me for several of formative school years. Your trust, encouragement, and good humour lit a spark and inspired me. This journey began because of you, and I am thankful to be able to call you a friend and confidante after all these years.

To my family, I want to thank you for your patience and support during an intense experience. To my friends, my gratitude for keeping me grounded and sane, and for being hugely encouraging throughout all of this. Credit is due to: Calum Cockburn, Sue Dawes, Jenny Doyle, Ethan Evans, Fran Govia, Lorraine Harvey, Aiden Heeley-Hill, Sam Jermy, Emma Kettle, Elli Kingsford, Mike Norman, Elizabeth Oliver, Joe Saunders, Jack Shoulder, and Rhiannon Shuter. Furthermore, I must give much love and praise to the collective that I always call "my home friends": Abi, Ash, Danny, Freddie, Jack, Jenna, Kirsty, and the rest of our growing dysfunctional Essex family.

This thesis makes several references to place and space, and the importance of feeling grounded and comfortable is demonstrated to be a significant aspects of life. Credit is, therefore, due to everyone in the General Office in the LiFTS department at the University of Essex, with a particular shoutout to the incomparable Rachele Winn, Deanna McCarthy, Sue Hogan, and Hannah Langwith. You are like a second family to me, and the department is, without a doubt, my second home. It will certainly be tough to move on from here.

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It becomes clear that one person may well write a PhD, but it is supported, facilitated, encouraged, championed, and shaped by so many!

# Introduction

*All things bright and beautiful,*
*All creatures great and small,*
*All things wise and wonderful,*
*The Lord God made them all.*

*Each little flower that opens,*
*Each little bird that sings,*
*He made their glowing colours,*
*He made their tiny wings.*

*The rich man in his castle,*
*The poor man at his gate,*
*God made them, high or lowly,*
*And ordered their estate.*

'All Things Bright and Beautiful' (1848), Cecil Frances Alexander

*In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.*
*And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters.*

*Genesis* 1:1-2[1]

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Cecil Frances Alexander's hymn 'All Things Bright and Beautiful' declares God to be the creator of all things on Earth. This case relates not only to the natural world but also extends a divine power towards the creation of societal hierarchies that supposedly kept the population in their respective positions. The three central writers in this thesis, Samuel Taylor Coleridge (1772-1834), Christina Rossetti (1830-1894), and Gerard Manley Hopkins (1844-1889), also expressed comparable devotional claims in keeping with the declaration that all natural and physical creation came from an almighty and loving God. Coleridge, in 'The Rime of the Ancient Mariner,' first published in 1798, states, "For the dear God, who loveth us,/ He made and loveth all." (418, ll.616-17)[2] These words come after the tumultuous events that follow the Mariner's slaughter of the Albatross, one of God's innocent creatures who had been proclaimed as a "Christian Soul" (l.65). By the Victorian period, some years after Coleridge's death, the High Church-leaning Rossetti wrote: "Tread softly! all the earth is holy ground" (*CP* 350, l.1), emphasising the insistence of all things being connected to God. Her near contemporary, although largely unpublished during his lifetime, the Roman Catholic

[1] All Bible quotations are taken from the *Bible, Authorised King James Version with Apocrypha*. eds, Robert Carroll and Stephen Prickett. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998).
[2] References to Coleridge's poems in this chapter are taken from *The Collected Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, Volume 16, Poetical Works I, Poems (Reading Text): Part 1, ed. J. C. C. Mays (Princeton University Press, 2001).

Hopkins, similarly concluded that if God created everything on Earth, then "All things therefore are charged with Love" (*SD* 195). For these writers, God is the creator and force behind all things, human or otherwise, where everything is touched and filled with God's love and energy, exalting them beyond normalcy into something more.

The now frequently omitted third stanza of Alexander's hymn controversially claims that social class was also part of God's creation. It suggests that each person is put into a position that befits their rank in society, the connotation being that there is a divine precedent for class status.[3] At the heart of such debates is one of the pressing issues of Alexander's time, namely the rapid growth of the urban environment along with a rise in population, industrialisation, and shifts in technology and societal practices. In this changing and expanding world, Alexander's claim that the same God was responsible for the natural world and human status is an attempt to highlight the unifying influence of God. For Alexander and the three writers central to this thesis, God is evident and present in everything, including the human and non-human worlds and society's broader ideological and sociological practices. The attempts to justify and understand God and the environment against these social and political changes provide a pertinent scope to view its influence on literature and other cultural products.

This thesis shows, in new ways, how themes linking God and nature are explored across the works of Coleridge, Rossetti, and Hopkins amidst the industrialisation, pollution, and destruction of natural environments and long-established communities that occurred in the Romantic and Victorian periods. In doing so, it presents a new historicist and materialist approach to reading these respective works, more of which is explained and contextualised in the following pages. Whilst only partially within the Marxist context of materialism, a new historicist approach will reflect on the societal issues, class anxieties and commodification as essential cultural and contextual elements for reading these texts. As Terry Eagleton highlights, "Matter itself is alive, and not only alive but self-determining,"[4] this vibrancy of life, objects, and human experience provides a framework for interpreting and analysing literature. Marx was, however, right in noting that "Nature builds no machines, no railways, electric telegraphs, self-acting mules etc. These are products of human industry; natural material transformed into organs of the human will over nature, or of human participation in

[3] Robert George Crawford. *What is Religion?* (United Kingdom: Routledge, 2002) 164; Peter Jones, David Hillier, and Daphne Comfort. "The Rich man in his castle, the poor man at his gate," *Town and Country Planning*. Volume 72, Number 10 (November 2003): 324-26; and Peter Barry. *Beginning Theory: An Introduction to Literary and Cultural Theory*, 4th ed. (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2017) 253.
[4] Terry Eagleton. *Materialism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016) 3-4.

nature."[5] Marx emphasises how the land was remapped and reconsidered as the great industrial British cities expanded and how man-made desire and commodification see humans begin to oppose the natural world.[6]

The following pages explore the scope and context of this research, which examines selected works by Coleridge, Rossetti, and Hopkins. It specifically examines their High Church beliefs, providing a deeper understanding of the interconnectedness between religion, environment, and literature. The significance of this research centres on an awareness of the cultural, political, and ecological contexts and how these factors feed into and enrich the works of Coleridge, Rossetti, and Hopkins. Firstly, it groups three distinctive, canonical writers who are rarely studied as a collective and who belong to three distinctive literary schools: Coleridge the Romantic; Rossetti the Victorian and Pre-Raphaelite; and Hopkins the Victorian and Catholic, who was not widely published until the early twentieth-century.[7] The consequence of this approach is a greater understanding of the Coleridgean theological and environmental legacy and how this is utilised and adapted by subsequent generations, such as Rossetti and Hopkins. Secondly, I use a new historicist and materialist approach as a framework to analyse and enrich their work by understanding the broader reflection and impact of social, political, and theological matters of the time. Therefore, this research presents their works as products of their religious, historical, and environmental surroundings, providing crucial insight into the period. Finally, it will document how High Church teachings influence these social, environmental, and theological factors but are adapted to suit the unique circumstances and locations in which Coleridge, Rossetti, and Hopkins lived. This shows how traditional, orthodox views are not wholly restrictive but allow for a personal negotiation that sometimes borders on socialist and liberal thinking. The result is a continuation of thought from Coleridge to Rossetti and Hopkins, which draws on an evolving spiritual and moral message to empower a Christian orthodoxy against the pressures of urbanisation and secularisation.

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[5] Karl Marx. *The Grundrisse*. trans. Martin Nicolaus (Middlesex, England: Penguin, 1973) 706.

[6] Raymond Williams notes that: "The country and the city are changing historical realities, both in themselves and in their interrelations [...] Our real social experience is not only of the country and the city, in their most singular forms, but of many kinds of intermediate and new kinds of social and physical organisation."- *The Country and the City* [1973] (New York: Oxford University Press, 1975) 289.

[7] Scholars at, or working with, the Armstrong Browning Library and Baylor University in Texas have collectively raised the profile of such a comparative study. These include Joshua King, Melinda Creech, and Jennifer Hargrave. See: Joshua King. *Personal Website*. <https://blogs.baylor.edu/joshua_king/#> (Accessed November 11, 2023); *Ecology & Religion in Nineteenth-Century Studies Conference*. September 2019. <https://sites.baylor.edu/ecologyreligion/> (Accessed November 11, 2023); and the *Baylor University Nineteenth-Century Research Seminar* <https://blogs.baylor.edu/19crs/> (Accessed November 11, 2023).

The form of materialism that this research utilises is defined by geography and the urban and rural landscape, particularly in how religious attitudes towards place further inform these dimensions. Faith played a significant part in the lives of the three writers at the centre of this study, and consequently, their literary and non-literary works represent the strong influence of traditional Christian orthodoxy. This study, however, is focused on something more than the manifestation of religious imagery in the writing of Coleridge, Rossetti, and Hopkins. Instead, it addresses the reactions and portrayal of change, pollution, and urbanisation as witnessed by these writers. In doing so, it examines how theological teaching and justification are used to help establish comfort, sympathy, and understanding. Through a close reading of selected poems alongside the period's socio-political, theological, and cultural contexts, there is an enrichment in understanding how Coleridge, Rossetti, and Hopkins reflected the world they inhabit.

This thesis focuses on "the Long Nineteenth Century", building its arguments in part from the socio-economic and historiographical framework defined by Eric Hobsbawm as a means to understanding the progression and evolution of thought in Europe, bookended by two significant outbreaks of conflict: the French Revolution in 1789 and the start of the First World War in 1914.[8] Such a broader scope allows for a greater comprehension of the Romantic and Victorian periods through their connections to revolutions (social, political, and mechanical) and the wider religious and environmental discourse. [9] For Hobsbawm, the period's considerable and rapid change and advancement, notably against the backdrop of rebellion, industrialisation, and urbanisation, is significant because "such words as 'industry', 'industrialist', 'factory', 'middle class', 'working class', 'capitalism' and 'socialism'" were either invented or took on their modern definition during this time.[10]

Furthermore, substantial events would alter the spiritual and cultural identity of the British population following "the construction of the first factory system of the modern world in Lancashire", which led towards "the historic force of the revolutionary socialist and communist ideology."[11] L. E. Elliot-Binns outlines how England was once "a land of small

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[8] The scope of the Long Nineteenth Century as presented by Hobsbawm, follows the publications of: *The Age of Revolution: Europe 1789–1848* (1960), *The Age of Capital: 1848–1875* (1975), and *The Age of Empire: 1875–1914* (1987).
While my approach and methodology are not explicitly Marxist, my research and interpretations were considerably influenced by Hobsbawm's important scholarship.

[9] Hobsbawm refers to the French and Industrial Revolutions as the "dual revolutions", which politically and economically transformed international and national identity. Eric Hobsbawm. *The Age of Revolution: 1789-1848* (Great Britain: Abacus, 2012) 14-16.

[10] Hobsbawm. *The Age of Revolution*. 13.

[11] Ibid.16.

towns and villages, of country seats and their surrounding estates, a land whose vast potentialities for production of wealth were yet unexploited."[12] Industrialisation and urbanisation would challenge the traditional values and connection toward God and the environment, with increasing commodification, destruction, and pollution altering the landscape. Although my research does not take a wholly Marxist approach in examining key texts, it does acknowledge the underlying influence of social and political change through reforms and economic growth, as witnessed and documented by Coleridge, Rossetti, and Hopkins. By using this historical timeframe, this thesis presents the Romantic Movement and its adherents' appreciation of the environment and God as influential on the thinking and writing of Victorians such as Rossetti and Hopkins. In doing so, it shows how the two adapt Romantic thinking to accommodate the progression and impact of the increasingly common urban living.[13]

Historians such as Hobsbawm have established how the nation and society become irreparably changed during this period, and the associated disillusionment and anxiety are evident in the correspondence, literature, and journals of those who witnessed it first-hand. Through contextual and historical evidence, this thesis chronologically examines Coleridge, Rossetti, and Hopkins to demonstrate the contrasting attitudes between the primarily rural-based Coleridge and that of his literary successors, the mostly urban-based Rossetti and Hopkins. As a result, it becomes clear that these writers can be viewed as participants in a philosophical, theological, and sociological lineage of thought that passes from one to the next against the backdrop of significant environmental and urban change.

My research engages with elements of literary geography, particularly taking note of Tobias Menely's materialist ecocriticism and geohistorical poetics in understanding how poetry is the "inescapable imbrication in the Earth system, the condition of all productive activity."[14] As Menely argues, "any poem can be understood, in its world making and time shaping, to offer a meditation on the enigmatic yet omnipresent nature of energy, in its planetary and social manifestations."[15] As part of establishing New Historicism, Stephen Greenblatt refers to "cultural poetics" as a method for charting the "intellectual trajectory" of

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[12] L. E. Elliot-Binns. *Religion in the Victorian Era*. (London: Lutterworth Press, 1964) 14.
[13] Williams refers to the idea of "Victorian moralists" and how they "had to learn to assume, with increasing unease from Coleridge to George Eliot and Matthew Arnold, that there was no necessary correspondence between class and morality..." - *The Country and the City*. 117.
[14] Tobias Menely. *Climate and the Making of Worlds: Toward a Geohistorical Poetics* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2021) 13.
[15] Ibid.14.

literature.[16] Although initially applied to early modern works, what Greenblatt demonstrates is that "art is itself the product of a set of manipulations […] the work of art is the product of a negotiation between a creator or class of creators, equipped with a complex, communally shared repertoire of conventions, and the institutions and practices of society."[17] The re-examination of the connections between literature and history is essential for my analysis where material such as "official documents, private papers, newspaper clippings, and so forth [are] transferred from one discursive sphere to another and becomes aesthetic property."[18] Menely and Greenblatt, writing thirty years apart, emphasise the importance of appreciating the external factors in producing poetry, correspondence, or other art forms. The process of creating culture is, therefore, shown to be informed by political, economic, sociological, and theological factors.

The extensive biographies and academic scholarship on my three central writers tend to treat them as individual figures, and as such, they are rarely grouped for analysis and exploration. It is worth explaining what this research is arguing and what it does not intend to do or follow. The field of Coleridgean studies includes a vast amount of work on Coleridge's philosophy, such as that by Seamus Perry, Douglas Hedley, and Peter Cheyne, as is the case for Michael Hurley on Hopkins; however, my research does not focus on philosophy whether it be Romantic or Victorian. Instead, the materialism explored here through geography and the landscape is viewed as central in understanding how they are defined by religious attitudes, therefore being seen as a form of philosophy rather than a complete natural antithesis. The poets I write about might be considered cerebral, but their imaginations were also of the material world they inhabited. So, this thesis argues for the little-attended ways material environments provided sustenance for the literary imagination. It goes a step further in presenting an alternative context through which to view the works of Coleridge, Rossetti, and Hopkins, particularly in how they respond to the value of religious and environmental experiences in their respective locations.

Not only is this research informed by the principles set out by Menely, Greenblatt, and other theorists, but it is also interested in how material possessions and non-human entities, such as the natural world, provide physical and spiritual comfort. In its most apparent occurrence with Coleridge, Rossetti, and Hopkins, nature would become infused with a significant divine and moral value. The High Church orthodoxy that would eventually be

[16] Stephen Greenblatt. *Learning to Curse: Essays in Early Modern Culture*. (London: Routledge, 1990) 1.
[17] Ibid. 158.
[18] Ibid. 157.

adopted by all three during their lives presents a set of principles through which the world, both local and further afield, can be perceived and understood. The value placed on these objects or experiences does not replace God or spirituality, but instead, further enhances how the divine is the creator of all things and how the world is charged with a holy brilliance.

The term "orthodox" is employed to connect Coleridge, Rossetti, and Hopkins through their varying degrees of Christian leanings and conservative views. By "orthodox", I specifically mean a traditionalist version of Christianity with a strict adherence to the doctrines and teachings of the church, which I am attaching to the Anglican High Church and the Roman Catholic Church. G. K. Chesterton's definition of orthodoxy, originally written in 1908, relates to "the central Christian theology" where there "is the best root energy and sound ethics."[19] Chesterton's emphasis on "historic conduct" is "summarized in the Apostles' Creed," a declaration of faith concerning the foundation of the Christian church.[20] The Church of England is positioned as the middle ground between apparent extremes of the Christian faith, with the Roman Catholic church on the one side and the more liberal groups on the other. The discourse surrounding politics, theology, and the Church of England's direction created several internal fractions and splinter groups, which saw the split between the High, Broad, and Low Churches.[21] Coleridge, Rossetti, and Hopkins would all become connected to the High Church, with Hopkins being received into the Roman Catholic church in 1866.[22] Despite their differences, the Anglican High Church and the Roman Catholic Church both emphasise personal and public ritualism. This study addresses how they share a literary and theological heritage that aims to protect the integrity of Christianity in the face of change. As Chesterton highlights, "the very doctrine which is called the most old-fashioned was found to be the only safeguard of the new democracies of the earth,"[23] emphasising how orthodox, traditional beliefs can protect moral values and allow a realistic vision of freedom. The notion of "orthodoxy" is not a stable term, and indeed, the writers in this research felt

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[19] G. K. Chesterton. *Orthodoxy*. 16th ed. (London: The Bodley Head, 1957) 8.
[20] Ibid. 8
[21] By High Church, I mean specific the branch of the Anglican Church that "favours aspects of Roman Catholicism in liturgy, ceremonial, and dogma."- *The New Penguin English Dictionary*. ed. Robert Allen (London: Penguin, 2000) 656
In contrast, the Low Church refers to part of the Anglican Church, which "minimize [the] emphasis on the priesthood, sacraments, and ceremonial [..] often to emphasise evangelical principles." *The New Penguin English Dictionary*, 826-27.
[22] Chesterton was initially raised as a Unitarian before joining the Anglican Church. He converted to Roman Catholicism in 1922, fourteen years after the publication of *Orthodoxy*.
[23] Chesterton. *Orthodoxy*. 214-15.

some of its paradoxes and contradictions, struggling with the complexities of such beliefs in the modern age.

Joshua King and Winter Jade Werner affirm an "inescapability of religion and its influence in nineteenth-century culture,"[24] and the interplay between traditional Christian Orthodoxy and its influence on understanding the world in the nineteenth-century is central to this research. As a champion of the Catholic left, the Marxist critic Terry Eagleton emphasises the importance of religion as having vital cultural value, which this thesis presents as evident in the writing of its three central writers. Eagleton argues that attempts to "plunder us of our historical legacies", of which religion is a fundamental example, risks undermining culture, and, therefore, "religion needs to be patiently deciphered, not arrogantly repudiated."[25] The essential historical and social influence of religion is argued to be "the single most powerful, pervasive, persistent form of popular culture,"[26] and it is from this angle that this thesis will present the writings of Coleridge, Rossetti, and Hopkins. Furthermore, Eagleton's assessment that a "thoroughly orthodox, scriptural, and traditional" system of beliefs represents a "more realistic [view] about humanity"[27] is particularly pertinent to the three writers of this thesis.[28] They portray in the writing what Eagleton calls "the full measure of human depravity and perversity […] Yet it also believes that the very frailty of the human can become a redemptive power."[29] The extremities of faith and feeling remove an absolute romanticised version of society in favour of certainty and possibility.

**Materiality and Dirt Theory**

The approaches outlined above helped to contextualise this thesis; however, I also want to explain further the critical framework utilised here before I begin to ground this research with historical and sociological background and provide the overall core structure. The materialism that my research employs, as I have previously noted, is defined by

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[24] Joshua King and Winter Jade Werner. *Constructing Nineteenth-Century Religion* (Columbus: The Ohio State University Press, 2019) 9.
[25] Terry Eagleton. *Reason, Faith, and Revolution: Reflections on the God Debate* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009) 90.
[26] Ibid. 52.
[27] Ibid. 47.
[28] Stanley Fish proposes "religion as a force motivating action [which] could no longer be sequestered in the private sphere," highlighting how it can address political and social issues, where the history of religion becomes a growing topic that "has brought along with it the anthropology of religion, the sociology of religion, the economics of religion, the politics of religion, religious art, religious music, religious mysticism, religion and capitalism, religion and law, religion and medicine, and so forth."- Stanley Fish. "One University, Under God?" *The Chronicle of Higher Education.* January 7, 2005. <https://www.chronicle.com/article/one-university-under-god/> (Accessed May 14, 2023).
[29] Eagleton. *Reason, Faith, and Revolution*. 47-48.

geography and the landscape, and where religious attitudes towards place further inform these dimensions. The material world represents a broad and growing environment through which Coleridge, Rossetti, and Hopkins attempt to experience and witness God and feel grounded and confident about their theological beliefs. Although Marx was particularly interested in the economic influence and impact on the production or labour of material or creation, the broader power and vibrancy of non-human objects or experiences are pertinent to my analysis. Bill Brown's "thing theory" draws attention to how "we look through objects", which allows us "to see what they disclose about history, society, nature, or culture…"[30] Brown highlights how things are often more than "mere materialization" or "mere utilization as objects," instead they are forces of a "sensuous presence or as a metaphysical presence, the magic by which objects become values, fetishes, idols, and totems."[31] The power of these non-human, sometimes inanimate, objects emphasises creation's changing value and influence. The growing industrialisation, pollution, and commodification in the Long Nineteenth Century created a complex relationship between the natural and the artificial, the rural and the town, and the sanitary and the dirty. This evolving relationship is central to this thesis's exploration of the works of Coleridge, Rossetti, and Hopkins as a method of viewing their writing as a reaction to these changes.

The inherent goodness in the contrasting surroundings of the countryside and the growing industrial towns of the nineteenth-century provides an opportunity to evaluate how Coleridge, Rossetti, and Hopkins understand and acknowledge the human experience in this setting. The changing perceptions of dirt, materiality, and humility offer an alternative context to read and understand their writing. William Rueckert described eco-criticism as the attempt "to find the grounds upon which the two communities—the human, the natural—can coexist, cooperate, and flourish in the biosphere."[32] Since then, as the world has become more attuned to the crisis of species loss and climate change, that sub-genre has become a significant theoretical and methodological approach. This research is interested in how Coleridge, Rossetti, and Hopkins accommodate faith and an appreciation of their environment based on their surroundings and encounters. In doing so, it will highlight how the encroaching urban space results in friction between the ability for such entities to "coexist, cooperate, and flourish," as Rueckert refers to it. Jonathan Bate's seminal

[30] Bill Brown. "Thing Theory," *Critical Inquiry*, Volume 28, No. 1 (Autumn 2001): 4.
[31] Ibid. 5.
[32] William Rueckert. "Literature and Ecology: An Experiment in Ecocriticism," in *The Ecocriticism Reader: Landmarks in Literary Ecology*. eds. Cheryll Glotfelty and Harold Fromm (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1996) 107.

ecocritical text, *The Song of the Earth* (2000), argues that "poetry is the song of the Earth" in which the poet often tries "to explain the world and humankind's place within it."[33] Sheila Hones also highlights that reading and writing are "a moment of text-based spatial interaction, a geographical event."[34] These spatial influences help provide a literary geographical and materialistic perspective, creating a new angle to examine works by Coleridge, Rossetti, and Hopkins.

To simply analyse the depictions of environmentalism in the works of Coleridge, Rossetti, and Hopkins would fail to contribute anything of note to literary scholarship, as it is too broad. Instead, this research takes an eco-critical perspective that highlights nature's spiritual value and tracks changes in these writers' perceptions of the landscape and its components. The importance of understanding the molecular and minute features of the local environment and landscape is demonstrated by Jane Bennett, whose *Vibrant Matter* states that "so-called in-animate things have a life, that deep within is an inexplicable vitality or energy, a moment of independence from and resistance to us and other bodies: a kind of thing-power."[35] Bennett assesses that non-human aspects of our world possess a certain appeal and enchantment but can also evoke fear and unease. These elements are imbued with an enchanting energy that has the capacity to comfort and unsettle simultaneously.

The declarations made by Coleridge, Rossetti, and Hopkins argue that all things affirm God's power and love and are charged with a holy energy. There is, subsequently, a reverence for those non-human objects, particularly those found in nature, and how this energy is observed, processed, and documented is a defining part of this thesis's understanding and reading of these writers. They all represent a particularly conservative, orthodox version of Christianity[36], but their individual experiences and knowledge of the world surrounding them are unique and influential. Their individual weighting to objects, people, and experiences becomes crucial in examining how they regard matter in their surroundings and how they are presented and informed with a religious meaning.

By viewing these poets from the perspective of dirt and materiality, we can increase our understanding of how they emphasise what Henri Bergson defines as the "latent belief in

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[33] Jonathan Bate. *The Song of the Earth* (Great Britain: Picador, 2000) 251.
[34] Sheila Hones. "Text as it Happens: Literary Geography," *Geography Compass*. 2/5 (2008): 1301.
[35] Jane Bennett. *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2010) 18.
[36] Coleridge's religious affiliations are notoriously tricky to pinpoint, particularly in the middle section of his life. With a degree of certainty, it can be said that his early life and later life were shaped by High Church thinking, as I will examine in Chapters One and Two.

the spontaneity of nature."[37] The energy or vibrancy of the natural world, and more widely inanimate life as a whole encompassing both human and non-human entities, can inspire, create connections, and develop a sense of belonging. The vibrant matter that Bennett traces through to philosophers such as "Spinoza, Friedrich Nietzsche, Henry David Thoreau, Charles Darwin, [and] Theodor Adorno,"[38] among others, is also given a political weighting to "articulate a vibrant materiality that runs alongside and inside humans to see how analyses of political events might change if we gave the force of things more due."[39] This thesis demonstrates how Coleridge, Rossetti, and Hopkins were all engaged with a particular form of politics in their writing, which is attributable to their High Church orthodoxy.

Heather I. Sullivan's "Dirt Theory and Material Ecocriticism" provides an eco-critical and materialist framework for viewing what is referred to as an "antidote to nostalgic views" and where there is an emphasis on there being "no ultimate boundary between us and nature."[40] The primary issue for understanding the value of non-human and inanimate objects relates to "the dichotomy dividing our material surroundings into a place of 'pure, clean nature' and the dirty human sphere."[41] Sullivan links dirt as a physical matter that is carried and transported, adhering to people and animals as they move from one place to another, but it can also act as a metaphor and symbolic motif. As a result, dirt is both viewed materially and analogically, and this dual notion of dirt, I will demonstrate, frequently appears in the writings of Coleridge, Rossetti, and Hopkins either through literal portrayals of soil, grime, and dust or through explorations of morality, sin, and innocence. The works of Rossetti and Hopkins will present how Victorian attitudes towards dirt changed in the urban setting, highlighting the shift from the rural Romantic ideal.

Finally, Mary Douglas' *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of Concepts of Pollution and Taboo* (1966) provides a cultural, anthropological insight into dirt becoming viewed as a "disorder" where "absolute dirt" only exits "in the eye of the beholder."[42] The transition of dirt from a noble sustainer of life to something bound up in terror and disgust reflects the chaos and vitality of the Victorian urban environments. Rossetti and Hopkins face what Douglas calls the "re-ordering [of] our environment, making it conform to an idea."[43] This

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[37] Henri Bergson. *Creative Evolution*. trans. Arthur Mitchell (New York: Dover Publications, 1998) 45.
[38] Bennett. *Vibrant Matter*. viii.
[39] Ibid. viii.
[40] Heather I. Sullivan. "Dirt Theory and Material Ecocriticism," *Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature and Environment*, Volume 19, No. 3 (Summer 2012): 515.
[41] Sullivan. "Dirt Theory and Material Ecocriticism," 515.
[42] Mary Douglas. *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of Concepts of Pollution and Taboo* [1966] (London: Routledge, 2002) 2.
[43] Ibid. 3.

results in conflicts such as "order to disorder, being to non-being, form to formlessness, life to death,"[44] creating instability in the boundaries between dirt and cleanliness. The peaceful rural setting differs from the polluted and industrialised cities, where staining and soiling constitute a significant issue. The pollution in such areas affects people's physical health and can also impact their spiritual and mental well-being. The confluence of these factors leads to a growing trend of utilising religion as a means of reconciling with and making sense of the challenges presented by the urban environment. In this context, religion serves as a touchstone, shaping how individuals and communities understand and interact with the city.

**Bridging the Romantics and Victorians**

Recent critical works have opened a wealth of new interpretations and understanding of the relationship between literature and religion, particularly in the Romantic and Victorian periods. There has also been a noticeable move toward reading the environment in literature in conjunction with spiritual and religious connotations, including, among others, Dallin Lewis' "After Eden: Religion, Literature, and the Environment" (2014), Baylor University's 'Ecology and Religion in Nineteenth-Century Studies' conference (2019), and Joshua King's upcoming book project *The Body of Christ, the Body of the Earth: Poetry, Ecology, and Christology.*[45] In understanding the Long Nineteenth Century, Greenblatt states that the period was significant because it "show[s] the strong influence of the Romantics," but argues that the Victorians could not "sustain the confidence that the Romantics felt [as a result] the Victorians often rewrite Romantic poems with a sense of belatedness and distance."[46] The debate surrounding religion in an age underpinned by the effects of the Enlightenment's desire for fact and logic challenged some long-held beliefs and fuelled scepticism and atheistic thoughts in those who participated in these conversations.[47] Furthermore, Marilyn Butler notes that "the great Victorian controversies were anticipated in the early 1790s,"[48]

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[44] Douglas. *Purity and Danger*. 7.
[45] Dallin Lewis. "After Eden: Religion, Literature, and the Environment," *Religion & Literature*. Volume 46, No 2/ 3 (Summer- Autumn 2014): 157-67; *Ecology & Religion in Nineteenth-Century Studies Conference*. September 2019. <https://sites.baylor.edu/ecologyreligion/> (Accessed November 11, 2023); Joshua King. *Personal Website*. <https://blogs.baylor.edu/joshua_king/#> (Accessed November 11, 2023).
[46] Stephen Greenblatt et al. *The Norton Anthology of English Literature*. Volume E, 9th ed. (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 2012) 1038 (Ellipsis and brackets my own insertion.)
[47] For further reading on religion and Romanticism, see: M. H. Abrams. *Natural Supernaturalism: Tradition and Revolution in Romantic Literature* (New York: Norton, 1971); Colin Jager. *The Book of God: Secularization and Design in the Romantic Era* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007); and Ross Woodman and Joel Faflak. *Revelation and Knowledge: Romanticism and Religious Faith* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2011).
[48] Marilyn Butler. *Romantics, Rebels and Reactionaries: English Literature and its Background, 1760-1830* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981) 79.

therefore, there is an artistic, theological, and political continuation of thoughts, concerns, and discussions from the Romantics to the Victorians.

Butler draws on materialism and New Historicism to highlight the importance of reading Romantic texts within their historical context, writing that "literature, like art, like language, is a collective activity, powerfully conditioned by social forces, what needs to be and what may be said in a particular community at a given time…"[49] The ongoing conversation between Romanticism and Victorian cultures is significant when writers such as Rossetti and Hopkins lived, learned, and wrote in the Victorian period, exhibiting signs of the continued presence of the intellectual principles from the Romantic period. Isaiah Berlin agrees that Romanticism represents one of Western history's most significant cultural influences, writing that it:

> …is the largest recent movement to transform the lives and thoughts of the Western world […] the greatest single shift in the consciousness of the West that has occurred, and that all the other shifts which have occurred in the course of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries appear to me in comparison less important, and at any rate deeply influenced by it.[50]

The bridge between Romanticism and the Victorians forms this research's narrative, following Berlin and Butler's statements about the profound influence of Romanticism on the thoughts and culture of the nineteenth-century.

This thesis's focus on the relationship between religion and the natural world during the Long Nineteenth Century allows for an exploration of how these attitudes and understanding have evolved. Colin Jager describes how the process of secularisation "is understood not as a loss of belief but rather as an example of the differentiation that characterizes modernity."[51] The result is a repositioning of faith to view it as a cultural phenomenon, in keeping with Eagleton's view that it represents "the single most powerful, pervasive, persistent form of popular culture…"[52] My thesis argues that a Romantic Christian spirituality acts as a form of continuity in the writing of Rossetti and Hopkins. While aspects of Romantic engagement and imagination are respected in the Victorian period, my work reveals how these forces are rearranged into a new constellation regarding faith and the environment.

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[49] Butler. *Romantics, Rebels and Reactionaries*. 9
[50] Isaiah Berlin. *The Roots of Romanticism*. (London: Random House, 2010) 1-2.
[51] Colin Jager. *The Book of God.* 1.
[52] Eagleton. *Reason, Faith, and Revolution.* 52.

Timothy Morton describes the sense of a "horrible narrowness" when the natural world is threatened, creating an "ecological awareness [which] is also dark-uncanny."[53] Morton understands the connection to the natural as being intertwined with mixed feelings, including joy and contentment, as well as fear and apprehension. This notion of a daunting nature that can bring both delight and discomfort highlights this environment's intricate and dual characteristics. The encroachment on the natural world through urbanisation and industrialisation creates an intensity of feeling and connection, as noted in this research's exploration of Coleridge, Rossetti, and Hopkins. The "horrible narrowness" that Morton refers to will be presented not solely through an investigation of ecological destruction but also alongside the broader concerns surrounding moral and religious integrity in the nineteenth-century, which were seemingly being eroded. These three writers present the reader with stark reflections and criticism of society through an orthodox framework.

**Ascribing God in the Rural and Urban**

Jerry White describes London as "a city of paradox", noting how "this metropolis of wealth and grandeur, culture and sophistication was also a hell of starving, degrading and heart-rending poverty."[54] This description is also applicable to the broader urbanisation and industrialisation across the country during the Long Nineteenth Century, which exacerbated the accumulation of wealth for some at the expense of poverty for many more. Roland Fletcher notes that the "materiality of urbanism encompasses the words and actions by which we relate ourselves to it, the economics of its creation and maintenance, the impact of the material on the viability of community life, and also the long-term trajectories of urban growth and decline."[55] The complexities of the urban environment are encapsulated not only by its vibrancy and busyness but also in its breaking down of traditional values and the greater exposure to hardship. It is against these circumstances that Coleridge, Rossetti, and Hopkins are writing, where the friction between the countryside and the town appeared at its most fraught. When Hopkins stated, "All things therefore are charged with love, are charged with God" (*SD* 195), he argued that God's beauty and power were present in all creation. Therefore, the product of God's creation symbolises perfection and demonstrates a merciful

[53] Timothy Morton. *Dark Ecology: For a Logic of Future Coexistence* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2016) 4-5.
[54] Jerry White. *London in the Nineteenth Century: A Human Awful Wonder of God* (United Kingdom: Bodley Head, 2016) 3.
[55] Roland Fletcher. "Urban Materialities: Meaning, Magnitude, Friction, and Outcomes," in *The Oxford Handbook of Material Culture Studies*. eds. Dan Hicks and Mary C. Beaudry (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010) 460.

and almighty deity and, crucially, that all was "Good."[56] The difficulty for Victorians, such as Rossetti and Hopkins, was how to understand and appreciate God as the creator of the world when this environment was increasingly dominated by unnatural and manmade creation.

Terry Gifford refers to a form of "literature that describes the country with implicit or explicit contrast to the urban."[57] Gifford further highlights how the notion of the pastoral "can be a mode of political critique of present society, or it can be a retreat from politics into an apparently aesthetic landscape that is devoid of conflict and tension."[58] Indeed, the result, as Gifford summarises, is the "necessity of a return", which "always leads to a qualification of the idyllic retreat."[59] J. Hillis Miller writes about the "gradual withdrawal of God from the world," suggesting that God "is out of reach" and therefore inaccessible.[60] Gifford refers to the "conflict and tension" that becomes dominant, particularly between the country and city, humankind and nature, and religion and secular beliefs. In Coleridge, Rossetti, and Hopkins, there are active attempts to pursue, find, and experience God wherever possible. It may no longer be "that God dwelt in the human world," as Miller puts it,[61] but human experiences, encounters, and spiritual reflection can be seen to create a closeness to God. The "progressive transformation of the world" through "industrialization and urbanization"[62] undoubtedly changes the physical qualities of an individual's surroundings; however, the essential attributes of God are still revealed and understood and remain a potent reality. Indeed, old systems and beliefs are challenged, with the apparent disintegration of God as an entity, as suggested by Miller, but that is not entirely true of the writers at the centre of this study who continue to experience the beauty of God.

Their acceptance of human experiences, emotions, and physical and spiritual encounters in the "real" world reflects their orthodoxy, but their connection to the rural environment is complex and varied depending on their unique circumstances. This is undoubtedly complicated by the notions of conflict and instability, as suggested by Gifford and Miller, but also demonstrates a flexible, or arguably evolving, perception of the world. Coleridge's natural landscape is infused with a spirituality and power, and whilst it serves the

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[56] The creation story of Earth (*Genesis* 1:1-31) contains seven occurrences of the word "good" and that because "God saw every thing that he had made, and, behold, it *was* very good" (*Genesis* 1:31), then all of life must be in a state of perfection as a result.
[57] Terry Gifford. *Pastoral* (London: Routledge, 1999) 2.
[58] Ibid. 11.
[59] Ibid. 10.
[60] J. Hillis Miller. *The Disappearance of God: Five Nineteenth-Century Writers*. (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1963) 1.
[61] Ibid. 1.
[62] Ibid. 5.

pastoral notion of self-sufficiency, it is one that he struggles to fully follow himself. In Rossetti, the countryside represents an idealised, Christian view of the world, yet she would exalt the vitality and excitement of the city. Finally, for Hopkins, a bucolic state is a long-yearned-for location representing the finest and most beautiful aspects of creations. To this extent, he idolises its importance as an escape from the city. These reactions to their surroundings stem from Christian beliefs, including Coleridge's spiritual and pantheistic nature, Rossetti's world heightened because of faith, and Hopkins' natural world as evidence of God all affirm this notion.

The traumatic transition caused by industrialisation and urbanisation created a new world. As White acknowledges, "the sheer physical growth of London on the ground, and the huge accretion of people sucked into it, were probably the dominant facts in contemporaries' minds, at least from the 1830s…"[63] A similar occurrence could also be seen in the other British industrial cities, where Coleridge and William Wordsworth had witnessed the start of such change and its impact on rural life, but it would become most evident and starker in the mid-nineteenth century.[64] For Rossetti and Hopkins, "the metropolis of wealth and grandeur, culture and sophistication was also a hell of starving, degrading and heart-rending poverty,"[65] a paradox that they had to contend with, justify, and manage.

In his observation of the human experience, St. Augustine wrote that society had created two forms of reality: the Earthly City and the City of God. For Augustine, human behaviour across history has resulted in conflict between these two cities. He writes: "the two cities are indeed entangled and mingled with one another; and they will remain so until the last judgment shall separate them."[66] He describes the citizens of the Earthly City as preferring "their own gods to the founder of this Holy City, not knowing that he is the God of gods."[67] The Earthly City embodies idolatry, materialism, and self-interest, in contrast to the pious inhabitants of a Holy and Heavenly City. Although Augustine uses this to defend the superiority of Christianity over Paganism, his distinction between two realities, one of Earthly desire and the other of Heavenly desire, has broader implications. Mary M. Keys demonstrates that Augustine's writing was written for his "own tumultuous age, the book transcends its time as an enduring classic, engaging our human condition in ways that prompt

[63] White. *London in the Nineteenth Century.* 3.
[64] See: Morton D. Paley. *Apocalypse and Millennium in English Romantic Poetry* [1999] (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).
[65] White. *London in the Nineteenth Century*. 3.
[66] St. Augustine. *Concerning the City of God against the Pagans*. trans. Henry Bettenson, ed. G. R. Davis (London: Penguin, 2003) 46.
[67] Ibid. 429.

readers to return to it in every era and amid a great variety of political societies and cultures."[68] The "tumultuous" nature of Augustine's age and the "tumultuous" changes that occurred during the Long Nineteenth Century provide a reflection on religion and human experience in the face of transformation and conflict.

In pushing back against the charges of secularisation and the obstacle of religion in the Long Nineteenth Century, Coleridge, Rossetti, and Hopkins, like Augustine, aimed to give pride and value to the Christian faith in their surroundings. The trait of being close to God, and therefore to dwell in the Heavenly City, relates to humility and its invocation of a common good and shared responsibility. Keys explains that "Humility, as Augustine understands and presents it, undergirds and inspires fruitful human agency in political, scientific, artistic, philosophic, and ecclesial-theological affairs; it does not, as might at first glance appear, check or oppose honest human effort."[69] To this effect, I will demonstrate how the poets central to this thesis subscribe to similar values. Augustine's use of the term "city" concerning the Heavenly City, or the City of God, relates to the historical tradition of "heaven or paradise, portrayed as a city in which God, his angels, and the beatified reside."[70] On the other hand, the Earthly City is regarded as the place where God and angels do not reside and may be defined as a large assembly of human habitation that is mostly manmade and, therefore, largely artificial. Furthermore, using the term "Earthly" opens a further dialogue about the earth, dirt, and soil itself, thereby providing a link between the rural, natural environment and the constructed urban setting.

Hones notes that it becomes apparent that a "broad array of people, places, times, contexts, networks, and communities"[71] have a distinct and vital bearing on the works produced. I argue that the three poets at the heart of this thesis are enacting a form of geography to record the world as they see and experience it.[72] Although Bate argues that such writing "severs the link with the immediate life-world of the speaker,"[73] I would say that writing is informed by an urgency, a need to react and document, in which it cannot help but be influenced by urban and natural environmental factors. Concerning Wordsworth and the

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[68] Mary M. Keys. *Pride, Politics, and Humility in Augustine's City of God* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2022) 1.
[69] Ibid. 236.
[70] *Oxford English Dictionary*, s.v. "city (n.), sense 4.a," accessed December 14, 2023, <https://doi.org/10.1093/OED/1065982466.>
[71] Hones. "Text as it Happens: Literary Geography," 1301.
[72] The term "Geography" is derived from Greek and aspects of Latin to mean earth (geo) and writing (graphia), see: *Oxford English Dictionary*, s.v. "geography, n.," accessed July 24, 2023. <https://doi.org/10.1093/OED/2087714158>
[73] Bate. *The Song of the Earth.* 249.

environment, Bate notes that "orthodox thought defines man through his mastery over nature,"[74] but the writers at the heart of my exploration demonstrate an exception to this concept. In the case of Coleridge, Rossetti, and Hopkins, three profoundly religious and orthodox figures are forced to cope with the challenges of the growing urban environment. Despite their orthodoxy, they are forced to attempt elements of their beliefs to maintain a connection with God when the natural world sometimes appears absent. Their reconceptualising of faith and nature is less about "mastery" and more in line with finding an alternative approach to understanding how natural elements and the landscape encapsulate God's love and power.

The growth of the industrial cities resulted, as Miller notes, in everything being "changed from its natural state into something useful or meaningful to man."[75] Such commodification and intensive labour in the Victorian cities had wide-ranging ramifications on the understanding of religious experiences and beliefs. This is felt most evidently in the works of Rossetti and Hopkins, where selected works will be analysed in relation to their portrayal of the urban environment, providing a deeper insight into the comprehension of human life and materiality. The three writers at the heart of this research indicate a trend of individuals remaining close to God in the nineteenth-century despite the transformation of their respective worlds as they knew it. Their connection as individuals influenced by the High Church should suggest a particularly orthodox and conservative point of view, yet this research will demonstrate their concern and treatment of transgressive behaviour, commodification, and poverty. In doing so, it will emphasise how they embraced a more profound sense of Christian charity and virtue that inherently rejects materialism and excess. As Jeffrey Barbeau affirms, religion was a dominant force and highly influential in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, where it "saturated Romantic society."[76] For Coleridge, this led to extensive reflection and consideration of God and religion in society through several poetic and non-fiction pieces. This is most prominently seen in *On the Constitution of the Church and State* (1829), an intensive study of social and political problems through a conceptualisation of the relationship between the nation and the Christian church, which became influential to the early to mid-nineteenth century Anglican High Church Oxford Movement, as experienced by both Rossetti and Hopkins.

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[74] Jonathan Bate. *Romantic Ecology: Wordsworth and the Environmental Tradition* (Abingdon, Oxford: Routledge, 2013) 34.
[75] Miller. *The Disappearance of God*. 5.
[76] Jeffrey Barbeau, ed. *Religion in Romantic England: An Anthology of Primary Sources* (Waco, Texas: Baylor University Press, 2018) xix.

**Research Structure**

This thesis' temporal structure with the Long Nineteenth Century allows the prevailing ideas of the time to be presented in context alongside selected works by Coleridge, Rossetti, and Hopkins, particularly those relating to theological, environmental, and political themes. As the attitudes towards religion and nature begin to change, it becomes clear that the works of Coleridge, Rossetti, and Hopkins reflect this by either resisting the transformation or strongly advocating that the change brings benefits. This thesis is composed of two sections, in which these writers are examined in chronological order. The first encompasses the life and selected works of the Romantic poet Samuel Taylor Coleridge, and the second focuses on the Victorian period with a specific emphasis on the lives and writings of Rossetti and Hopkins.

Chapter One, *Young Coleridge and the West Country Years*, centres on Coleridge's early career, with a critical focus on his time in various locations in the West Country during the 1790s. This period marked a significant moment of political and religious freedom for Coleridge, during which time he advocated for seemingly liberal viewpoints as a preacher for the Unitarian church, but I will show how he also remains grounded in a High Church orthodoxy. Drawing on Richard Cronin's concept of "West Country Romanticism", the chapter reimagines this term as a lived experience where Coleridge is the central figure who brings West Country Romanticism to life as an active form of natural and spiritual engagement.[77] The argument is made that West Country Romanticism is a distinct and important form of the Romantic Movement, thanks to the unique political and religious freedoms that existed in the region. The chapter reevaluates Cronin's "West Country Romanticism" to present Coleridge at its spiritual and creative heart, thereby highlighting the vital role that the village of Nether Stowey and its surroundings played in his search for self-sufficiency, comfort, and security. It also shows how the poetry and correspondence from this period reflect Coleridge's earliest immersion in the natural world and his desire for self-sufficiency. Throughout, dirt, soil, and earth are presented as essential materials for the aspirations of freedom and simplicity, and where the natural world is imbued with an inherent goodness and usefulness.

Chapter Two, *Later Coleridge and the Maturation of Thought,* concentrates on Coleridge's later years rather than revisiting the well-documented period of Coleridge in the Lake District. The focus will be on the significance and influence of Highgate, where he

[77] Richard Cronin. "Joseph Cottle and West Country Romanticism," in *English Romantic Writers and the West Country*. ed. Nicholas Roe. (Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010) 65-78.

enjoyed a highly productive and settled time as a guest of the Gillman family from 1816 until his death in 1833. This builds upon what Tim Fulford calls the "tendency to overlook the later poetry of no longer youthful poets – in particular, that of the group called at the time 'Lake poets'…"[78] The chapter reads against critical narratives that set this period of Coleridge's career as uneventful and underwhelming. Instead, it presents Coleridge's embracing of High Church orthodoxy as significant in reassessing his work and interactions with his surroundings. The focus on Highgate, rather than the Lake District, allows for a substantial re-exploration of his later years and how this period was used to reflect on his past and legacy. In doing so, the chapter will extend beyond Fulford's chapter on later Coleridge by analysing several additional significant poems alongside correspondence and key theological works such as *On the Constitution of the Church and State.*

Crucially, this period marked Coleridge's return to the Church of England, and it is within this context that the chapter views the maturation of his religious and political opinions, influenced by societal changes and events. Furthermore, the chapter highlights the underacknowledged significance of Coleridge's friendship with his neighbour, the Hebrew scholar Hyman Hurwitz. The relationship is presented through correspondence and collaborative projects as an important example of Coleridge developing his theological and political thought. The chapter closes with an analysis of poems composed by Coleridge during this period, many of which are lesser known and are seldom anthologised. In these poems, there is evidence of Coleridge scrutinising his mortality and legacy, containing a profound contemplation of the worth and significance of his existence and the value of life. Overall, the chapter provides a reassessment of Coleridge's later years and its relevance in the development of his thoughts and writing. This, in turn, will feed into how this work and ideas influence subsequent High Church orthodox followers in the subsequent decades.

The shift from Romantic to Victorian literature is demonstrated through the works of Rossetti and Hopkins, revealing new attitudes towards human experience, materiality, virtue, and dirt. The third chapter, *Christina Rossetti and the Liturgy of the City*, presents Rossetti from the perspective of a contented urban resident, seeking to understand how the city's religious practices intersect with her own spiritual beliefs and literary output. Through an analysis of a selection of poems and correspondence by Rossetti, this chapter illuminates the complex interplay between urban life and religious experience. It builds and expands upon Dinah Roe's usage of the term "the urban Rossettis" to refer to the Rossetti siblings as a

[78] Tim Fulford. *The Late Poetry of the Lake Poets: Romanticism Revised* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013) 1.

collective,[79] and subverts traditional readings of Rossetti's primarily rural set poems to bring to the forefront the city's influence on her life and writing. As a result, the chapter reconsiders the urban-rural dichotomy as understood by Rossetti and shows how she finds a personal form of nature and spirituality in the city. I will establish how poems such as 'Goblin Market' are influenced by the cityscape that Rossetti knew and how she uses poetry to accommodate the dangers and allure of the urban environment. The market brought the countryside into the city, opening a world of possibilities through unfamiliar produce and introducing an unusual environment filled with desire, politics, and danger. The excessive noise levels, presence of dirt and filth, constant crowds, and objectification of individuals all make the space feel increasingly peculiar. It becomes clear that Rossetti, in this environment, frequently deals with the repulsion of things that are immoral and lacking in virtue. The chapter focuses on Rossetti's social activism to emphasise her efforts to challenge social boundaries and taboos within the context of her High Church beliefs. The purpose is to highlight how her actions influence the importance of empathy, compassion, and inclusivity in creating a moral and just urban society.

Finally, *Gerard Manley Hopkins: An Ecological Communion,* examines the life and selected works of the poet and Jesuit priest Gerard Manley Hopkins. This takes a similar approach as the previous chapter, examining Hopkins as a poet of the city and contextualising his writing in relation to his time spent predominantly in industrial, working-class locations. His extensive collection of poetry and writing about the natural world exemplify how he saw nature as a way to escape and find relief from the unpleasant living conditions in urban areas. Specifically, Hopkins is shown to present the rural environment as the fundamental representation and manifestation of God's power and energy. Compared to Rossetti, Hopkins' writing offers a contrasting view of the urban environment, which he associates with dirt, pollution, and darkness, particularly in the great industrial cities. At the same time, his depictions of nature are presented as being noticeably dirt-free and filled with purity despite the advocation of the wilderness being allowed to prosper unimpeded. Hopkins' urban setting will be presented as a force that influences many aspects of his beliefs and outlook on life, particularly when faced with his parishioners' troubling encounters in areas of industrialisation and poverty. In my response, I'll explain how Rossetti and Hopkins shared similar literary and religious beliefs, but their experiences of life and perception of the world diverge. Rossetti found inspiration in the bustling city environment, whereas Hopkins

[79] Dinah Roe. *The Rossettis in Wonderland: A Victorian Family History* (London: Haus Publishing, 2011) 35.

felt a more Romantic and Coleridgean spiritual connection to nature and struggled to find God in urban settings. Hopkins was repulsed by the poverty and filth of the city, and although he was politically conservative, he still questioned the materialistic values of society and mankind's destruction of nature through seemingly socialist and compassionate means.

# Chapter 1: Young Coleridge and The West Country Years

*I therefore go, and join head, heart and hand,*
*Active and firm, to fight the bloodless fight*
*Of Science, Freedom and the Truth in CHRIST.*

'Reflections on having left a Place of Retirement'
(260, ll.60-62)[80]

In the 1790s, Coleridge's life was marked by confusion, self-discovery, and sorrow. There was a lack of direction and purpose between his enrolment at the University of Cambridge in 1791 and his arrival to the village of Nether Stowey, Somerset, in December 1796. Those experiences, however, were influential in forming and shaping the young Coleridge's poetic, theological, and philosophical outlook. The decade had been marred by anxieties over the trial and expulsion of the Unitarian Cambridge Fellow, tutor and radical William Frend (1793);[81] by a failed attempt to flee debts and join the King's Army (1793); an unrealised vision for a Pantisocracy in the United States with fellow poet Robert Southey, their spouses, and a small group of friends (1794-95); and the closure of his periodical *The Watchman* after ten issues (1796).

Coleridge's time in the West Country marked a crucial turning point in his life, and its significance is explored in more detail in this chapter. This location's importance, I will argue, is centred around a desire to escape with the countryside offering a sanctuary through which he could achieve that aim. Following the birth of his first son, Hartley, in September 1796, Coleridge sought a different and more fulfilling life. He yearned for simplicity and a sense of spiritual goodness that was rooted in rural life and wrote to Charles Lloyd Senior, "I am anxious that my children should be bred up from earliest infancy in the simplicity of peasants, their food, dress, and habits completely rustic." (*CL* I, 240) Anxiety became a common theme during this period, highlighted here through his concern that town life would be unsuitable for his family and that rural living offered the best conditions for a better way of life. Although his comment exposes an idealised vision of rural life, it also reveals a

[80] References to Coleridge's poems in this chapter are taken from: *The Collected Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge: Volume 16, Poetical Works I, Poems (Reading Text): Part 1*, ed. J. C. C. Mays (Princeton University Press, 2001). For simplicity, in the first instance a reference to a poem includes the page number followed by the line number; thereinafter, just the line number will be used.

[81] For further information on Frend's life and trial, see: P. M. Zall. "The Cool World of Samuel Taylor Coleridge: The Trials of William Frend," *The Wordsworth Circle*, Volume 2, No. 1 (Winter 1971): 26-31; and Susan Purdie and Sarah Oliver. "William Frend and Mary Hays: Victims of Prejudice," *Women's Writing*, Volume 17, No. 1 (May 2010): 93-110.

crucial component most prominent in Coleridge's West Country years in the 1790s: the need to escape and live simply without burden, complication, or strain. This romanticised vision and interpretation of the natural world as a place of simplicity and escapism demonstrates the value that Coleridge placed on austerity, self-reliance, and freedom, which his Christian faith would influence. This chapter shows how such an experience in the West Country has a lasting impact on his poetic and religious thinking, where a contextual and materialist analysis of this period allows for further meaning to be found in his writing. It explores Coleridge's endeavours to actualise his desires for freedom and simplicity in diverse literary genres such as poetry, correspondence, notebooks, and non-fiction work.

I am defining the West Country as the area comprising the southwest peninsula of England containing the counties of Cornwall, Devon, and Somerset, as well as Bristol and the surrounding historic counties of Wiltshire and Dorset.[82] The high number of radical thinkers, dissenters, abolitionists, and literary figures who visited or resided in the West Country meant that it was the centre of much intellectual and political interest, creating a forum particular to this region. As a result, the chapter will show how Coleridge's interaction with the West Country's landscape and culture are essential to understanding his writing and thinking from the 1790s. His escape from his troubles and his embedding into the natural, rural environment represents a significant turning point for his life and career; the later ramifications and contrasting views are explored in Chapter Two.

Coleridge's previous failures to forge a self-sufficient life and career would create a new trajectory in his relationship with faith, nature, and poetry— the product being his collaboration with William Wordsworth on *Lyrical Ballads* (1798). This chapter builds on the small but valuable collection of publications which centre Coleridge in the context of the West Country.[83] These works form an entry point that I will expand upon to analyse Coleridge and his poetry under the influence of the landscape. This chapter also extends the research of the scope of these texts by focusing specifically on the importance of the West

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[82] Bristol is a curious oddity in that it was both a city and a county after being granted a County Charter by King Edward III in 1373. See: Christian Drummond Lidd. *War, Politics and Finance in Late Medieval English Towns: Bristol, York and the Crown, 1350-1400* (UK: Boydell & Brewer, 2005) 13.
Additionally, Thomas Hardy used the historic name "Wessex", which was part of the Anglo-Saxon Kingdom, to describe his imaginary region based on the geography of South and South-West England. The areas of Lower, Outer, South, West, North, Mid, and Upper Wessex roughly cover approximately the West Country.

[83] These include Berta Lawrence. *Coleridge and Wordsworth in Somerset* (Newton Abbot: David and Charles, 1970); Nicholas Roe. *Wordsworth and Coleridge: The Radical Years* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988); Tom Mayberry. *Coleridge and Wordsworth in the West Country* (Stroud: Alan Sutton,1992); and the collection of essays in *English Romantic Writers and the West Country* under the editorship of Nicholas Roe. (Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010). My particular interest will be in this latter collection as one of the most recent and diverse looks at Romanticism in the West Country.

Country as Coleridge's place of escape and early freedom. An analysis of Coleridge's exploration of the natural world will emphasise the conceptualisation of place and space, childhood, and education. Furthermore, the chapter considers the effect of the West Country on Coleridge and his poetry from the period, emphasising the significance of the folklore, history, ecology, and identity of such a specific area of England. Crucially, the chapter will argue that whilst Romanticism tends to be focused on the Lake District or London, it is necessary to reconsider the geography of the movement in which the West Country is present in its origins. The re-conception of Romantic geographies allows the interconnection between faith and nature in Coleridge's work to be understood more clearly.

**"The Valley of Seclusion":[84] Belonging in Coleridge's West Country**

This section presents an extension of the influential research by Richard Cronin, Peter J. Kitson, Graham Davidson, and others in *English Romantic Writers and the West Country* (2010), edited by Nicholas Roe.[85] As its central theme, I want to expand on Cronin's usage of the term "West Country Romanticism", which has gained currency in Romantic studies for its focus on the Bristol publisher Joseph Cottle and the circle of dissenting thinkers associated with him, including Coleridge.[86] Instead, I will illuminate a different side of West Country Romanticism, which was rurally centred on Nether Stowey and the Quantock Hills, analysing their influence on Coleridge's poetry and thought. I will present this version of West Country Romanticism as having Coleridge at its heart, thereby creating an alternative perspective of that literary movement. I aim to advance the scholarship of *English Romantic Writers and the West Country* by providing a new analysis of Coleridge's 1790s writing linked to his desire for solitude and self-sufficiency. My study will explore how the ecology, culture, and people of the West Country contribute significantly to understanding and reinterpreting Coleridge's poetry and how this natural world is essential to the earliest formations of his theological beliefs.

In the foreword to *English Romantic Writers and the West Country*, Richard Holmes discusses the "lively 'New Regionalism' in contemporary Romantic studies", focusing on the

[84] From Coleridge's 'Reflections on Having Left a Place of Retirement' (1796) (261, l.9).
[85] Nicholas Roe (ed.). *English Romantic Writers and the West Country* (United Kingdom: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010) with an interest in: Richard Cronin. "Joseph Cottle and West Country Romanticism," 65-78; Timothy Whelan. "S. T. Coleridge, Joseph Cottle, and Some Bristol Baptists, 1794–96," 99-114; Peter J. Kitson. "Coleridge's Bristol and West Country Radicalism," 115-28; Anthony John Harding. "Radical Bible: Coleridge's 1790s West Country Politics," 129-51; and Graham Davidson. "Coleridge in Devon," 176-200.
[86] Cronin. "Joseph Cottle and West Country Romanticism," 65-78.

West Country as providing a "back-to-the-roots movement" for Romanticism.[87] Nicholas Roe further notes the importance of the West Country because it "offered the geographical and psychological remove that encouraged the poets' experiments with alternative insights and renewals."[88] The sense of removal is crucial when reading Coleridge during this period, with poems reflecting on the notions of a "Valley of Seclusion" (261, l.9), the "hush of nature" (454, l.17), and "a green and silent spot amid the hills,/ A small and silent dell!" (470, ll.1-2) The stillness and quietness of the rural landscape are presented as a beneficial and positive feature, emphasising its apparent goodness and tranquillity.

Richard Cronin further highlights through his chapter using the term "West-Country Romanticism" that such a gathering of poets, essayists, scientists, and thinkers in the southwest of England is essential to understanding the early period of Romanticism. Romanticism itself would become closely associated with the Lake District in Cumberland and Westmoreland, known for its strong connection to Wordsworth, Coleridge, Robert Southey, and many other figures linked with the First-Generation Romantics who collectively became called the "Lakers," "Lake School," and "Lake Poets".[89] These collective names were grounded in a specific geographical location and drew on that place's essence and topography. The term, however, is restrictive and reductive because it does not encompass the group's and its members' broader characteristics. Wordsworth was the most prominent resident in the Lake District and a native of Cumberland. He was born in Cockermouth in 1770 and resided in various locations in the area from 1799 until his death in 1850. As with many of the other early Romantic figures, Coleridge followed Wordsworth to the Lake District, but his time there was short, lasting from 1800 until 1804, a much briefer stay compared to Wordsworth and others. By extension, the term "Cockney School", used initially as a derogatory term for the Second Generation of Romantics, highlights further the significance of alternative Romantic locations beyond the Lake District.

For Cronin, Wordsworth and Coleridge's departure from the West Country "has a symbolic value; it marks the birth of the Lake School of Romantic poetry."[90] The separation of Wordsworth and Coleridge from their Bristol publisher, Joseph Cottle, was seen as a blow because Cottle claimed: "to have originated that school himself and not in the Lake District

[87] Richard Holmes. "Foreword" in *English Romantic Writers and the West Country*. xii.
[88] Nicholas Roe. "Introduction" in *English Romantic Writers and the West Country*. 2.
[89] All three terms originated from Francis Jeffrey in the *Edinburgh Review* and were intended pejoratively (articles in 1814-17). Over time, the name lost its negative associations and became more of a geographical and literary-cultural descriptor.
[90] Cronin. "Joseph Cottle and West Country Romanticism," 65.

but some 250 miles to the South, in Bristol."[91] Cottle, central to Cronin's exploration, is adamant in his declaration of being key to the works and lives of Southey, Coleridge, Wordsworth, and Charles Lamb, although his demands to be viewed as "their fellow poet" is much more debatable.[92] The pre-Lake District Romanticism is one of the remarkable evolution of poetry and thought, with a West Country Romanticism applying to the early period of Coleridge's life, not only due to the significant works he wrote there but also the experiences and encounters that impacted his long-term thinking and philosophy. In the 1790s, he attempted to separate from the urban world by removing and embedding himself into the solitude and apparent safety of the countryside. Although Cottle was crucial to the publication of many of the early Romantics, as demonstrated by Cronin, I want to suggest that West-Country Romanticism has an extra vibrancy and dimension when viewed with Coleridge at its centre. In doing so, I will demonstrate how many of his poems are grounded in a more material, historical reality than their subject matter would suggest. Even in Coleridge's most fanciful and creative pieces, it becomes clear that he still channels the influences of being grounded in the specifics of a rural West Country landscape and culture.

Coleridge spent over a decade living in the West Country, making it one of the most prolonged periods that he remained settled in one area other than his time at Highgate, as examined in the next chapter.[93] Remarking on Coleridge's time in the West Country, Kitson highlights how his "political and religious views and activities were thus indelibly marked and crucially shaped by the people he met and encountered during this period of his life."[94] Reginald Watters also notes that the bond between Wordsworth and Coleridge was founded on shared experiences and beliefs: "Both were country born, and spoke with country accents until the ends of their lives […] Both had lost parents early, and had subsequently tried to live a life of independent poverty. Both had been enthusiasts for the French Revolution."[95] Although the West Country would be Coleridge's territory, Graham Davidson stresses it was

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[91] Cronin. "Joseph Cottle and West Country Romanticism," 65.
[92] Ibid. 65.
[93] Coleridge was born in the West Country in 1772, remaining there until he was sent to Christ's Hospital School, London in 1781 following his father's death. After a period of study at Jesus College, Cambridge from 1791-94, Coleridge returned to the West Country in 1795 where he delivered a series of political lectures in Bristol. In the same year, he married Sara Fricker at Bristol's St. Mary Redcliffe Church and moved to Clevedon on the Bristol Channel before eventually living in the village of Nether Stowey, Somerset from 1796 to 1799. There were also other short-term residencies in the West Country including Bristol (1813), and Calne, Wiltshire (1814-15). See: Rosemary Ashton. *The Life of Samuel Taylor Coleridge: A Critical Biography* (Great Britain: Blackwell, 1997) 13-24, 62-87, 215, 244, 285-86; and Graham Davidson's specific look at Coleridge's Devon years in "Coleridge in Devon" in *English Romantic Writers and the West Country*. 176-200.
[94] Kitson. "Coleridge's Bristol and West Country Radicalism," 115.
[95] Reginald Watters. *Coleridge* (London: Evans Brothers, 1971) 40.

far from a harmonious relationship because "Coleridge had a troubled relationship with his home in the West."[96] Davidson's chapter focuses specifically on Coleridge's connection with Devon, the county of his birth, and his early childhood there, however, it is noted that Devon was one of "a series of exiles"[97] in Coleridge's life. His return to the West Country in the 1790s is significant because he chooses to reside in a neighbouring county to escape his native Devon. This contextual background provides an alternative rendering of Coleridge's life in the West Country. His yearning for the "Valley of Seclusion" (261, l.9), the "hush of nature" (454, l.17), and "a green and silent spot amid the hills,/ A small and silent dell" (470, ll.1-2) are all places that he could claim as his own. This rural state offered an element of peace and tranquillity, lacked emotional baggage, and was not tainted by negative experiences. Therefore, Coleridge's time in the West Country is an incomplete return home, emphasising the importance of simplicity and good living.

Coleridge's retreat to live a life of intended self-sufficiency was grounded in the desire to "keep no Servant," and where he planned to "cultivate [a] Land-acre" (*CL* I, 266). Coleridge performs an act that would be repeated several decades later by the Transcendentalist Henry David Thoreau, who in 1845 wrote, "I went to the woods because I wished to live deliberately, to front only the essential facts of life."[98] For Thoreau, as it was for Coleridge, to go to a form of nature away from the bustle of society is to return to a life with a purpose. Coleridge enthusiastically wrote about rural living to the radical orator and activist John Thelwall, declaring, "I raise potatoes & all manner of vegetables; have an Orchard; & shall raise Corn with the spade enough for my family.—We have two pigs, & Ducks & Geese. A Cow would not answer the keep: for we have whatever milk we want from T. Poole." (*CL* I, 308) He enthusiastically reveals his routine and the great zeal he has for rural life: "from seven to half past eight I work in my garden; from breakfast till 12 I read and compose; then work again—feed the pigs, poultry &c, till two o'clock—after dinner work again till Tea—from Tea till supper *review*. So jogs the day; & I am happy." (*CL* I, 308) This is a fanciful and purely imaginative comment on Coleridge's part since he had only been in the cottage for a few wintery months. It displays his vision for a rural plot and the bold plans to live the existence of a country resident who worked the land. He has invested in

[96] Davidson. "Coleridge in Devon," 177.
[97] Ibid. 199.
[98] Henry David Thoreau. "Where I Lived, and What I Lived For," in *Walden.* ed. Stephen Fender (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008) 83.

a location with practical and creative values, aiming to become embedded in the landscape fancifully and romantically.

Coleridge's 1794 meeting in Oxford with Robert Southey sparked an interest in a social experiment to create a Pantisocracy, which would be an ideal, utopian, democratic community on the banks of the Susquehanna River in Central Pennsylvania. The Pantisocrats aimed to create a liberated space for thought and lifestyle choices, free from the constraints of Britain's repressive society. Southey noted, "We preached Pantisocracy and Aspheterism […] two new words, the first signifying the equal government of all, and the other the generalization of individual property; words well understood in the city of Bristol."[99] His reference to the city further identifies the importance of West Country Romanticism as a place that recognised freedom, equality, and material value. Coleridge would write that "America really inspired Hope, & I became an exalted Being" (*Notebooks* 2, 2398), the prospect of hope being essential to the optimism of the plan. At the heart of the community would be what Coleridge called "the System of no Property (*CL* I, 90), fairness created through equal means and the companionship of similarly like-minded and intellectual individuals utilising what nature provided. In a letter to his brother, Coleridge refers to the founding principles of the Pantisocracy and the desire of people to come together and address the issues of society:

> […] the morals & domestic habits of the people are daily deteriorating: & one good consequence which I expect from revolutions, is that Individuals will see the necessity of individual effort; that they will act as kind neighbours & good Christians, rather than as citizens & electors; and so by degrees will purge off that error…
>
> (*CL* I, 395)

A Christian ethos and the inherent goodness of individuals freed from society's pressures are shown to be essential for the common good. The fundamental principle was that everyone should give their share and contribute with the whole mind, body, and soul to the communal project.

The scheme's practicalities gradually came into question due to such a commune requiring significant money to acquire, prepare, and farm the intended land. Doubts grew for Southey over whether America offered the lifestyle they desired, and difficulties arose

[99] Robert Southey in a letter to his brother Thomas, September 1794 in Robert Southey. *The Story of His Life Written in His Letters*. ed. John Dennis (London: George Bell and Sons, 1894) 91.

concerning the roles of servants and other matters.[100] Instead, plans were suggested to relocate the Pantisocracy ambitions from the banks of the Susquehanna River to a farm in Wales, a notable downsizing of the original aspirations.[101] This was not enough to keep things going, and by the close of 1795, the Pantisocracy dream was over, and Coleridge and Southey parted ways from the concept. Therefore, I would argue that Coleridge's residency in Nether Stowey was a modification of those early Pantisocracy plans and an attempt to bring it to fruition, albeit on a reduced and more manageable scale. There was now one family instead of the proposed twelve, the location was now in a North Somerset village amongst the Quantock Hills rather than America or Wales, and the shareholding was significantly smaller than previously envisaged.

Nether Stowey would become a welcoming place filled with intellectuals and like-minded creative and political individuals visiting the cottage and the area because of Coleridge's occupancy there. In regular correspondence with Coleridge in the late 1790s, John Thelwall described the cottage to his wife, stating that the place was an "enchanting retreat (the Academus of Stowey)."[102] This sleepy Somerset village offered an escape from the pressures of life with a calm and pastoral lifestyle centred around community and simplicity. In a letter to George Dyer in March 1795, Coleridge expressed the wish that "we could form a Pantisocracy in England" (*CL* I, 155) and realised this partially in Nether Stowey.

Heather I. Sullivan's "Dirt Theory" refers to life being "dependent on Earth and soil", arguing that the "less glamourous" side of life involves much dirt and toil,[103] and this is where Coleridge aimed to direct his focus. Here, Coleridge's interaction with dirt, which he aspires to cultivate and tend, is part of the connection with the landscape where "there is no ultimate boundary between us and nature."[104] Coleridge's aspiration to have a rural way of life relies on the land, demonstrating not only the simplicity of such an existence but also his idealised vision of such a natural landscape. His escape from the hustle of city life in London

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[100] See: Clarke Garrett. "Coleridge's Utopia Revisited," *Soundings: An Interdisciplinary Journal,* Volume 55, no. 1 (1972): 121–37; Samantha Webb. "'Not so pleasant to the taste': Coleridge in Bristol during the mixed bread campaign of 1795," *Romanticism,* Volume 12, no. 1 (2006): 5-14; and Colin Jager. "A Poetics of Dissent; or, Pantisocracy in America," *Theory & Event.* Volume. 10, no. 1 (2007), *Project MUSE,* <https://doi-org.uniessexlib.idm.oclc.org/10.1353/tae.2007.0042> (Accessed 7 October 2023).

[101] Coleridge complained that the community in Wales would fail to remove the burden of private resources and that participants could have kept their personal wealth and possessions as a result. He wrote to Southey that they would have been in a "petty Farming Trade" in Wales rather than being of interest to the collective. (*CL* I, 165).

[102] Quoted in Damian Walford Davies. *Presences that Disturb: Models of Romantic Identity in the Literature and Culture of the 1790s* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2002) 296.

[103] Sullivan. "Dirt Theory and Material Culture," 515.

[104] Ibid. 515.

and Bristol culminates in a desire to return to nature and the goodness and independence it seemingly offers. The dirt and toil, although "less glamourous", are seen as a necessary aspect of the rural idyll, where nourishment, sustenance, and life can be created, and the virtuousness it establishes is positively promoted. When Coleridge viewed himself as being "uncontaminated with one drop of Gentility" (*CL* I, 303), his labouring on the land was crucial in presenting the dirt and toil as a form of cleansing and separation from the ills of high society and urban living.

The benefits of a West Country life are explained in a letter from Coleridge to Thelwall: "You will find a country life a happy one; and you might live comfortably with an hundred a year [sic] […] and by severe economy, a little garden labour, and a pigstye, this would do." (*CL* I, 305) Coleridge succinctly summarised the lifestyle he hoped to share with others, which is notably "a happy one" with the prospect of living "comfortably" despite the "severe economy." By including "might" as a qualifier, it downplays the certainty of his desired ambitions, where financial hardship continued to undermine these aspirations, prompting the insistence that hard work and "labour" were essential to its upkeep. The hope for Coleridge is that the effort and money applied to this rural vision will pay off, as demonstrated through his insistence that "a country life [is] a happy one" despite the physical intensity. His invitation for others to join him in his rural dream and, by extension, enter the establishment of West Country Romanticism with him at its centre was grounded in that desire for a community and simple living. James Engell writes that "collaboration embodied Coleridge's belief that literature is a living enterprise,"[105] and for this reason, the community in the West Country was vital to his vision.

When Coleridge, his wife Sara, and their three-month-old son Hartley moved to Nether Stowey in December 1796, it was expected that it would be a modest country life of "severe economy." (*CL* I, 305) Although Molly Lefebure describes the time in Nether Stowey as "the happiest, healthiest, most creatively productive period of his life"[106], the reality was far harsher than the highly regarded, rural idyll Coleridge envisaged. Rosemary Ashton describes the cottage as being: "Tiny, dark, and damp, facing straight onto the street, with a gutter running past the front door, an infestation of mice, and the smell of [friend and

[105] James Engell. "'A Hare in every Nettle': Coleridge's Prose," in *Thinking Through Style: Non-Fiction Prose of the Long Nineteenth Century*. eds. Michael D. Hurley and Marcus Waithe (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018) 17.
[106] Molly Lefebure. *Samuel Taylor Coleridge: A Bondage of Opium* (United Kingdom: Stein and Day, 1974) 205.

landlord Thomas] Poole's nearby tannery all too prevalent."[107] The small, cramped, and cold cottage represented the reality of a country living without the comfort and security of financial stability. Although Coleridge had hoped for a country plot to tend to, he ended up with nature in close quarters, including inside the family home. As Sullivan highlights, "dirt, soil, earth, and dust surround us,"[108] a reminder of the essential natural and organic materials that seemingly permeate all spaces. Mary Douglas stresses that "there is no such thing as absolute dirt: it exists in the eye of the beholder,"[109] therefore, Coleridge's ignoring of the dirty and cramped conditions highlights a willingness to accept the filthy reality of country living.

Despite the apparent bleakness, Ashton emphasises that "the cottage nevertheless represented true happiness."[110] Coleridge's letters show his excitement and optimism about fully participating in his vision of rural living. He aims to be devoted to his rural cause, writing to Poole that "I mean to work very hard – as cook, butler, scullion, shoe cleaner, occasional nurse, gardener, hind pig protector, chaplain, secretary, poet review…" (*CL* I, 266) He is aware, in part, of the realities of rural life and that it would involve a substantial amount of multi-tasking to maintain this. The self-sufficient lifestyle is clearly expressed in another letter to Poole:

> If you can instruct me to manage an acre and a half of land, and to raise in it, with my own hands, all kinds of vegetables and grain, enough for myself and my wife and sufficient to feed a pig or two with the refuse, I hope that you will have served me *most* effectually by placing me out of the necessity of being served.
>
> (*CL* I, 270)

Coleridge sees himself as rooted in the landscape, a mutual exchange in which he tends to the soil, providing sustenance to him and his family. He wants to be part of the landscape "with [his] own hands" and to rely only on the earth rather than others to remove the "necessity of being served." The connection with the landscape in terms of identity and spirituality demonstrates, as Sullivan emphasises, "that there is no ultimate boundary between us and nature."[111] Coleridge's vision was to see nature as part of his identity and to find his place in nature rather than turn against it.

The serenity and escapism offered by the West Country is a focal point in many poems from this period, not least in 'Domestic Peace' (1794), which celebrates not only

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[107] Ashton. *The Life of Samuel Taylor Coleridge.* 91 [brackets my own insertion].
[108] Sullivan. "Dirt Theory and Material Culture," 515.
[109] Douglas. *Purity and Danger*. 2.
[110] Ashton. *The Life of Samuel Taylor Coleridge.* 91.
[111] Sullivan. "Dirt Theory and Material Culture," 515.

"DOMESTIC PEACE" (114, l.2), expressed in capitals, but also the comfort of the "cottag'd vale" (l.7) where the sound of "Sabbath bells" (l.8) continues the connection with God. The "Halcyon Daughter" (l.3), much like Coleridge himself, has fled with "fearful wings" (l.4) far "From the pomp of [the] scepter'd State, / From the Rebel's noisy hate." (ll.5-6) The "cottag'd vale" (l.7) is a place of sanctuary and safety far from the threats and commotion of wider society. This is similarly experienced in 'To The Rev George Coleridge' (1797), which talks of "the cleanly hearth and social bowl" (328, l.55) that forms the "sweet sequester'd Orchard-Plot" (l.57). The Nether Stowey residency is promoted as a location of escape, where social cultivation and community are central to the vision for freedom and self-sufficiency.

In 'Fears in Solitude', Coleridge regards the "beloved Stowey" (477, l.222), where far from the fears of war is his "own lowly cottage" (l.222) in the shadow of "the mansion" of his friend, Thomas Poole (l.224). The poem previously considers "O native Britain" (l.183) as being filled with "All sweet sensations, all ennobling thoughts" (l.188), which celebrate the "adoration of the God in Nature,/ All lovely and all honorable things" (l.189-90). The connection with God through nature results in "awe" and the singing of "stately songs" (l.197) that express a "Loving [for] the God that made me!" (l.198) This makes the "beloved Stowey" (l.222) particularly special in the eyes of Coleridge. It is here that he can witness the "green and silent dell" (l.229) closely and experience the joy of life through "nature's quietness/ And solitary musings." (ll.230-31) The safety of the domestic, Edenic state in Nether Stowey is crucial to attending to Coleridge's need for contentment. He greatly emphasises and values the redeeming, spiritual qualities of a rural, natural existence as the antithesis of modern stress and pressures. The distance of the West Country from the "menace of the vengeful enemy" (l.200) means that his wife and child "dwell in peace" (l.227) and that Coleridge, for the most part, can live an unburdened life.

Following his father's death in 1781, Coleridge was sent away from his Devon home to study at Christ's Hospital School - a charity school for orphans, despite not being an orphan himself, located in the City of London, a short distance from St Paul's Cathedral and the meat market at Smithfield.[112] This forced separation from his family and his West Country into the urban realm heightened a sensation of not fitting in and feeling unappreciated. The city and the school would be an enclosed environment, and he later recalled that he had been "cloister'd in a city School/ The Sky was all, I knew, of Beautiful"

[112] Ashton. *The Life of Samuel Taylor Coleridge.* 19-27; and Richard Holmes. *Coleridge: Early Visions* (London: Harper Perennial, 2005) 22-33.

(*CL* II, 791). He self-references his earlier poem 'Frost at Midnight' (1798), which contains the much-analysed line: "I was reared/ In the great city, pent 'mid cloisters dim,/ And saw nought lovely but the sky and stars." (455, ll.51-53) He would express concern about being trapped and enclosed in the confines of a city environment in a letter to George Dyer, where he states the want to: "*wish* away the bitter Little of Life in the felon-crowded Dungeon of a great City!" (*CL* I, 155) In 'The Rime of the Ancient Mariner', the Mariner views the sun as though in a dungeon: "And straight the Sun was fleck'd with bars,/ (Heaven's Mother send us grace)/ As if thro' a dungeon-grate he peer'd" (386, ll.177-79). The dungeon motif emphasises the claustrophobic and traumatic nature of separation and loss, the same sensation Coleridge links with the city.

Coleridge exults the health benefits of the rural setting and its cleaner environment in his 1796 letter to Charles Lloyd in which he describes "an enchanting situation about eight miles from Bridgewater [sic] […] I have cause to believe my Health would be materially impaired by residing in a town..." (*CL* I, 240) In the same letter, Coleridge takes this one step further by questioning the morals of city life in his concern that "if I live in cities, my children (if it please the All-good to preserve the one I have, and to give me more) […] will necessarily become acquainted with politicians and politics—a set of men and a kind of study which I deem highly unfavourable to all Christian graces." (*CL* I, 240) As he sees it, the immoral nature of the city becomes a cause for further apprehension when faced with the corruption and greed that he felt inhabited such an environment. The singling out of politicians and politics highlights Coleridge's troubled attitudes towards the lawmakers who seemed to act without the grace of God. Their suppression of religious freedoms and ongoing paranoia with the changing situations in France often brought Coleridge's beliefs into uncertain and risky territory. The young Coleridge, therefore, associates the city with immorality, filled with physical darkness that stifles the goodness and vibrancy of the natural world.[113]

Coleridge had expressed the importance of simple and rural living as an antidote to society's ills in his short-lived publication, *The Watchman.* In April 1796, he wrote of commerce and the construction of canals:

> Thousands, and even millions, of new hands, not pent up in corrupt, and corrupting towns, but every where scattered in villages and hamlets, and employed in the

[113] Gerard Manley Hopkins' family followed a similar thought process when they moved from the growing urban and industrial area of Stratford, Essex (now London) to the leafy, largely rural village of Hampstead in 1852.

> pursuits of agriculture, and the more necessary manufactures, would nourish up health and happiness with simplicity of manners.
>
> (*CW* 2, 223)

In Coleridge's view, the "corrupting towns" could not compete with the "health and happiness" provided by a rural life. To be "scattered in villages and hamlets", for Coleridge, is preferable to becoming lost or enclosed within a city. The rural environment's seemingly inherent goodness and simplicity kept it free from "corrupting" forces. In the same article, he goes on to state that "in cities and towns the lower orders of men are often vicious, discontented and factious." (*CW* 2, 224) Coleridge believed that the "corrupting" forces of the urban landscape and the claustrophobic sensation made the lower classes restless and angry. Wordsworth similarly commented on the "increasing accumulation of men in cities" in the Preface to *Lyrical Ballads*, "where the uniformity of their occupation produces a craving for extraordinary incident."[114] Jonathan Bate argues that ecology is "a holistic science, concerned in the largest sense with the relationship between living beings and their environment."[115] Coleridge's relationship with the urban environment is decisively negative, lacking any sense of "health and happiness" (*CW* 2, 223), both experienced fully in the natural world. Coleridge's reasoning appears to be centred on two key points: the first relating to the inherent goodness of rural life, and the second concerning inequality in an urban setting, which only works "for the interest and convenience of the master" rather than the worker. (*CW* 2, 224)

Coleridge's solution to the evils of the city is to counteract that with rural living and "using all prudent means for restoring each individual, willing to labour, to his share of the earth […] and raising the industrious day-labourer to the comfortable and dignified situation of an independent cultivator." (*CW* 2, 225) He believes that "the industrious day-labourer[s]" who were constructing the canal network would feel the benefits of being in the country rather than the city. Sullivan highlights how "soil becomes the ultimate Agent in World events," and Coleridge undoubtedly draws on the links between country practices and the economy by noting the practices of Holland[116] and China. (*CW* 2, 222-23) Furthermore, Coleridge likens the cultivation of a small piece of land to the process of "improveability" [sic] (*CW* 2, 222), where maximum potential is made from natural resources.

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[114] William Wordsworth. "Preface to the Second Edition of Several of the Foregoing Poems, Published, With an Additional Volume, Under the Title of Lyrical Ballads" in *The Poetical Works of William Wordsworth*. Volume 2. ed. E. De Selincourt, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford Clarendon Press, 1952) 389.
[115] Bate. *Romantic Ecology: Wordsworth and the Environmental Tradition*. 36.
[116] Coleridge uses the term "Holland" rather than "Netherlands" to refer to the nation. (*CW* 2, 222-23).

Nicola Trott argues that Coleridge's favourable opinion of canals relates to the view that: "Canalization equals industrialization without urbanization."[117] Coleridge may well be seen to adopt what Mary Douglas refers to as "positively re-ordering our environment, making it conform to an idea."[118] These construction projects bring work to the rural area but not the excess population growth that threatens the peace, tranquillity, and green space. He refers to the canal network of Holland and how it forms a network that brings "the whole of the nation together." (*CW* 2, 222) In Britain, he believes that canals "serve the greater purpose of agriculture" (C*W* 2, 223) and, therefore, are crucial to rural life. I want to argue that it was in the West Country where Coleridge tried to practice his philosophy that emphasised a spiritual connection with nature and, most importantly, freedom from the burden of work without benefits. The "urban dungeon", as Trott refers to it by paraphrasing Coleridge's words,[119] stifles freedom and creativity. I would argue that from an early period, Coleridge has already linked goodness and freedom with the countryside, particularly the West Country. Coleridge sincerely acknowledges and respects his surroundings, where seemingly insignificant entities are imbued with joy, vitality, and holiness. He evokes Bennett's concept of "the impersonal that surrounds and infuses us", creating an "awareness of the complicated web of dissonant connections between bodies…"[120] The West Country is an environment where these connections and energies can be closely observed, understood, and appreciated, far from the disruption and noise of the city.

In proposing to have Charles Lloyd live with him in 1796, Coleridge wrote in verse about "some low mansion in some woody dale." (276, l.46), which offered "blue eye DOMESTIC BLISS" (l.47). The vision of rural happiness was to escape from "mad oppression's thunder-clasping rage" (l.60) and the stresses of life in favour of the "healthful greenness" which benefits the "soul" (l.68) The simplicity of this life makes Coleridge "laugh at wealth" and to "learn to laugh at fame" (l.69) in its rejection of aristocratic and restrictive values. The "Rekindling" of "joy's domestic flame" (l.74) is crucially linked to a "truth" (l.72) and a "discipline [of] the heart" (l.73), where self-sufficiency and simple domestic living is viewed as the antidote of modern pressures and unhappiness.

[117] Nicola Trott. "Coleridge's City," *Coleridge Bulletin*, New Series 19 (Spring 2002): 41.
[118] Douglas. *Purity and Danger*. 3.
[119] Trott. "Coleridge's City," 42.
[120] Bennett. *Vibrant Matter*. 4.

**"There is everything here…":[121] The West Country as the Romantic Ideal**

A further critical moment for the West Country Romanticism that this thesis proposes came in July 1797, when William and Dorothy Wordsworth moved to Alfoxden House, Holford, a village a few miles north of Nether Stowey. The Wordsworths had spent several years in the 1790s making the West Country their home, first in Dorset and then Somerset.[122] Although Dorothy had a yearning for her and William's native Lake District, the surroundings of Dorset (their first West Country home) were enough to remind her of home, writing: "We have hills which, seen from a distance, almost take the character of mountains, some cultivated nearly to their summits, others in their wild state covered with furze and broom. These delight me the most as they remind me of our native wilds."[123] Dorothy's writing highlights a deep associative affinity with the natural landscape and its ecologies, in which the hills appear to resemble mountains and where almost every inch is used for either agricultural purposes or left in a wild state. Her journals from 1798, written whilst she and her brother were living at Alfoxden, provide an extraordinary insight into the lives of the Wordsworths and Coleridge and the composition of their great, experimental collaboration entitled *Lyrical Ballads.* Although she wrote numerous letters and poems, Dorothy's journals are significant for my study of Coleridge because they are split into two distinct geographical locations where she and Coleridge resided: *The Alfoxden Journals* (1798), written in Somerset, and *The Grasmere Journals* (1800-03), written in Westmorland (now Cumbria). This further highlights the importance of the Lake District and the West Country as related but separate key localities to Romanticism.

In a letter from 1797, Dorothy would comment on the aesthetic beauty and environmental appeal of North Somerset after she moved there with William. She excitedly noted that:

> …There is everything here; sea, woods wild as fancy ever painted, brooks clear and pebbly as in Cumberland, villages so romantic […] a sequestered waterfall in a dell formed by steep hills covered with full-grown timber trees. The woods are as fine as those at Lowther, and the country more romantic…[124]

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[121] Dorothy Wordsworth to Correspondent Unknown in *Letters of the Wordsworth family from 1787-1855*. Volume One. ed. William Knight (New York, N.Y: Haskell House, 1962) 110.
[122] Wordsworth had previously met Coleridge in Bristol in 1795, and Coleridge had visited their home at Racedown House in Dorset, where the Wordsworths lived from September 1795 until June 1797 before journeying to Somerset.
[123] Dorothy Wordsworth in *The Letters of William and Dorothy Wordsworth*. Volume 1. eds. Ernest De Selincourt and Chester L. Shaver. 4th ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967) 161.
[124] Ibid. 189

For Dorothy, the Quantocks contained the same charm of her and William's native Westmorland and, in her words, are far "more romantic", demonstrating the importance of aesthetics when experiencing a place. By describing the "woods wild as fancy ever painted", she also highlights the importance of the imagination's freedom in natural surroundings, similar to Coleridge's vision. Writing to Southey, Coleridge describes Alfoxden Hall as "a gentleman's seat, with a park & woods, elegantly & completely *furnished* […] in a most beautiful & romantic situation by the sea side" (*CL* I, 334). Bennett writes of "the impersonal life that surrounds and infuses" individuals and, in doing so, "will generate a more subtle awareness of the complicated web of dissonant connection between bodies, and will enable wider interventions into the ecology."[125] Both Dorothy and Coleridge find a vibrancy in the natural landscape of the West Country because of their willingness to witness and connect with it. Their engagement with the Quantock Hills and the surrounding areas is part of active participation in rural life, emphasising the escapist and spiritual values it holds.

This southwestern region of England is loosely composed of a collection of historic counties that, as John Payne points out, are "linked from earliest times to the rest of England by track-ways, and later turnpike, canals and railways."[126] The area is noted for having an individual identity due to the Roman invasion, which displaced the original Britons to the west, giving the area a stronger "Celtic patina than any other part of England."[127] The region, therefore, has a cultural and geographical character that distinguishes it from London and eastern England. As previously referenced, Cronin's "West Country Romanticism" draws attention to the influence of the West Country on the early foundations of British Romanticism. Although Joseph Cottle is the main subject of Cronin's article, the notion of West Country Romanticism indicates a broader involvement of individuals and influential factors, which this chapter particularly advocates in the case of Coleridge in the 1790s.

Cronin stresses the significance of Bristol's "cultural facilities, its theatre, schools and its five newspapers,"[128] all of which help to provide a valuable way of life that could rival any major regional or capital city. By the mid-1770s, when Edmund Burke became the Member of Parliament for Bristol, the city "boasted 55,000 inhabitants, and the electorate of more than 5,000 made it the third largest urban constituency in England, after London and

[125] Bennett. *Vibrant Matter*. 4.
[126] John Payne. *The West Country: A Cultural History* (Oxford: Signal Books, 2009) 9.
[127] Payne. *The West Country*. 9.
[128] Cronin. "Joseph Cottle and West-Country Romanticism," 67.

Westminster."[129] Bristol was a draw for Coleridge and many radicals of the time because it was "enlivened in the late 1760s by the agitation over John Wilkes and the Middlesex election affair."[130] The apparent "*perception* of social alienation remained strong"[131] in the region led to it becoming a centre of political and social reform. The importance of those dissenter groups across the southwest shows how the community became influential in driving social change and promoting charitable causes. Crucially, the freedom of this area was the antithesis of "the felon-crowded Dungeon of a great City" that Coleridge had previously mentioned in a letter to George Dyer. (*CL* I, 155)

Coleridge would attempt to appeal to these groups whilst working on his periodical *The Watchman*, which ran for ten issues between 1st March and 13th May 1796. (*CW* 2, xxvii) As Lewis Patton notes, both *The Watchman* and the earlier *Lectures of 1795 On Politics and Religion* showed a "profound awareness of the defects of established, so-called Christian society" (*CW* 2, xxvii). Daniel Norman draws attention to the fact that the periodicals are "full of jokes and satirical barbs, many of them ridiculing individuals and attitudes elsewhere lauded within the work."[132] This develops a unique relationship between Coleridge and the reader: "Rather than imagining them as a crowd, to be entertained by the 'dancing' performance of his wit, he consciously envisions a different sort of reader, engaged in a different sort of reading."[133] As Norman highlights, Coleridge encourages a sense of domesticity, where he "pictures his reader beside a domestic hearth, not swept up by eloquence and rhetoric, but engaged in the solitary activity of textual scrutiny."[134] Coleridge's call to hear "the horrors of war" whilst sitting "by the fire-side" provides a "safe distance" at which to listen to the pressing matters of the day. (*CW* 2, 238) The combination of addressing significant issues from the safety of a domestic setting mirrors what Coleridge set out to achieve in Nether Stowey. His escape to the West Country was bound not just by the shelter that this location offered but also because of the relative fearlessness of being outspoken against traditional and conservative politics.

Nicholas Roe notes that *The Watchman* received "some 270 subscriptions" in Bristol, partially fuelled against the backdrop of "the government's attempt to muzzle opinion and

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[129] James E. Bradley. *Religion, Revolution, and English Radicalism: Non-conformity in Eighteenth Century Politics and Society* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002) 196.
[130] Elizabeth Baigent and James E. Bradley. "The Social Sources of Late Eighteenth-Century English Radicalism: Bristol in the 1770s and 1780s," *The English Historical Review*, Volume 124, No. 510 (October 2009): 1078.
[131] Baigent and Bradley. "The Social Sources of Late Eighteenth-Century English Radicalism," 1107.
[132] Daniel Norman. "Coleridge's Humour in *The Watchman*," *Romanticism*. Volume 25.2 (2019): 117.
[133] Ibid. 118.
[134] Ibid. 118.

free speech with the Two [Gagging] Acts […and] the war with France continued to cause misery."[135] Crucially, in obtaining nearly three hundred subscriptions from Bristol alone and tackling some of the critical political issues of the day, *The Watchman* is fundamentally grounded in the West Country, with Roe highlighting how it "would have to appeal to a remarkably miscellaneous audience, even among the radicals and dissenters where he might have expected to discover shared aims and expectations."[136] At its heart is the notion of truth, and Coleridge writes, "I contribute what I believe to be truth." (*CW* 2, 197) The need for truth and *The Watchman*'s apparent presentation of that truth form the repeated theme of the periodical.

The motto at the start of each edition quotes Christ's words from the Gospel According to St. John: "THAT ALL MAY KNOW THE TRUTH; AND THAT THE TRUTH SHALL MAKE US FREE!" (*CW* 2, 9 and *John* 8:32) Roe draws attention to the fact that its title references the Old Testament Books of Isaiah and Ezekiel and "numerous other references to the 'Watchman' in Samuel, Kings, the Psalms, and Hosea."[137] J. Galambush notes the complexities of Ezekiel's Watchman reference because he was "commissioned to watch over a city that has already been destroyed. Such a commission is ironically apt for Ezekiel, who even while Jerusalem and its temple were standing could deliver his prophecies only to those who had already been exiled."[138] The optimism is central to Coleridge's presentation of the truth in *The Watchman* because even in the aftermath of destruction, it is still possible to serve God.

In the Parable of the Sower, Jesus says that everyone has the gift to hear and see the word and beauty of God, but also declares that some "see not; and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand." (*Matthew* 13:13) This suggests that despite the gift of sight and hearing, few are attuned to the message of God. As a result, "When any one heareth the word of the kingdom and understandeth *it* not, then cometh the wicked *one*, and catcheth away that which was sown in his heart." (*Matthew* 13:19) The periodical aims to address social injustices and promote awareness among its readers about significant issues, concerns, and causes of the period. Its purpose is to encourage readers to expand their knowledge and

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[135] Nicholas Roe. "Coleridge's Watchman Tour," *Coleridge Bulletin*, New Series 21 (Spring 2003): 37- [brackets my own insertion].
[136] Ibid. 40.
[137] Ibid. 36.
[138] J. Galambush. "Ezekiel" in *The Oxford Bible Commentary*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001) <https://www-oxfordreference-com.uniessexlib.idm.oclc.org/view/10.1093/acref/9780198755005.001.0001/acref-9780198755005-chapter-28.> (Accessed August 10, 2023).

perspective and to contribute to positive societal change. Coleridge's aspirations to cultivate the land of the West Country are deeply intertwined with this notion of sowing and reaping its benefits. A life of simplicity and self-sufficiency allows for a greater appreciation of the gift of God without the dangerous influences that exist elsewhere in society.

It is not surprising that Coleridge would target the dissenter communities across England for subscriptions as well as other people from different social classes who had a wide breadth of insight about the world around them. As Nicholas Roe notes, it was a lengthy endeavour, "a month-long tour to the centres of radicalism and dissent in the Midlands and North of England, on a journey of around 400 miles. He had encountered aristocrats, industrialists, clergymen, dissenters of all kinds, scientists, booksellers, intellectuals, fashionables, printers, and would-be authors."[139] Coleridge was immersing himself in the groups he knew best, with whom the nation's future direction could be said to rest upon. Ultimately, the periodical was unsuccessful, running for ten issues but included articles on slavery (*CW* 2, 130) and politically motivated material, including "The Present State of Society" (*CW* 2, 64) and "A Defence of the Church Establishment" (*CW* 2, 67). As the base for many ships involved in the slave trade and international exports, Bristol became a vital hub and a major city. Its significance invited seamen, merchants, the rich, non-conformist thinkers, and radicals of the day to gather there.[140] Bristol's difference in approach meant that many felt a greater sense of freedom compared to the restrictions and censorship of London; however, that freedom sat alongside interests in the absence of freedom for others, such as the transatlantic slave trade.[141]

Coleridge would describe himself as someone without any connection to the upper echelons of society by stating that he was: "a genuine Sans culotte, my veins uncontaminated with one drop of Gentility" (*CL* I, 303). The French phrase "without breeches" refers to the lower classes of France, who eventually became a prominent force during the French Revolution. Coleridge displays those revolutionary sympathies by claiming he was like the French labouring classes and had little connection or sympathy to aristocrats and nobility.

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[139] Roe. "Coleridge's Watchman Tour," 40.

[140] The city of Bristol was made rich and important by the exploitation and abuse of slavery. See David Simpson's understanding of Romantics in this period using a Marxist interpretation: *Wordsworth, Commodification and Social Concern: The Poetics of Modernity*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

[141] Many have suggested Coleridge was inspired by the Slave Trade, particularly in his active campaign towards its abolition, see: J. R. Ebbatson. "Coleridge's Mariner and the Rights of Man," *Studies in Romanticism*. Volume 11 (Summer 1972): 171-206; Debbie Lee. "Yellow Fever and the Slave Trade: Coleridge's The Rime of the Ancient Mariner," *ELH*. Volume 65, No. 3 (Fall 1998): 675-700; and Tim May. "Coleridge in Bristol: The 1975 Slave Trade Lecture," *The Coleridge Bulletin*, Volume 58 (Winter 2021): 1-19.

Coleridge attempts to demonstrate a connection with the rural West Country working class by disregarding his advanced education and early childhood. He believed little could separate him from those who worked the land because he was "uncontaminated" and distant from the upper classes. In the aftermath of the French Revolution and with the prospect of conflict between France and Great Britain causing uncertainty, Coleridge further explores the importance of the working classes in 'Fears in Solitude: Written in April 1798, During the Alarm of an Invasion'. Coleridge's understanding of purity becomes deeply entrenched in noting the difference of class allegiances, where the simple life of the labouring classes is one "Made up a meditative joy, and [those who] found/ Religious meanings in the forms of Nature!" (470, ll.23-4) Although Coleridge moves away from supporting the violence of the new French regime, he is critical of the British government and politics whose "vices [and] whose deep taint/ With slow perdition murders the whole man,/ His body and his soul!" (ll.52-54) Despite this, the deep affinity to the land remains a constant source of joy and pleasure, such as the "green and silent spot, amid the hills,/ A small and silent dell" (ll.1-2) that echoes the landscape of the Quantock Hills in Somerset. Coleridge's "own lowly cottage" (l.226) is a place where he is "grateful" for "nature's quietness/ And solitary musings" (ll.230-31) that allows an escape from the pressures of life through simple, rural living.

**A Sense of Return: Coleridge's West Country Poetics**

Consideration of the home and childhood form the basis of 'Sonnet: To the River Otter' (1796)[142], where Coleridge reflects on his "Dear native brook!" (300, l.1), a reminder of his native Devon and "the sweet scenes of childhood" (l.6). These "Visions of childhood" (l.12) are recollections of those days as a "careless child" (l.14) in which frolicking in the river is seen as an activity of a free and innocent child rather than the "Lone [figure of] manhood." (l.13) The contrast between the child and the adult emphasises the increasing burden of life and responsibility that comes with age. The expression of nostalgia becomes inherently linked to the river that he recalls in his youth, reflecting a positive relationship between his childhood days and the natural landscape. The contemplation of the intervening "many various-fated years" (l.2) creates a distance between the speaker and the memory, which has produced moments of "waking fondest sighs" (l.13) as he recalls those details. Despite noting that those experiences were "happy" and "mournful hours" (l.3), any

[142] J. C. C. Mays notes a discrepancy regarding the exact date of the poem's composition, which may be either "Aug-Nov 1796" or "1793", See: *CW* 16.I.1, 299.

negativity appears to be quickly dispersed as the recollections of the "light leaps" (l.5) of the heart and the warmth of "the sweet scenes" (l.6) that is associated with his youth. An earlier poem entitled 'Recollection' (1796) includes many similarities to 'Sonnet: To the River Otter' and features similar, if not the same, wording towards the latter section of the poem. 'Recollection' is also dedicated to a "native brook" (259, l.9, l.11, l.13), but the speaker of the poem is a "tir'd savage" (l.1) and suffering with a "drowsy frame" (l.1). The longing for the "sweet scenes of childhood" (l.21) relates to the "blameless Pleasures" (l.15) and the unencumbered vitality of youth. The hours spent in this rural setting are described as "blissful" but also "anguish'd" (l.18), with the line "Ah! Fair tho' faint those form of memory" (l.27) suggesting that a distance has formed between the child and the adult experiences and physicality, but this does not diminish the joy that the speaker continues to recall.

These poems are not traditionally considered part of Coleridge's conversation poems, a collection of around eight poems written between 1795 and 1807 that generally explore nature alongside life experiences.[143] M. H. Abrams defines the conventionally identified conversation poems as including: "a description of the landscape; an aspect or change of aspect in the landscape evokes a varied but integral process of memory, thought, anticipation, and feeling which remains closely intervolved with the outer scene."[144] Such a definition is, however, relevant to an expanded group of poems that follow a similar process, which I would argue includes 'Sonnet: To the River Otter' and 'Recollections'. Crucially, George Harper McLean's definition of the conversation poems describes the structure as one that "begins with a quiet description of the surrounding scene and, after a superb flight of imagination, brings back the mind to the starting-point, a pleasing device we may call the 'return.'"[145] The sense of a 'return' is the notable feature that I want to view in its broadest possible meaning to not only relate to the conversation poems. Indeed, it relates significantly to other works from this period, such as 'Sonnet: To the River Otter' and 'Recollection', as well as Coleridge's literal return to the West Country in the 1790s. The recalling of childhood experiences is deeply grounded in his memories and understanding of the landscape. The

[143] The eight conversation poems are traditionally given as: 'The Eolian Harp' (1795), 'Reflections on Having Left a Place of Retirement' (1796), 'This Lime-Tree Bower my Prison' (1797), 'Frost at Midnight' (1798), 'Fears in Solitude' (1798), 'The Nightingale: A Conversation Poem' (1798), 'Dejection: An Ode' (1802), and 'To William Wordsworth' (1807). The selection of these eight comes from George McLean Harper, who coined the term in 1928. See: George McLean Harper. *Spirit of Delight* (London: E. Benn, 1928) 3-27
[144] M. H. Abrams. "Structure and Style in the Greater Romantic Lyric," in *From Sensibility to Romanticism*. eds. Frederick W. Hilles and Harold Bloom. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1965) 527.
[145] Harper. *Spirit of Delight.* 11.

water courses that he recalls are not roaring rivers but gentle brooks that are described in 'Recollection' as being "like peace so placidly" (l.11). Even though "thy waters rise" (l.23), there is never any sense of danger with heaven being compared to the "smooth evening stream!" (l.28)

A poem dealing with more contemporary scenes, such as 'The Eolian Harp: Composed at Clevedon, Somersetshire' (1795), directed to his bride-to-be, the "pensive Sara" (232, l.1), remarks on the stillness of the world which is "so hushed" (l.10). The "stilly murmur of the distant Sea" (l.11) is confirmation of "Silence" (l.12), and that all creation tells of "the one Life within us and abroad,/ Which meets all motion and becomes its soul" (ll.26-27). The emphasis is on how the world offers a specific form of spirituality for those attuned to see and experience it. Coleridge's return to the West Country is also associated with the land's benefits and simple pleasures that enrich life through physical experiences and sensations. There is no attempt to explain away the feelings of these moments, with the poem declaring that it is "impossible/ Not to love all things in a world so filled" (ll.30-31), a reminder of the connections between man and nature, where the world is a manifestation of the love an almighty, who is "God of all" (l.48). The West Country is a manifestation of the unity presented by pantheism, where "every Thing has a Life of it's [sic] own, & that we are all *one Life*." (*CL* II, 864) The deep affinity and spirituality of the landscape demonstrates Bennett's notion of vibrant matter emphasised by the "active role of nonhuman materials in public life."[146] Everything has an intrinsic value that shows how all creation is "inextricably entwined."[147] The world's beauty is revealed through the sounds of nature, such as birdsong, the sea, and the wind, and also in moments of silence and tranquillity that emphasise the peacefulness and sanctuary of this environment. In 'Frost at Midnight', the frost performs a "secret ministry" (452, l.1), encapsulating the spirituality of nature which continues in silence "Unhelped by any wind." (l.2) The "strange/ And extreme silentness" (ll.9-10) despite the apparent "populous village" (l.11) is comforting but also peculiar. The frost continues despite "the numberless goings on of life" (l.12); it is independent and witnessed only by those who observe it at the late hour, such as the speaker. Its "secret ministry" is something to be admired, a personified and holy entity that enacts a mysticism that "freaks the idling Spirit" (l.20) and draws them closer to a connection with a divine presence in the calm of nature.

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[146] Bennett. *Vibrant Matter*. 2.
[147] Gregory Leadbetter. "Nature Lyrics," in *The New Cambridge Companion to Coleridge*. ed. Tim Fulford (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2022) 60.

In 1797, Coleridge started but never completed 'The Brook', a poem of significance because of comments later made in his autobiographical and literary criticism piece, the *Biographia Literaria* (1817). He writes: "I sought for a subject that should give equal room and freedom for description, incident, and impassioned reflections on men, nature, and society, yet supply in itself a natural connection to the parts, and unity to the whole." (*CW* 7.I, 195-96) The implication is that it could have been included as a conversation poem due to its apparent conformity to Abrams' description. He goes on to say:

> I conceived myself to have found in a stream, traced from its source in the hills among the yellow-red moss and conical glass-shaped tufts of Bent, to the first break or fall, where its drops became audible, and it begins to form a channel; thence to the peat and turf barn, itself built of the same dark squares as it sheltered; to the sheep-fold; to the first cultivated plot of ground; to the lonely cottage and its bleak garden won from the heath; to the hamlet, the villages, the market-town, the manufactories, and the seaport. […] With my pencil and memorandum book in my hand, I was making studies, as the artists call them, and often moulding my thoughts into verse, with the objects and imagery immediately before my senses. Many circumstances, evil and good, intervened to prevent the completion of the poem, which was to have been entitled 'THE BROOK.'
>
> (*CW* 7.I, 196)

Coleridge's thorough recollection, filled with botanical details and specific features, demonstrates the importance of location. Coleridge notes the rich plant ecologies and biodiversity of the place he has been walking and observing. Whilst there may well be embellishments on Coleridge's part, it highlights the keenness to encapsulate the West Country in poetry, with Frederic Stewart Colwell suggesting it "might have rivalled in scale [Wordsworth's] The Prelude",[148] emphasising the poem's importance, had it succeeded.

'The Brook' could have been a poem that explored how the watercourse travels across the landscape, bringing hope, possibility, and sustenance to those who encounter it. So much of rural life would depend on that brook "from the heath; to the hamlet, the villages, the market-town, the manufactories, and the seaport." (*CW* 7.I, 196) All would have different uses and needs, yet a simple brook could fulfil all those needs. He also points out the importance of the botanical life and plant ecologies which rely on it. The "yellow-red moss and conical glass-shaped tufts of Bent" and the "cultivated plot of ground" (*CW* 7.I, 196) demonstrate his awareness that both the wild, untamed spaces as well as the maintained, human-created gardens have equal reliance on the rural water source. Unlike the brooks in earlier Coleridge poems, which treat the watercourse alongside childhood innocence and

[148] Frederic Stewart Colwell. *Rivermen: A Romantic Iconography of the River and the Source*. (Montreal: McGill- Queen's University Press, 1989) 89.

simplicity of life, this proposed poem is interested in the relationship between the brook, humans, and the natural world. The vitality of human settlements and rural ecology is significantly reliant upon the life-sustaining properties of the brook. Its nourishing qualities serve as a critical source of nourishment for rural communities, enabling them to maintain self-sufficiency.

**Coleridge's West Country Religion**

In 'Reflections on having left a Place of Retirement' (1795), Coleridge wrote: "I therefore go, and join head, heart and hand, /Active and firm, to fight the bloodless fight/ Of Science, Freedom and the Truth in CHRIST" (263, ll.60-62) thereby connecting science with the head, freedom with the heart, and Christ as the hand of truth. This intellectual holy trinity needs to co-exist in a "bloodless fight" even when they seem estranged or in opposition. For Coleridge, all three are worth fighting for and would become topics he would consider for many decades. In a letter to his brother George, Coleridge attempts to downplay any attempts to call himself: "a Democrat" (*CL* I, 397). Instead, he suggests that he is acting through a Christian concern, where politics and religion are combined in Coleridge's philosophical and theological beliefs, particularly in the 1790s. The result was a period of great confusion and contradiction for Coleridge, in which his religious and political leanings were sometimes at odds with each other, leading to attempts to reconcile the two.[149] This section of my thesis investigates the complexities of Coleridge's religious beliefs during the 1790s and argues that multiple Christian denominations are evident in his writing during the West Country years, although an Anglican orthodoxy remains prominent. I will also emphasise the influence of the West Country as a centre for dissenter groups and a place full of disenchantment for the National Church and the government, which is crucial for understanding Coleridge's politics at the time.

As Luke Savin Herrick Wright contextualises, "Coleridge's father was an old-fashioned High Churchman and a sacramentalist,"[150] highlighting that High Church values and the sacraments as signs of grace would have been prominent in the Coleridge family

[149] Coleridge's religious persuasions have long been a source of critical debate, which has led to a substantial amount of Coleridgean scholarship in the field, including Douglas Hedley. *Coleridge, Philosophy and Religion: Aids to Reflection and the Mirror of the Spirit* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000); Jeffrey W. Barbeau. *Coleridge, the Bible, and Religion* (Great Britain: Palgrave, 2008); Luke Savin Herrick Wright. *Samuel Taylor Coleridge and the Anglican Church* (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 2010); and Christopher Corbin *The Evangelical Party and Samuel Taylor Coleridge's Return to the Church of England* (Hampshire: Routledge, 2021) to name a few recent examples.
[150] Wright. *Samuel Taylor Coleridge and the Anglican Church*. 42.

household.[151] Wright states that Coleridge's father was also endorsed by the "West Country High Churchmen" set and could be seen as part of such a movement himself.[152] Crucially, Wright uses the term "West Country High Churchmen", which suggests an established and well-developed High Church collective in the area.[153] The split between his High Church upbringing and a growing sense of liberalisation would persistently appear throughout Coleridge's writing during the 1790s. His move towards a more liberal and evangelical point of view was not an outright rejection of his upbringing; indeed, the bond between father and son was a significant and influential one as "nowhere in any writing, or table talk, or letter, does Coleridge even criticise his father, let alone condemn his beliefs."[154] Graham Davidson notes that before Coleridge was three, "he could read a chapter of the Bible,"[155] indicating an influence of his father's religious teachings. It is difficult to account for when Coleridge became a Unitarian, with Wright noting that he was still participating in Church of England liturgy and writing at Jesus College, Cambridge, well into 1794.[156] R. L. Brett, however, proposes that Jesus College at this period was part of a "revolutionary Left" movement at the time of Coleridge's study, which saw the College as "a centre of left-wing politics."[157]

Although Wright argues to the contrary by stating that the college was much more centrist and that "though it may well have introduced Coleridge to biblical Unitarianism, [it] did not introduce him to the radical political ideology that he would become famous for a few years later."[158] The reality is more than likely located between Wright and Brett's comments. Cambridge can undoubtedly be regarded as a traditional institution, which, along with Oxford, had established itself as a place of academic excellence whilst upholding Anglican values. At the time of Coleridge's attendance at Cambridge, the university only accepted

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[151] For my definition of High and Low Church, see my earlier point on page 7.
[152] Wright. *Samuel Taylor Coleridge and the Anglican Church*. 42.
[153] This is perhaps unsurprising as Exeter was a few miles west of Ottery St Mary, where its cathedral was the historic seat of the Bishop of Exeter. Arguably, the strength of tradition and orthodoxy was strong in this part of the West Country- it would be a short distance north of Exeter where the infamous Gorham Controversy would occur in 1847 in the village of Brampford Speke, itself a demonstration of the continued struggle between the High Church movement and the more liberal branches of the Church of England.
[154] Wright. *Samuel Taylor Coleridge and the Anglican Church*. 43.
[155] Graham Davidson. "S. T. Coleridge," in *The Blackwell Companion to the Bible in English Literature*. eds. Rebecca Lemon, Emma Mason, Jonathan Roberts, and Christopher Rowland. (United Kingdom: Blackwell, 2009) 413.
[156] Wright. *Samuel Taylor Coleridge and the Anglican Church*. 44.
[157] R. L. Brett. *Faith and Doubt: Religion and Secularisation in Literature from Wordsworth to Larkin* (Georgia, USA: Mercer University Press, 1997) 7.
[158] Wright. *Samuel Taylor Coleridge and the Anglican Church*. 50.

students who were practising Anglicans,[159] where Coleridge would have been one of the generations of students who were meant to uphold the teachings of the established church and safeguard those Christian beliefs.

Despite this preservation of Anglicanism, it is clear that non-Anglicans were also in attendance at the university, with Kitson noting that Coleridge was in "contact with Unitarians such as William Frend, Benjamin Flower, editor of the Cambridge Intelligencer, and his friend, George Dyer."[160] Frend was a fellow at Jesus College, Cambridge, and had been ordained in the Church of England before leaving in 1787 to become a Unitarian.[161] Frend's resulting trial due to the writing of a tract entitled *Peace and Union recommended to the Associated Bodies of Republicans and Anti-republicans* (1793), which had expressed dismay at the liturgy and teachings of the Church of England. It was considered scandalous at the time and, as I have already said, led to the removal of his Cambridge right of residence. For Coleridge, the exposure to such variation of Christian beliefs would have been a new experience and one that was far removed from his High Church upbringing.

Regardless of whether Jesus College was left or centrist leaning, as argued by Wiley and Wright, respectively, it would have certainly been a more liberal experience for Coleridge, free from the restrictions of childhood and school. Although awarded a Rustat Scholarship for being "a clergyman's son of exceptional academic ability,"[162] Coleridge did not partake in strictly High Church rituals and teachings despite attending "chapel twice a day…"[163] He also enjoyed wine parties and drunken larks with his fellow students and, by around 1793, had found himself tempted by sex workers. An entry in his notebook written in 1803, recalls a dream connected with his university days, where he recounts, "out rushes a university Harlot, who insists on my going with her/ offer her a shilling […] The Harlot in white with her open Bosom certainly was the Cambridge Girl." (*Notebooks* 1, 1726) This is

[159] The Test Act of 1673 was one of a series of laws passed that meant an individual had to subscribe to the beliefs of the established state church, in this instance the Church of England. Oxford had an even older restriction on non-Anglicans at the university, which dated back to 1581. As a result, the ability to hold public office or attend the country's ancient universities excluded several ethnic and religious groups, such as Nonconformists, Catholics, and Jews. This was not abolished until the passing of the Universities Tests Act of 1871. Slight earlier variations existed on the nature of the Tests- the Oxford University Act 1854 had removed the requirement of tests for BA degrees, whilst the Cambridge University Act 1856 abolished tests for all degrees in most of its subjects, but restrictions remained in place that only members of the Church of England and Ireland could become members of the University Senate or hold any University Office.
[160] Kitson. "Coleridge's Bristol and West Country Radicalism," 116.
[161] For further details on Frend's life and the surrounding controversy, see: Kenneth R. Johnston. *Unusual Suspects: Pitt's Reign of Alarm and the Lost Generation of the 1790s* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2013) 78-95.
[162] Ashton. *The Life of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*. 33.
[163] Ibid. 34.

not to say that High Churchmen did not also engage in such activity or that Coleridge's partaking is proof of a more liberal lifestyle, but it does demonstrate the start of Coleridge's exploration of life and pleasure in a more profound way than before. Such pursuits were not disclosed in Coleridge's letters to his brother and family members, clearly recognising that such actions would not have met with approval.

Coleridge's attempt to escape debts by joining the army in December 1793 and his eventual 'rescue' by his family the following year reinforced the continued reliance on others. Richard Holmes affirms that this incident and its fallout marked "the beginning of his Unitarian phase, which would lead him for several years into a radical view of Christianity as a philosophy of social reform, with strong egalitarian overtones."[164] I would argue that this phase had been going on for some time, in line with the abovementioned points raised by Wright and Wiley about his time at Jesus College. The impulsive decision to run away and join the army and its ultimate failure was undoubtedly the final straw, but it was part of a long series of struggles and anxieties experienced by Coleridge. The desire to live a life of self-sufficiency and simplicity, which he sought in the West Country, I would argue, stems from this period when Coleridge begrudgingly found himself constricted by family ties and support, along with the pressure of tradition and societal expectations. When Coleridge wrote in a letter to his brother that "my Reason (or perhaps my *reasonings*) would not permit me to *worship*" (*CL* I, 78), there can be seen a startling similarity to the figure of the Ancient Mariner who would appear in print four years later. Coleridge cannot worship, and the Mariner finds that he cannot pray (390, ll.244-47), and as such, they struggle to connect with the faith they knew.

He also declares, "My Faith therefore was made up of the Evangelists and the Deistic Philosophy—a kind of *religious Twilight*." (*CL* I, 78) Coleridge's faith, therefore, can be noted as being Unitarian from the mid-1790s up until he declared: "No Christ, No God […] No Trinity, no God" (*Notebooks* 2, 2448) in 1805, which represented his gradual move away from the Unitarian principles towards to holy trinity and the High Church. Coleridge's religious persuasions are notoriously tricky to pin down precisely due to his conflicting beliefs. In 1802, he wrote that "the Quakers and Unitarians are the only Christians, altogether pure from Idolatry" (*CL* II, 893), yet in the year of his realignment towards the Anglican Church, he writes that "Unitarianism in all its forms is Idolatry." (*Notebooks* 2, 2448) Within three years, he shifts his view from the Unitarian church being: "pure from Idolatry" to it

[164] Holmes. *Coleridge: Early Visions*. 58.

becoming the embodiment of idolatry - a substantial shift over a short time. From 1805 onwards, Coleridge comfortably sat with the Anglican Church, although it was still not necessarily the hard-line High Church leanings of his childhood — this would not occur until some years later.[165]

Nigel Leask highlights that during those West Country years, "Coleridge theorized Imagination as the agent of the 'One Life', expressing an integrated Unitarian idea of culture."[166] Additionally, Ronald C. Wendling notes how Coleridge grew up in "the later stages of an Enlightenment culture" in which there was a "distant and wholly transcendent God."[167] Leask and Wendling rightly emphasise that Coleridge came of age in the 1790s, influenced by "his family's devout Christian orthodoxy and revolutionary developments in France."[168] Although Coleridge never truly gave up on his Christian values, his adjustment towards the freedom, democracy, and egalitarian values of the French Revolution saw him find a new way to harmonise orthodoxy with radicalism. Critics like Wendling and Wright have questioned just how far a radical and reactionary figure Coleridge might have been, and I propose that it is something of a more centrist agenda as opposed to one that was thoroughly conservative or entirely revolutionary. Cooke notes that "Unitarian circles at this time offered an opportunity for sociable study […] the atmosphere of a small group of dissenters banded together in the face of general social opprobrium had the added advantage of being open to intellectual enquiry."[169] Peter Kitson adds that Coleridge's politics and religious beliefs were "significantly different from that of many of his contemporary Unitarian friends […] one of the reasons for this is that Coleridge's dissent was deepened by his wish to ground it on the historical basis that he discovered through his reading and discussions in the West Country."[170] Hence, I concur with Kitson's viewpoint that during Coleridge's time in the West Country, he demonstrated an exceptional comprehension of Christianity that was adaptable to the evolving knowledge and experiences he encountered during that period.

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[165] Wright argues that confirmation of Coleridge's return to High Churchmanship only occurs in 1816 due to his involvement in the Lancaster-Bell debate because "Only High Churchmen attacked Lancaster."- Wright. *Samuel Taylor Coleridge and the Anglican Church*. 54.
The Lancaster- Bell debate was focused on a new educational teaching method, of which one of the key figures in its development was Joseph Lancaster, a Quaker.
See also: R. A. Foakes. "'Thriving Prisoners': Coleridge, Wordsworth and the Child at School," *Studies in Romanticism*, Volume 28, No. 2 (Summer 1989): 187-206.
[166] Nigel Leask. *The Politics of Imagination in Coleridge's Critical Thought* (Hampshire: Macmillan, 1988) 3.
[167] Ronald C. Wendling. *Coleridge's Progress to Christianity: Experience and Authority in Religious Faith* (London: Associated University Press, 1995) 93.
[168] Ibid. 93.
[169] Katharine Cooke. *Coleridge* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1979) 12-13.
[170] Kitson. "Coleridge's Bristol and West Country Radicalism," 116.

The West Country's long history of dissenters presents a counterculture against traditional High Anglican teachings, the former a type of liberalism deeply concerned with freedom, fairness, and simplicity, whilst the latter represents a form of orthodoxy. As Kitson notes, Bristol (and, by extension, the entire West Country) had been "deeply divided" following the English Civil War, leading to distrust towards the traditional and state-held beliefs.[171] Unsurprisingly, the West Country would come to be defined as an "ingathering of the neglected,"[172] a rural outcrop with a specific and unique way of life that sometimes seemed to be in opposition to the national state powers. H. B. Workman, for example, notes that Methodism went "through the length and breadth of Cornwall and Devon" and became one of the area's most prominent faith groups, which could thrive in a region that felt cut off from the rest of England.[173] Non-conformists, such as the Methodists, reached those who might have otherwise remained untouched by and were alienated from the state church in various ways. The rural and often poverty-stricken West Country inhabitants would have found solace in a faith that appeared to communicate with them on a personal level. It dispensed with the hierarchical formations of the Roman Catholic and Anglican churches, instead presenting a charismatic approach to worship that appealed to the working classes. It was a stripped-back and simplified form of worship without the ritualistic or archaic aspects that may have been off-putting to some.

The large gatherings of non-conformists in the West Country demonstrated how the area had a particular appeal and freedom to dissenter groups since the eighteenth century.[174] Non-conformist groups in Bristol, where Coleridge would spend time during the mid-1790s, were remarkable because they held unusually high offices and ranks compared to other parts of the country.[175] Unitarianism is a Christian theology shared by several denominations with the "belief in the unipersonality of God and rejection of the doctrine of the Trinity."[176] This monotheist approach to Christianity had many political implications and motivations, with R. L. Brett noting that during the 1790s, "Unitarianism was part of a wide sweep of ideas which included not only dissent from the established church, but freedom of conscience, electoral

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[171] Kitson. "Coleridge's Bristol and West Country Radicalism," 116.
[172] H. B. Workman. *Methodism* [1912] (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2011) 97.
[173] Ibid. 97.
[174] Stephen A. Timmons charts the course of acceptance and the rise in prominence of Non-conformist groups in his essay "From Persecution to Toleration in the West Country, 1672-1692," *The Historian*, Volume 68, no. 3 (Fall 2006): 461-88.
[175] According to James E. Bradley, eleven dissenters held the office of mayor between 1754 and 1784, while the position of sheriff was also held by a dissenter- Bradley, *Religion, Revolution and English Radicalism.* 77.
[176] *Oxford English Dictionary*, s.v. "Unitarianism (*n.*)," July 2023, <https://doi.org/10.1093/OED/9774985020>

reform, and republicanism."[177] The rejection of several fundamental principles of Christian catechism, such as original sin, predestination, and the infallibility of the Bible, further separated it from traditional High Church teachings, encouraging a debate and discussion of the excesses of the apparent mainstream Christian denominations.[178]

The Unitarian breakaway allowed for a re-evaluation and reconciliation of what it meant to be religious, to be a Christian, and to have faith. As Christopher Stokes summarises, "Unitarianism was generally optimistic about humanity's prospects, holding it absurd and unscriptural that God would make moral demands that he knew would be impossible to fulfil. Unitarianism believes that human beings can be good if the right social and political conditions come about."[179] Therefore, it was a group that encouraged the freedom and openness of ideas that Coleridge exalted during this period. Anthony John Harding argues that "Coleridge was adding his voice to those of prominent West Country Unitarians, particularly Joshua Toulmin of Taunton and John Prior Estlin of Bristol."[180] The situation, however, was fraught with notable religious incidents occurring in the West Country, including the Blagdon Controversy (1799-1803) and the Gorham Case (1847-50), which demonstrated the increasing tensions between evangelical and orthodox beliefs in the region.[181]

Coleridge would later refer to himself in the *Biographia Literaria* as "a zealous Unitarian" (*CW* 7.I, 180) who had preached regularly at Unitarian places of worship across the West Country throughout the mid-1790s. William A. Ulmer concurs that from "1797-

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[177] Brett. *Faith and Doubt*. 7.

[178] The Thirty-Nine Articles, finalised in 1597, sought to establish clear distinctions between the doctrines and practices of the Church of England and define how it was different, and therefore separate, from the Catholic Church. This definitive set of beliefs was not reflective of the more liberal stance of Christians such as the Unitarians or indeed conservative groups like the High Church Anglicans who by the mid-1800s had moved towards the label Anglo-Catholic because of campaigns by religious pressure groups such as the Oxford Movement. The Movement, as discussed in later chapters in relation to Christina Rossetti and Gerard Manley Hopkins, were also critical of the practices and catechisms of the Church of England in a similar manner to the Unitarians. The emergence of the more liberal fractions on one side and the more orthodox, high-church groups on the other demonstrate the centuries-old disagreements in the church.

[179] Christopher Stokes. "'My Soul in Agony': Irrationality and Christianity in 'The Rime of the Ancient Mariner'," *Studies in Romanticism*. Volume 50. No. 1. (Spring 2011): 16.

[180] Harding. "Radical Bible: Coleridge's 1790s West Country Politics," 129.

[181] For further information on the Blagdon Controversy, see: Anne Stott. "Hannah More and the Blagdon Controversy, 1799-1802," in *Evangelicalism in the Church of England, c.1790-c.1890*. eds. Mark Smith and Stephen Taylor (Woodbridge, UK: Boydell Press) 1–50.
Coleridge met Hannah More at her home at Barley Wood, Somerset, in 1814. Joseph Cottle recounts the meeting in his book but notes that More later abandoned Coleridge's company and "devoted herself to her [more] titled visitant."- Joseph Cottle. *Reminiscences of Samuel Taylor Coleridge and Robert Southey* (London: Houlston and Stoneman, 1847) 54.
For further information on the debate of the Gorham Case, see: "The Gorham Case and the Rev. G. A. Denison", *House of Commons Debate*, 18 March 1850, Volume 109, cc.1054-6.

1798 Coleridge was still zealously engaged in the Unitarian cause: preaching to Unitarian congregations, corresponding with Unitarian ministers on theological questions, and revising his doctrinaire *Religious Musings*."[182] Coleridge's poetry reflects some of these Unitarian values, a blending of "religious and political hopes."[183] Molly Lefebure refers to 'Religious Musings' as "an incredible Conglomeration of Unitarian thinking, Jacobin polemics, hero-worship, the Book of Revelations, travellers' tales, and experimental writing."[184] The poem may well be seen as an attempt to connect Unitarian thinking to the ongoing political struggle in France. It introduces the idea of One Life that forms the foundations for Unitarian beliefs: "There is one Mind, one omnipresent Mind,/ Omnific. His most holy name is LOVE." (179, ll.105-06) God is presented as a single entity, and for Coleridge, this oneness of God, as repeated twice in a single line, represents Love, centred on one divine being rather than split three ways, as is the case for a Trinitarian point of view. This God goes on to look at "all creation; and he loves it all,/ And blesses it, and calls it very good!/ This is indeed to dwell with the Most High!" (ll.112-14) The poem presents the goodness of creation as being blessed by God, something that is later echoed by Christina Rossetti when she writes: "Tread softly! all the earth is holy ground" (*CP* 350, l.1) and Gerard Manley Hopkins when he expresses: "The world is charged with the grandeur of God." (*Poems* 66, l.1) Whilst Rossetti and Hopkins' views are not based on the teachings of Unitarianism, they are influenced by High Church beliefs which still celebrate the beauty of God's creation and the respect owed to it. Mankind may well find itself distanced from God when "we roam unconscious, or with hearts/ Unfeeling of our universal Sire" (ll.117-18). The hope and wish of regaining that connection, a unity with God, becomes a catalyst to re-establish and feel that love once more.

**Nature and Religion in 'The Rime of the Ancient Mariner' (1798)**

The first poem to appear in the 1798 edition of *Lyrical Ballads* was 'The Rime of the Ancient Mariner'.[185] The poem tells how the titular Mariner's irrational slaughter of an innocent albatross seemingly curses the ship and dooms those on board, with himself being the only survivor of the ordeal. The Mariner's cautionary tale compels him to tell his story to

[182] William A. Ulmer. "Necessary Evils: Unitarian Theodicy in 'The Rime of the Ancyent Marinere'," *Studies in Romanticism*, Volume 43, No. 3 (Fall, 2004): 328.
[183] Harding. "Radical Bible: Coleridge's 1790s West Country Politics," 130.
[184] Lefebure. *Samuel Taylor Coleridge: A Bondage of Opium*. 180.
[185] Although 'The Rime of the Ancient Mariner' held the accolade of being the first poem in the 1798 edition of *Lyrical Ballads*, it would later see its position diminish in subsequent editions where from 1800 onwards it served as the penultimate poem of the first volume.
The original 1798 edition of the poem used the spelling 'The Rime of the Ancyent Marinere', although I am using the updated spelling throughout this research for clarity and simplicity.

anyone he encounters, regardless of whether they want to hear it. His life is both a curse and an act of salvation, where suffering relates to atonement and where freedom comes at the price of eternal guilt.

The complexity of such a poem and Coleridge's own life and beliefs have led to a polarisation of critical thought. Jerome McGann argues that: "The Romantic ideology must be seen for what it is, a historical phenomenon of European culture, generated to save the "traditional concepts, schemes and values" of the Christian heritage."[186] McGann shifts away from traditional interpretations by attempting to place Coleridge's religious sentiments alongside notions of "superstition" and "delusion" as a method of reading the poem.[187] Although a valid reading evoking conversation around scepticism and irreligious interpretations, this thesis's emphasis on religious understanding follows the principles of Terry Eagleton in arguing that: "religion needs to be patiently deciphered" and not "repudiated.[188] As Thomas Dilworth succinctly summarises, the poem "is not realism; it is romance, in which the improbable can and does happen."[189] Therefore, the extreme and fantastical elements of the poem push the boundaries of perception and human understanding, but the religious elements act as a unifier, an easily detectable reference point. My reading of 'The Ancient Mariner' contains two critical elements: the first relates to the value placed on the natural world and the experiences contained within it, which are in keeping with a pantheistic view of creation, and the second concerns High Church and Catholic orthodoxy.

Dilworth affirms that "the critics who argue against consonance with Christianity fundamentally misread the poem."[190] Malcolm Guite clarifies that "the Mariner's deed has alienated him from nature, humanity and God."[191] Despite no apparent motivation, the Mariner's actions are seen as an affront against God and nature, disrupting the existing spiritual connections. The forced repetition of the story urges the reader, as Simon C. Estok notes, to draw "direct and unquestionable links between individual actions and broad environmental catastrophes."[192] The Mariner's cautionary tale forces him to evaluate and consider his actions constantly, and his lessons are revealed in a hymnodic style:

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[186] Jerome J. McGann. "The Meaning of The Ancient Mariner," *Critical Inquiry*, Volume 8 (1) (Autumn 1981): 65.
[187] Ibid. 65.
[188] Eagleton. *Reason, Faith, and Revolution.* 90.
[189] Thomas Dilworth. "Symbolic Spatial Form in "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner" and the Problem of God," *The Review of English Studies*. Volume 58, No. 236 (September 2007): 522.
[190] Ibid. 523.
[191] Malcolm Guite. *Faith, Hope and Poetry: Theology and the Poetic Imagination* (Surrey, UK: Ashgate, 2012) 156.
[192] Simon C. Estok. "Environmental Horror in the Time of the Ancient Mariner," *ANQ: A Quarterly Journal of Short Articles, Notes and Reviews*, Volume 36, No. 3. (November 2021): 369.

He prayeth best who loveth best
All things both great and small;
For the dear God, who loveth us,
He made and loveth all.
(ll.614-17)

This echoes St Augustine's *Confession,* which states: "The wicked are displeased by your justice, even more by vipers and the worm which you created good, being well fitted for the lower parts of your creation."[193] Everything in God's creation has a purpose, and therefore, a human should not seek to kill senselessly or insensitively. It is a stark warning to the wedding guest, who finds himself "a sadder and a wiser man" (l.624), where all life is proclaimed to be precious, and that everything is connected and worthy of love. The Mariner's lesson further evokes Biblical references, notably: "O Lord, how manifold are thy works! in wisdom hast thou made them all: the earth is full of thy riches. *So is* this great and wide sea, wherein *are* things creeping innumerable, both small and great beasts." (*Psalm* 104: 24-25) Similar sentiments are expressed in Cecil Frances Alexander's hymn 'All Things Bright and Beautiful', in which the beauty of God is represented in his creation and the corresponding elevated beauty that surrounds humankind.

Timothy Morton argues that the poem's moral is "about the traumatic encounter between strange strangers. One of these, without a doubt, is the albatross itself; another is the Mariner, the zombie-like walking, talking poem; another, the Wedding Guest; the Nightmare Life-in-Death; and several million water snakes, lowly worms."[194] There is a disharmony between these connected strangers which must be resolved before any unity can be experienced. This is referred to as "coexistentialism" by Morton,[195] and emphasises the need to find a value in both human and non-human entities. Jane Bennett's argument is applicable here, where there is "inexplicable vitality or energy" given off by all matter, resulting in "a kind of thing-power."[196] The albatross is adored by the ship's crew not because of any notion of superficial beauty, but because they regard it as if it was "a Christian Soul" (l.65). It is charged with a spiritual power that is both a respite from the monotony of the journey and a symbol of the continued connection with God's creation. The Mariner's failure to see and understand that connection forms the moral dilemma of the poem, with Morton criticising the Mariner's declaration of being "Alone, alone, all all alone" (l.232) as missing the fact that

[193] St Augustine. *Confessions*. trans. Henry Chadwick (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008) 126.
[194] Timothy Morton. *The Ecological Thought* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2010) 46.
[195] Ibid. 47.
[196] Bennett. *Vibrant Matter*. 18.

"He is coexisting with other beings that 'liv[e] on.'"[197] The Mariner's isolation becomes a matter of perception because he lacks "the awareness of coexistence."[198] Where silence in the countryside was seen as a comfort, as witnessed in 'The Eolian Harp', the unnatural silence at sea emphasises the death of the crew where the Mariner hears no "sigh or groan" (l.217), only the "heavy thump, a lifeless lump/ [As] They dropp'd one by one." (ll.218-19) Death surrounds the Mariner almost entirely, where the prominent sound is not the sea itself, but the collapsing heaps of his fellow crewmates. The inability to connect and sympathise with anything beyond the crew leads to a separation from God, nature, and his fellow humans with disastrous social and theological implications.

The albatross draped around the Mariner's neck after it has been shot acts as a symbolic but physical manifestation of the guilt bestowed on him by the ship's crew at the first signs of trouble:

> … what evil looks
> Had I from old and young!
> Instead of the cross, the Albatross
> About my neck was hung.
> (ll.139-42)

Nicholas Halmi refrains from referring directly to the poetic imagery of the albatross,[199] yet it embodies his concept of something that "fully represents within itself the whole of which it is a part."[200] Referring to Schelling, Halmi highlights that symbolism often "embraces myth, organic nature, art, philosophy, sculpture, and drama."[201] Interconnectedness is embodied in manmade and natural creations, emphasising uniformity and oneness, highlighting Bennett's notion of "the active role of nonhuman materials in public life."[202] The killing of the albatross breaks that connection with the natural world by presenting man in opposition to nature, endorsing what Jonathan Bate calls the "Orthodox thought [which] defines man through his mastery over nature."[203] The albatross around the neck is a physical manifestation of the burden of guilt that the Mariner must carry with him. It reminds him of the violation of the natural world and results in a punishment that seems to weigh him down like a prisoner in chains, trapped at sea where he is without a home and without a connection to a place.

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[197] Morton. *The Ecological Thought*. 46-47.
[198] Ibid. 47.
[199] This is explicitly stated in the opening paragraph in Nicholas Halmi. *The Genealogy of the Romantic Symbol* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007) 1.
[200] Ibid. 18.
[201] Ibid. 14.
[202] Bennett. *Vibrant Matter*. 2.
[203] Bate. *Romantic Ecology*. 34.

The Mariner continues to wear the weight of the albatross until he notes that "I could pray;/ And from my neck so free/ The Albatross fell off, and sank." (ll.288-90) The burden of the albatross is removed of its own accord, and freedom is introduced only by re-establishing the connection with God and all life forms on Earth. His ability to pray again and forge a spiritual connection once more represents a reconciliation with God from which the Mariner can continue to learn. The Mariner states that the albatross is hung around the neck "Instead of the cross" (l.141), which likens the albatross to a Christian symbol like a crucifix pendant. I would also argue that there are similarities between the albatross around the neck and liturgical vestments such as a stole, which are used to symbolise priestly authority, of which prayer is an important aspect. Extravagant and excessive vestments played no part in the Church of England following the English Reformation, although High Church groups, such as the mid-nineteenth Oxford Movement, would revive such practices. Such accessories would not have been part of the clothing worn by Coleridge as a Unitarian minister, and therefore, such usage would have linked back to his experience with his High Church father.

The Mariner may not be an absolute symbol of the purity of faith or the authority of priestly duty, yet he is the one who survives the ordeal- albeit scarred psychologically and with a spiritual change. It is he who travels and tells the story, which is a plausible reference to St Peter's journey as one of the Twelve Apostles of Christ who denies having known Christ three times before the crucifixion.[204] Following the resurrection of Christ, Peter is restored through the confirmation of love for Christ and by Christ's recommissioning of Peter in his discipleship. Christ's declaration that Peter should "Feed my lambs" (*John* 21:15) and "Feed my sheep" (*John* 21:16 and 17) is a symbolic link to the nurturing of Christianity, where followers of Christ shared his story and looked after his people, as a shepherd looks after sheep. Although Peter is seemingly absolved, he is still forced to reconcile his initial lack of faith after being recommissioned by Christ.[205] Despite his denial, Peter has his faith restored and, just like the Mariner, spends the rest of his life wandering and telling the story of what he has witnessed and learned. Carl Woodring argues that Coleridge "needed a divinity of forgiveness rather than of reason, because he could not bear the burden of his own

[204] See the prediction of the denial in *Matthew* 26: 33-35. The three denials are referenced across several Gospels, including *Luke* 22:54-62 and *John* 18:15-27.
[205] Peter is widely recognised as the founder of the Christian Church, with the Church of Rome and the Church of Antioch considering Peter as their first Patriarch, also referred to as Pope or Primate by certain denominations.

guilt."[206] Guilt comes to define the Mariner's existence, but although he appears to be free physically, he remains morally and spiritually burdened.

Despite Coleridge's Unitarian beliefs at the time of writing the poem,[207] there is a noticeable inclusion of broader Christian elements, the most notable of which, and the most contrasting to Unitarianism, relates to medieval Catholicism. Seamus Perry notes that the poem displays "the superstitious insistence of the late-medieval Catholic speaker", which, in turn, provides a significant distancing effect between Coleridge and the Mariner.[208] Jude Wright draws attention to the connection between "the supernatural and quasi-Catholic elements of the poem"[209] but also argues that the poem forms part of Coleridge's early evangelicalism. Wright explains that Coleridge uses "the concepts and vocabulary of Catholicism (and perhaps High Church Anglicanism) to express the concepts that are more rightly at home amongst the followers of John Wesley."[210] The result is a jarring paradoxical portrayal where a Christian orthodoxy is presented at odds with Coleridge's Unitarian leanings, creating an unusual hybrid of faith that seemingly borrows from both the High and Low practices.

The poem, as Thomas Dilworth concludes, is "an imitation of medieval romance. Its medieval setting is established by ballad stanzas [and] archaic and medieval Catholic references."[211] Therefore, the religious elements are essential to the poem's imitation, with the particular emphasis on a Catholic faith relating to Joseph McQueen's argument that a "Re-enchanted orthodoxy" allowed Coleridge's "vision of an enchanted world [that will] exemplify the pre-Reform orthodoxy…"[212] Coleridge's world in 'The Ancient Mariner' can only exist and be elevated beyond normalcy by its return to pre-Reformation principles. This older style embodies the poem's role as part of the "larger poetic backlash against mechanistic understandings of the world so common in Enlightenment thought […] Romantic writers reacted against such sterile explanations of the cosmos by finding the

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[206] Carl Woodring. *Politics in English Romantic Poetry* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1970) 52.
[207] William A. Ulmer's article, for example, aims to reconcile the poem with Coleridge's Unitarian beliefs: Ulmer. "Necessary Evils," 327-56.
[208] Seamus Perry. "An introduction to The Rime of the Ancient Mariner," *British Library*. May 15, 2014. <https://www.bl.uk/romantics-and-victorians/articles/an-introduction-to-the-rime-of-the-ancient-mariner> (Accessed March 1, 2023).
[209] Jude Wright. "'The Penance of Life': The Testimonial Paradigm in Coleridge's The Rime of the Ancient Mariner," *Romanticism on the Net*, Volume 71 (Fall 2018) <https://ronjournal.org/s/4545> (Accessed June 21, 2021): 2.
[210] Ibid. 2.
[211] Dilworth. "Symbolic Spatial Form," 503.
[212] Joseph McQueen. "'Old faith is often modern heresy': Re-enchanted orthodoxy in Coleridge's 'The Eolian Harp' and The Rime of the Ancient Mariner," *Christianity and Literature*. Volume 64 (1) (December 2014): 22.

divine in the natural world."[213] The inclusion of medieval Catholicism adds both an archaic and authentic aesthetic to the poem, providing a closer connection to the natural world and faith that Coleridge seeks to portray.

McQueen asserts that "treating Coleridge's later conservatism as the mast key to the *Rime*'s [later] revisions mistakenly downplays other possible influences, such as German Higher Criticism and the philosophy of Kant."[214] Noting these broader influences is essential; however, I would argue that the influence of Christian orthodoxy and Catholicism were present in the earliest iterations of the poem, although it can be said that these features became more pronounced in later revisions. These Catholic elements do not relate primarily to the Roman Catholic Church but rather a form of Christianity that Coleridge later called "universal" and "spiritually perfect" (*CW* 10, 125). These can be traced to the historical and traditional part of the church, of which the High Church and Roman Catholicism were subsequent offshoots. As Wright notes, Coleridge's father was regarded as part of the "West Country High Churchmen" set,[215] and this theological background and education are crucial to understanding the inclusion of orthodox Christianity.

The inclusion of clear Catholic elements comes at crucial moments in the narrative: the arrival of the albatross is given great religious importance and reverence: "As if it had been a Christian soul/ We hail'd it in God's name." (ll.65-66) The observance of evening prayers is traditionally associated with Catholic and orthodox beliefs through the "vespers nine" (l.74), noted just before the shooting of the albatross. There is a reflection on the significance of saints as guardians and protectors just before the Mariner blesses the sea snakes when the Mariner declares, "my kind saint took pity on me" (l.278). The coming of rain results in the Mariner giving thanks to the Virgin Mary: "To Mary Queen the praise be yeven/ She sent the gentle sleep from heaven/ that slid into my soul" (ll.294-96), a declaration and belief in the power of "the holy Mother" as she is referred to in the subsequent gloss. (*CW* 16.I.1, 395). Towards the end of Part V, it is written, "the man hath penance done,/ And penance more will do" (ll.413-14), the notion of penance being an act or actions forming part of the Catholic and orthodox sacrament towards absolution, and the presence of God's endless mercy. The inclusion of holy qualities in non-human entities, the adoration of saints, and Mariology create a contrast to viewing the poem from a wholly evangelical perspective. Dilworth finds that "Coleridge was fully aware" of these Catholic

[213] McQueen. "Old faith is often modern heresy," 23.
[214] Ibid. 23.
[215] Wright. *Samuel Taylor Coleridge and the Anglican Church*. 42.

details and that, for example, "the Catholic doctrine of purgatory holds that sin forgiven may yet entail punishment or suffering..."[216] The result is that "medieval Christianity accommodates with its theology the ongoing […] suffering of the Mariner, which bothers so many critics."[217] Therefore, this orthodoxy within the poem serves a multifaceted function by harking back to a historical age and offering a plausible framework through which the events and punishment can co-exist.

Although these have a distancing effect, as Seamus Perry argues, I would enhance this by noting that they originate from an education and traditional values much closer to home due to the High Church Anglicanism of Coleridge's childhood. Concerning Coleridge's childhood, Graham Davidson notes that "before he was three, he could read a chapter of the Bible."[218] Coleridge's Biblical education is deeply embedded into him, and as previously noted, demonstrates a thorough knowledge of Christianity instilled by his High Church priest of a father. The Catholic passages highlight an earlier formation of Christianity, which Coleridge had understood from a young age. Concerning the "vespers nine" (l.74), Christopher Stokes notes that the "Roman Catholic vespers, like the Anglican equivalent of Evensong, involved heavily penitential elements and Coleridge would have been particularly familiar" with such liturgical events.[219] Coleridge, therefore, can never truly remove himself from High Churchmanship and would return to it later in life. Peter Kitson argues that Coleridge's apparent Unitarian faith at the time was "significantly different" from his fellow believers.[220]

Anthony John Harding argues that Coleridge created "a blend of secular political engagement with devout attention to the New Testament call for a new form of human community, which was not incompatible with a rational-critical approach to the Bible."[221] Coleridge's faith, therefore, evolved and engaged with liberal ideas as well as older, orthodox traditions of Christianity, presenting a hybrid of beliefs. The Mariner attempts to call upon the saints for assistance, a practice that, since the Reformation and the publication of the *Book of Common Prayer* (1544), had "excised most of the portions dependent on the cult of the saints."[222] Although removing the emphasis on saints and their importance from the

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[216] Dilworth. "Symbolic Spatial Form," 525.
[217] Ibid. 525.
[218] Davidson. "S. T. Coleridge," 413.
[219] Stokes. "My Soul in Agony," 5.
[220] Kitson. "Coleridge's Bristol and West Country Radicalism," 116.
[221] Harding. "Radical Bible: Coleridge's 1790s West Country Politics," 130.
[222] Brian Cummings. "Introduction" in *The Book of Common Prayer: The Texts of 1549, 1559, and 1662* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011) xxvii.

Church of England liturgy and weakening the influence of saint-inspired cults and followings, it did not wholly eradicate saints' significance and associations from the public's mind.

Indeed, idolatry worship and reliance on saints can be interpreted as a sinful action that detracts from divine worship and the adoration of an omniscient God. The *Thirty-Nine Articles*[223] states that the idolatrous invocation of saints, along with other practices, is viewed as a "Romish Doctrine."[224] It is further disregarded as "a fond thing vainly invented, and grounded upon no warranty of Scripture, but rather repugnant to the Word of God."[225] Nicholas Halmi argues that the theological implications of such symbolism by Coleridge provided "greater legitimacy, since its irrationality can now be dignified as a mystery of transcendental origin.[226] Coleridge's complex Christian beliefs during this period are directly linked, as Halmi suggests, to the need for "a minimally orthodox understanding of the Trinity."[227] Even in the most liberal state of Coleridge's Unitarianism in the West Country years, there is still the essential requirement for High Anglican, and even Catholic, orthodoxy, creating a theological hybridity.

The albatross' slaughter appears impulsive, mirroring an incident from Saint Augustine's *Confessions.* Augustine writes how he sneaked into an orchard with friends and stripped a pear tree "not for feasts but merely to throw to the pigs [...] our pleasure lay in doing what was not allowed."[228] The Mariner's actions, although seemingly unmotivated, feed into Augustine's suggestion of transgression for the sake of transgression. In *Table Talk,* Coleridge comments on how all things have a purpose regardless of whether we view them as beautiful or practical: "The weeds, you see, have taken the liberty to grow, and I thought it unfair in me to prejudice the soil towards roses and strawberries" (*CW* 14.I, 181) Gerard Manley Hopkins would express similar sentiments in his poem 'Inversnaid' when he states: "O let them be left, wildness and wet;/ Long live the weeds and the wilderness yet." (*Poems* 89, ll.15-16) For Hopkins and Coleridge, the beauty of God's creation exists in all things, where it is found in the wild, untamed features of the land as well as the beautiful and cultivated spaces. The Mariner is initially repulsed by the "million million slimy things" (l.238) in the sea, declaring:

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[223] One of the foundational texts of the Church of England, which defined the practices and beliefs of the Anglican Church.
[224] *The Book of Common Prayer*. 679.
[225] Ibid. 679.
[226] Halmi. *The Genealogy of the Romantic Symbol*. 101.
[227] Ibid. 119.
[228] St. Augustine. *Confessions*. 29.

I look'd to Heaven, and try'd to pray;
But or ever a prayer had gusht,
A wicked whisper came and made
My heart as dry as dust.

(ll.244-47)

His inability to pray and connect with God is linked to the slaughter of the albatross and the failure to see beauty in all of creation, including the "slimy things" in the water.[229]

Previously, the dead crew were declared as "beautiful" (l.236), whilst the living creatures are denounced as "slimy" (l.238) because they reside in a "rotting Sea" (l.240) and are superficially unappealing. The change of perception occurs when the monstrosity and horror are somewhat lifted, and the Mariner returns to the "water-snakes" (l.273) and "bless'd them unaware." (l.285) They are now "happy living things" (l.282), and the once dry and unfeeling heart now finds "a spring of love" (l.284) in all things, even those in which "no tongue/ Their beauty might declare." (ll.282-83) Simon C. Estok refers to "the human inability to assert control over this other-than-human agency" and that "the shocking and unpredictable agencies of nature play out across the spectrum of human incomprehensibility and impotence."[230] The reconnection forces an adjustment of the Mariner's worldview to account for the beauty of creation in its broadest possible form. As Elke Weik highlights, the poem "depends on space, matter, and the reference system of the observer."[231] The Mariner's societal and theological reference points undergo a significant realignment towards acknowledging the connection with all things and recognising the love and mark of a heavenly creator. The Mariner does not have a "mastery over nature"[232] but is, instead, part of a greater spiritual vision of co-existence and co-dependence.

**Coleridge's West Country Anxieties**

As Nigel Leask argues, "the productive years 1797-1805 was a sophisticated, if somewhat socially-marginalised, attempt to promote the civic values of an egalitarian commonwealth, and not the product of a conservative reaction to the failure of French and English radicalism."[233] The difference in Coleridge's politics and actions was that locals reported him and Wordsworth on suspicion of being French spies because they took long

[229] See: Simon C. Estok. "The Environmental Imagination in the Slime of the Ancient Mariner," *ANQ: A Quarterly Journal of Short Articles, Notes and Reviews*, Volume 34, No. 2, (August 2019): 135-38. <DOI:10.1080/0895769X.2019.1643700>.
[230] Estok. "Environmental Horror in the Time of the Ancient Mariner," 371.
[231] Elke Weik. "From Time to Action: The Contribution of Whitehead's Philosophy to a Theory of Action," *Time and Society*, Volume 13, no. 2/3, (September 2004): 303.
[232] Bate. *Romantic Ecology*. 34.
[233] Leask. *The Politics of Imagination in Coleridge's Critical Thought*. 3.

night walks and followed the routes of water courses.[234] Although no arrest or charge was brought against Coleridge, it would leave him feeling uneasy. The friendship with the radical John Thelwall came under Coleridge's scrutiny because of Thelwall's notoriety and lack of Christian faith. The two had been great companions and regularly corresponded on their shared political beliefs; however, by October 1797, Coleridge attempts to dissuade Thelwall from moving closer:

> If *you* too should come, I am afraid, that even riots & dangerous riots might be the consequence — / *either* of us separately would perhaps be tolerated—but *all three* together—what can it be less than plot & damned conspiracy—a school for the propagation of demagogy & atheism?—And it deserves examination whether or not as moralists we should be justified in hazarding the certain evil of calling forth malignant passions for the contingent good, that might result from our living in the same neighbourhood?
>
> (*CL* I, 343-44)

Coleridge understands the problem of inviting Thelwall, a known radical and atheist, to live in such a rural and close community. If Coleridge's relatively tame pursuits evoked such a reaction that would see him accused of being a spy, then Thelwall's residency would likely have led to worse consequences. The impact of this life and the tranquillity that Coleridge had sought to create could not be sustained with the unwanted attention that someone like Thelwall would bring.[235]

An underlying factor of these West Country years that I previously referred to is the importance of community and friendship, which are sources of comfort in anxious moments. The poem 'This Lime-tree Bower my Prison' was inspired by an unfortunate accident that saw Coleridge's foot being scalded, rendering him unable to walk at length. As a result, he was forced to remain in the garden while his friends embarked on a walk across the Quantock Hills.[236] The poem is written from Coleridge's perspective as he sits in the garden of Thomas Poole's house in Nether Stowey under a "Dear Arbour,"[237] the use of "Dear" echoing the fond recollection of the "Dear native brook" (300, l.1) from 'Sonnet: To the River Otter'. The

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[234] This led to the infamous "Spy Nozy" occurrence in the summer of 1797 when a government informer followed Coleridge. Coleridge would attempt to capture the incident in a poem entitled 'Epigram on Mr Ross, Usually Cognominate "Nosy"' (1799) in which he attempted to rhyme "spy nosy/ Ross" with "rhynoceros"- only the first few lines were completed. (*CW* 16.I.1, 552)
See also: Nicholas Roe. "Who Was Spy Nozy?" *The Wordsworth Circle*. Volume 15, Number 2, (Spring 1984): 46-50.

[235] For more on Coleridge, Wordsworth and Thelwall, see: E. P. Thompson "Hunting the Jacobin Fox," *Past & Present,* no. 142 (1994): 94–140; Judith Thompson. "Citizen Juan Thelwall: In the Footsteps of a Free-Range Radical," *Studies in Romanticism*, Volume 48, no. 1 (Spring 2009): 67-100; and Judith Thompson. *John Thelwall in the Wordsworth Circle: The Silenced Partner* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012).

[236] These included John Thelwall, William and Dorothy Wordsworth, Charles Lamb, and Thomas Poole.

[237] Ashton. *The Life of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*. 91.

poem laments the loss of companionship despite this being a temporary occurrence, where it is declared, “Well, they are gone, and here must I remain.” (351, l.1) The overly sentimental opening suggests a tragedy because of death - “they are gone”- the thought of being away from those you love and their continuation without your presence emphasises the loneliness of the situation. The speaker refers to being physically and mentally disconnected from them as he declares, "I have lost/ Beauties and Feelings, such as would have been/ Most sweet to my remembrance” (ll.2-4). As with the earlier poems on childhood youth and vitality in the West Country, the speaker here is concerned that “age/ had dimmed mine eyes” (ll.4-5) and that he may never get to experience “Beauties and Feelings” again.

The prospect of being on his own does not fill him with joy; instead, he is bored, worried, and restless without company. The lament continues as consideration is given to missed experiences, conversations, and sights all things which are now “lost” (l.2). It becomes apparent that Coleridge is immensely familiar with the area that his friends are exploring, and he pieces together the memories of the locations from stories of “which I told.” (l.9) The reader is taken on that same journey as the friends in which we become witness to the “springy heath” (l.7), “The roaring dell” (l.9) and “the dark green file of long lank weeds.” (l.17) The reader, like Coleridge in that moment of isolation, are witness to the incredible beauty of the rural landscape despite not physically seeing it in the same manner as the walking party. This further illustrates Coleridge’s view of nature as a tangible space that can be occupied as well as one that occupies an imaginative realm that can be dreamed of and fantasised about.

Anne K. Mellor argues that the poem is “a Romantic phenomenological perception of a shared moral and emotional life flowing between man and nature.”[238] It is a poem in which Coleridge is “exercising his sympathetic imagination” at a moment where he “mentally joins his friends on their walking tour through the Quantock Hills along the coast of Somerset.”[239] In following their journey using his imagination, he can feel a form of inclusion with his friends despite their distance, where he also “cast himself as their guide, present in their minds (if not physically beside them) as a directing force.”[240] This remains Coleridge’s realm, a landscape he has traversed numerous times, discussing and dissecting the various facets of its beauty in great detail. His descriptions are so vivid that his friends can easily

[238] Anne K. Mellor. “Coleridge’s ‘This Lime-Tree Bower My Prison’ and the Categories of English Landscape,” *Studies in Romanticism*, Volume 18, No. 2 (Summer, 1979): 253.
[239] Ibid. 254.
[240] Ibid. 255.

recall them, even in his absence, evoking admiration for Coleridge's ability to capture its essence.

The third stanza reveals that the absence of the subject does not diminish the beauty of the scenery and the material experience. Coleridge declares "A delight" (l.44), feeling similar emotions "As [if] I myself were there!" (l.46) He concludes that beauty remains regardless of his presence, in a similar way that the existence of God does not need to be constantly seen to know that it exists. Both the beauty of God and the beauty of the landscape can be recalled at any time when required, much like Wordsworth's belief that poetry takes its origin from emotion "recollected in tranquillity."[241] The Quantock Hills are a landscape that Coleridge knows well and provides great joy and inspiration. He regards the rook in the sky and echoes the Mariner's act of blessing the sea snakes (l.285) by stating of the rook: "I blest it" (l.71). There is a reassurance that the rook could also be seen in flight by the "gentle-hearted Charles" (l.69) offering a shared experience across the miles. Although becoming "a dim speck, now vanishing" (l.73), there is a comfort that Coleridge and Lamb can connect with the same sky, clouds, and wildlife, emphasising the importance of experience and tangible entities, and finding comfort in its beauty, dangers, and fantasies.

Coleridge's West Country embodied many ideals envisaged for the planned Pantisocracy, albeit on a smaller scale, where the community in the Nether Stowey undoubtedly had himself at its spiritual and social heart. This commune of writers, thinkers, and artists was governed by Britain's laws, principles, and suspicions but offered a place for an escape in a secluded, safe environment. The ambition of self-sufficiency by working the land was a step towards a freedom of the mind, body, and spirit through the ideal fusion of work, faith, and nature. It was an environment where Coleridge could be happy and prosper creatively in a caring company, away from the stresses and guilt of the past. The relationships and ideas forged in the West Country became vital in Coleridge's later life as he sought to solidify and make certain of his theological position. The following chapter analyses his later years in Highgate, where the clarity and security of a prolonged residential status provided the appropriate circumstances for spiritual and autobiographical reflection. These experiences are presented in how they shaped his worldview and led him to revisit his beliefs during a time of great upheaval and change in the nineteenth-century. It also provides an in-depth analysis of Coleridge's return to orthodox, High Anglican beliefs and the impact of this transformation on his writing and thoughts.

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[241] Wordsworth. "Preface to the Second Edition," 400.

# Chapter 2: Later Coleridge and the Maturation of Thought

*…O, lift one thought in prayer for S. T. C.;*
*That he who many a year with toil of breath*
*Found death in life, may here find life in death!*

'S.T.C.' (1833)
(1145, ll.4-6)[242]

In a letter from 1818, John Keats wrote: "It is a great Pity that People should by associating themselves with the finest things, spoil them. Hunt has damned Hampstead and masks and sonnets and Italian tales. Wordsworth has damned the lakes…"[243] In his condemnation, Keats does not refer to Coleridge or any location associated with him, despite Coleridge's living nearby in Highgate since 1816. Keats does not suggest that Coleridge had "damned" anywhere, possibly relating to Coleridge's almost nomadic nature, where he was seemingly unattached and unassociated with any specific area. It may also be possible that Keats thought more highly of Coleridge or that, in the eyes of Keats, Coleridge had yet to damn anywhere through his association with any particular locality. The reality is that Coleridge would go on to become connected to a specific location; however, this could not be the Lake District, as Keats highlights that Wordsworth was the central person there. Whereas the previous chapter noted the significance of the West Country to the development of early Coleridgean thoughts and poetics, this chapter focuses on Highgate as a place that marks a vital part of his later intellectual and religious journey.

J. C. C. Mays stresses that Coleridge's later work "is overlooked because it appears intrinsically of lesser worth, especially to literary readers intent on poetical poetry."[244] This chapter examines the later period of Coleridge's writing because, as Mays argues, "it forms a large part" and a significant element of his career.[245] E. P. Thompson describes the older Coleridge as "withdrawn" to the "ramparts of disenchantment,"[246] but Coleridge's continued high public profile and creative output at this time were substantial. The security and comfort offered by his prolonged stay in Highgate from 1816 until his death in 1834 allowed him to consolidate his ideas and philosophies. The previous chapter stressed the importance of

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[242] Unless stated otherwise, all references to Coleridge poems in this chapter are taken from: *The Collected Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge: Volume 16, Poetical Works I, Poems (Reading Text): Part 2*, ed. J. C. C. Mays (Princeton University Press, 2001). For simplicity, in the first instance, a reference to a poem includes the page number followed by the line number; thereinafter, only the line number will be used.
[2] John Keats to Benjamin Robert Haydon. March 21, 1818. *The Letters of John Keats, 1814-1821*, Volume One. ed. Hyder Edward Rollins. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1958) 251-52.
[244] J. C. C. Mays. "The Later Poetry," in *The Cambridge Companion to Coleridge*. ed. Lucy Newlyn (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002) 98-99.
[245] Ibid. 99.
[246] E. P. Thompson. *The Making of the English Working Class* [1963] (London: Penguin, 2013) 915.

understanding the West Country years as a period of escapism and a yearning for simplicity, but in Highgate, I will demonstrate that this period represents a desire for certainty and prosperity.

By "certainty", I do not mean to suggest that Coleridge sought an Enlightenment notion of logic to achieve assurance and thereby remove doubt. Instead, I am interested in Coleridge's thoughts on an "absolute truth" that is "capable of communicating to other positions a certainty, which it has not itself borrowed." (*CW* 7.I, 268) Truth becomes undoubtable because it is "a truth self-grounded, unconditional and known by its own light." (*CW* 7.I, 268) Truth, he explains, "is correlative to being. Knowledge without a correspondent reality is no knowledge; if we know, there must be somewhat known by us. To know is in its very essence a verb active." (*CW* 7.I, 264) Inspired by Schelling's works, Coleridge encourages an active engagement with the world, where truth is "self-grounded," like a seed or a flower that can be revealed and understood through participation and cultivation. As Jane Bennett argues, "the impersonal life that surrounds and infuses us, will generate a more subtle awareness of the complicated web of dissonant connections between bodies, and will enable wiser interventions into that ecology."[247] For Coleridge, "the trinity, the Redemption, the assumption of Humanity by the Godhead remain truth" (*Notebooks* 2, 2640); therefore, this web of connections reveals that human and non-human entities are essential for the discovery of truth with religion at its heart.

In presenting his increasingly conservative and orthodox Christian views in the pursuit of truth, I do not intend to analyse Coleridge's political leanings concerning conservatism.[248] Instead, I am interested in how the later Coleridge represents a move away from earlier liberal, evangelical thoughts, where this conservatism with a lowercase "c" expresses a more traditionalist view and noticeable changes to his theological and social position. As a result, I want to not only advocate the importance of reassessing the significance of Coleridge's later writing but also illustrate how an orthodox Christian outlook informs these works. From this position, he seeks to address matters concerning society, religion, and politics more directly and confidently.[249] This chapter analyses three elements of Coleridge's later output to demonstrate such an argument. The first concerns biographical

[247] Bennett. *Vibrant Matter*. 4.
[248] Andy Hamilton provides a detailed look at the political and philosophical Conservative and Liberal elements of Coleridge's writing. "Coleridge and Conservatism," in *Coleridge and Contemplation*. ed. Peter Cheyne (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017) 143-70.
[249] Hopkins would write about his disapproval of Coleridge's earlier radicalism, noting: "…the specious Liberal stuff that crazed Shelley and indeed, in their youth, Wordsworth and Coleridge" (*LIII* 386), therefore suggesting that he regards Coleridge's later years as more conservative and orthodox.

matters and self-reflection through correspondence and life writing, whilst the second relates to the formation and creation of his seminal theological text *On the Constitution of the Church and State* (1829) and its embodiment of High Church ideology. The third section concludes the examination of Coleridge by highlighting and studying selected poetic pieces written during the Highgate years, which emphasise a noticeable shift in attitude concerning religion and the portrayal of the natural world.

Mays contends with how to define Coleridge's "later poetry" when some have suggested that this period began as early as 1799/1800. As Mays argues, such a conclusion is fraught with several difficulties because "Coleridge was less than thirty years old and less than half-way through his life…"[250] This chapter's primary focus is on the works produced towards the end of Coleridge's life, during his final and longest residency as a houseguest of the Gillman family from 1816 until his death in 1834, which I believe is more than sufficient to constitute what can be called the later period.[251] As Fulford notes, the later years of Wordsworth, Southey, and Coleridge suffered from the same problem when their writing was eclipsed by "the decade of the second generation Romantics."[252] Fulford argues that "it leaves unexamined the three poets' rise to popularity and fame in the 1830s and 1840s. It causes us to neglect over half of their writings and to overlook several profound poems that ponder, from their particular historical situations, universal human concerns."[253] Similarly, Mays is critical of Coleridge's biographical narrative, which suggests a decline after the success of his early years. Mays argues that "Coleridge's later poetry is often misunderstood as a poetry of and about personal failure."[254] Following Fulford and Mays' work, I address and expand upon the "historical situations" and "universal human concerns" in my exploration of later Coleridge.

[250] Mays. "The Later Poetry," 89-90.
[251] Some of the critical scholarships that focus on this period, and which the chapter expands upon, include Lucy Watson's *Coleridge at Highgate* (1925), Morton D. Paley's *Coleridge's Later Poetry* (2000), Tim Fulford's *The Late Poetry of the Lake Poets* (2013), and Greg Ellermann's articles "Late Coleridge and the Life of Idealism," *Studies in Romanticism*, Volume 54, No. 1 (Spring 2015): 33-55 amongst others. These texts attempt to reclaim much of Coleridge's later life and works that are seldom studied or anthologised compared to his earlier writing career.
[252] Fulford. *The Late Poetry of the Lake Poets*. 2.
[253] Ibid. 2.
[254] Mays. "The Later Poetry," 90.

**Documenting the self: Highgate and the biographical Coleridge**

Peter Kitson draws attention to Coleridge's evolution from "the chestnut-haired radical Unitarian political activist [to] the silver-haired conservative Trinitarian."[255] Kitson's comment highlights the physical changes to Coleridge as well as the movements in his philosophical and theological beliefs. As argued in the previous chapter, Coleridge's religious beliefs and affiliations were notoriously flexible and uncertain.[256] The 1790s was the period of Coleridge as the "radical Unitarian political activist,"[257] where the previous chapter argued for a renewed understanding of the religious complexities noting how Coleridge's position as a Unitarian borrowed from High and Low Church sources. The West Country Coleridge was seemingly liberal-leaning, but this changed in 1805 when Coleridge distanced himself from his earlier Unitarian values, declaring that: "No Christ, No God […] No Trinity, no God." (*CN* II, 2448) Unitarianism was now considered "Idolatry" (*CN* II, 2448), representing a return towards an Anglican Trinitarian belief.[258] Whilst 1805 contained a significant statement on theological belief, the move back to Church of England values can be seen as a much more gradual process. Luke Savin Herrick Wright argues that a hard-line Anglican Coleridge did not occur until the Lancaster-Bell debate in 1816.[259] This would suggest that Coleridge's arrival in Highgate coincided with his intellectual and theological refinement into "the silver-haired conservative Trinitarian", as Kitson describes him.[260] Therefore, the Highgate Coleridge was noticeably different from the preceding decades, reflected in his prolonged settled status and shift towards a conservative, orthodox version of Anglicanism. The religious concentration of this period and the resultant publications it influenced will be studied later in this chapter.

The offer of stability and comfortable living in Highgate proved to be a welcomed factor, ending decades of upheaval and short-term residencies. Starting in 1816, for almost two decades, Coleridge lived in Highgate due to the generosity of Doctor James Gillman,[261] who had agreed to assist him in battling his opium addiction with a view also to increasing his creative productivity. As Alexander Gillman writes in his history of the family, it was in

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[255] Peter Kitson. "Coleridge, the French Revolution and the Ancient Mariner: A Reassessment," *The Coleridge Bulletin*, New Series No. 7 (Spring 1996): 31.
[256] See my discussion from page 45-53.
[257] Kitson. "Coleridge, the French Revolution and the Ancient Mariner," 31.
[258] See my later point on this transformation on pages 77-78.
[259] Wright. *Samuel Taylor Coleridge and the Anglican Church*. 54.
[260] Kitson. "Coleridge, the French Revolution and the Ancient Mariner," 31.
[261] There were, in fact, two properties that Coleridge lived in with the Gillmans during his Highgate years: the first was Moreton House on South Grove from 1816-23, and the second came when the family moved the short distance to number 3, The Grove.

Highgate that: "the storm-tossed man at last found peace."[262] This draws similarities between Coleridge and the Ancient Mariner as figures tragically caught up in forces that had spun out of their control, and where there was little stability in Coleridge's life since leaving the West Country. Similarly to the Ancient Mariner, the wandering Coleridge was battling several personal demons and grief,[263] but unlike the Mariner, Coleridge seemingly does find peace in Highgate, as Gillman claims.

Richard Holmes argues that the "growing sense of security at Highgate" proved highly beneficial to Coleridge and resulted in a transformation that "could never have taken place without the support of the Gillmans."[264] Crucial for Coleridge's health and career, it was here that "His opium habit was no longer overwhelming; he had a stable, happy, home; [and] he was reconciled with Wordsworth."[265] As a result, Coleridge's writing goes through an "extraordinary second-birth" in which there is a new drive to be "consistent or productive in bringing finished work into print."[266] Unsurprisingly, Highgate forms one of the approximately six periods that Holmes refers to as the "intense poetic activity during his [Coleridge's] lifetime: in 1778-9 in the Quantocks; in 1801-2 in the Lake District; in 1804-5 in the Mediterranean; in 1807-11 in London; when he first moved to Highgate in 1816-17, and again after 1825."[267] The darker (to use Holmes' description) or more mature Coleridge of these later years represents a period of development, particularly in the vibrancy of his renewed poetic output. As Holmes acknowledges, the poems of this later period "tend to be shorter [but] are also denser in texture and allusion,"[268] which suggests that these poems still yield significant merits, as explored later in this chapter. E. P. Thompson claims that these later years were part of a "Tory paternalism" following the "recoil from the Enlightenment"[269] by Coleridge and his contemporaries. Coleridge, however, recoils from being closely connected to political parties, but I would agree that a move towards orthodoxy and conservatism, with a lowercase "c", is the crucial characteristic of later Coleridge.

From 1816 onwards, the Highgate years were productive; as Duncan Wu argues, Gillman's loving care contributed to a renewed writing energy and purpose that "prolonged

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[262] Alexander Gillman. *The Gillmans of Highgate: with letters from Samuel Taylor Coleridge. & illustrated with views and portraits, being a chapter from the History of the Gillman family* (London: Elliot Stock, 1895) 3.
[263] These include the death of his infant son Berkeley in 1799, the breakdown of his marriage to Sara Fricker, his growing infatuation and unrequited love with Sara Hutchinson and the later breaking off contact with her, and a quarrel with his good friend Wordsworth in 1810.
[264] Richard Holmes. *Coleridge: Darker Reflections* (London: Flamingo, 1999) 432.
[265] Fulford. *The Late Poetry of the Lake Poets*. 153.
[266] Holmes. *Coleridge: Darker Reflections*. 432.
[267] Richard Holmes. "Introduction," in *Coleridge: Selected Poetry* (London: Penguin, 1996) xvi.
[268] Ibid. xvi.
[269] Thompson. *The Making of the English Working Class*. 378.

his life."[270] Coleridge's health and well-being were a matter of concern by the time Gillman offered to support him in 1816, suggesting a level of great concern about mortality that had hung over him for several years. Neil Vickers notes how Coleridge experienced a recurrence of rheumatic fever in 1800, which saw "those pains inaugurated [in] a pattern which would be repeated again and again."[271] This incident led him to place "himself under the care of a surgeon-apothecary," although, as Vickers notes, the diagnosis of Coleridge's illness "seems to have been his own."[272] His involvement with Gillman continued a long period of medical discomfort and concern, but this friendship bore particular creative and intellectual promise.

Charles Lamb was concerned about Coleridge's seclusion in Highgate, fearing that he was kept as a prisoner. He wrote to Wordsworth in September 1816: "I made one attempt to visit him (a morning call) at Highgate, but there was something in him or his Apothecary which I found so unattractively – repulsing – from any temptation to call again, that I stay away as naturally as a Lover visits."[273] The atmosphere described by Lamb was disputed by Lucy Watson, who states that "an afternoon and evening in each week (Thursdays) were devoted to the reception of Coleridge's friends, though indeed they were welcome at all times."[274] Lamb voiced further concerns to Wordsworth, writing:

> [Coleridge] is at present under the medical care of a Mr. Gilman [sic] (Killman?) a Highgate Apothecary, where he plays at leaving off Laud-m. I think his essentials not touched: he is very bad, but then he wonderfully picks up another day, and his face when he repeats his verses hath its ancient glory, an Archangel a little damaged...[275]

There is an apparent concern in Lamb's letter, and his misspelling of Gillman's name as "Killman" is seemingly mocking but also alludes to a fear of the unresolved motives of the family. Lamb's reference to Gillman as "Mr" rather than "Doctor" downplays Gillman's medical qualifications and experience—the fear being that the doctor may well kill Coleridge. Nonetheless, Watson notes that "Lamb and his sister Mary were frequent guests" of Coleridge.[276]

The claims were unfounded, although based on genuine concern about Coleridge from some of his closest and oldest friends. Coleridge's recovery comforted those who lacked the

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[270] Duncan Wu. *Romanticism: An Anthology.* 3rd ed. (London: Blackwell, 2007) 597.
[271] Neil Vickers. *Coleridge and the Doctors: 1795-1806* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004) 80.
[272] Ibid. 81.
[273] Charles Lamb to William Wordsworth, 23rd September 1816 in *The Letters of Charles and Mary Anne Lamb, Volume 3, 1809-1917.* ed. Edwin W. Marrs, Jr (Ithaca, USA: Cornell University Press, 1978) 225.
[274] Lucy. E. Watson. *Coleridge at Highgate* (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1925) 83.
[275] Charles Lamb to William Wordsworth, 26th April 1816 in *The Letters of Charles and Mary Anne Lamb, Volume 3, 1809-1917.* 215.
[276] Watson. *Coleridge at Highgate*. 83.

suspicions of Lamb, with Thomas Poole writing, "I think no circumstances should induce you to leave your *present residence*. […] You are happy in your friends near you. Mr Gillman is an invaluable treasure. He gives you himself; and I respect, I had almost said revere, him for it..."[277] The truth was that Coleridge was extremely at ease with the Gillmans, writing in a letter to William Worship in 1826 about his accommodation, declaring: "I am specially delighted with my room." (*CL* VI, 659) The Gillmans worked hard to make Coleridge contented and comfortable, and once they moved from Moreton House to No. 3, The Grove, they "rebuilt for their honoured guest his attic room, transforming its original sloping ceiling (traces of which are still visible), into rectangular dignity."[278] This comment by Watson is significant because it supports the claim by the Gillman family and by Coleridge himself that everything was done to ensure that the ageing poet had the best environment to live, work, and entertain.

The space created for Coleridge was one that he could claim for his own, and according to Watson, it was Coleridge himself who had "requested his hosts to let his books and belongings be moved to this quaint upper chamber", having previously been offered a room on the floor below.[279] The move to the highest habitable part of the house also allowed him to see the "well-known view over Caen Wood and the adjacent valley,"[280] demonstrating a continued attachment to the natural environment. It may not have been the hills of the Quantocks or the Lake District, but it was a happy medium that allowed Coleridge to remain connected to nature. In another letter to William Worship, Coleridge wrote: "Our new home is and looks comely, and of an imposing respectability; the views from the garden-side are substitutes for Cumberland […] Mr Gillman has shown much taste in smart-smoothing and re-creating the garden..." (*CL* V, 313) It was a view and location that Coleridge came to adore and describe in equally poetic terms, further illustrating the "paradisiacal Loveliness of the Walks here about- above all, of Caen Wood." (*CL* IV, 942). In June 1817 Henry Crabb Robinson was invited to visit, with Coleridge stating that there was the option to either "walk or to be driven in Mr Gillman's Gig to Caen Wood & it's delicious Groves and Alleys- one [of] the finest in England, a grand Cathedral Aisle of *giant* Lime-trees, Pope's favorite [sic] Composition Walk." (*CL* IV, 739)

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[277] Mrs Henry Sandford. *Thomas Poole and His Friends*. Volume 2 (London: Macmillan, 1888) 257.
[278] Watson. *Coleridge at Highgate*. 51.
[279] Ibid. 51.
[280] Ibid. 51.

In the fragment entitled 'Lines on a Willow Reflected in the Water, at Caen Wood' (*CW* 16.II.1, 1347), Coleridge uses the "paradisiacal Loveliness of the Walks" (*CL* IV, 942) in Highgate to contemplate the fragility of life. He compares the tree's reflection to a "poor shadow of a higher self" (l.3), which fails to uphold the beauty of the willow. The flatness of the reflection and how the tree "soars [then] descends" (l.4) is seen to "mock heaven" (l.4). In doing so, Coleridge considers whether such a scene is "an emblem of this mortal life" (l.2), where the reflection of man fails to echo the image of a higher power, that of God. James D. Boulger's assessment of later Coleridge is one of "Pessimism [that] replaced his earlier optimism about Nature, which became more and more an alien object…"[281] In 'Lines on a Willow Reflected in the Water', a previously idyllic setting is shown to begin in failing to spark poetic passion. Despite this, Coleridge's continued interaction and fascination with the natural world, supplemented by visits to Hampstead Heath and Caen Wood, was less about nature's inadequacies and more about man's inadequacies. The failure of man, created in God's image, has not obtained the perfection of shadowing "a higher self" (l.3) and, therefore, pales in comparison.

In Highgate, Coleridge was regularly visited by guests who made the pilgrimage to converse and hear his stories, where he held "informal classes in philosophy and talk[ed] at soirées."[282] He would effectively hold court over those who had a particular interest in his work, where he was an essential person to visit and relished the high pedestal many placed him on. When Ralph Waldo Emerson visited the United Kingdom, he was eager to meet the co-authors of *Lyrical Ballads* and arrived in Highgate to meet with Coleridge in early August 1833. Emerson describes the cramped and overfilled attic space where Coleridge resided, noting how, like the wedding guests from 'The Ancient Mariner', he was subjected to a one-sided conversation led purely by Coleridge. Emerson was unflattering in his assessment of Coleridge and bluntly wrote that he "was old and preoccupied, and could not bend to a new companion and think with him."[283] A few weeks later, Emerson's visit to see Wordsworth involved similar rudeness, although he notes that Wordsworth "honoured himself by his simple adherence to truth, and was very willing not to shine."[284] On the other hand, Coleridge wanted to shine and be heard, with the conversation weighted towards Coleridge's constant talking.

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[281] James D. Boulger. *Coleridge as Religious Thinker* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1961) 198.
[282] Fulford. *The Late Poetry of the Lake Poets.* 153.
[283] Ralph Waldo Emerson. *The Annotated Emerson*. ed. David Mikics (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2012) 376.
[284] Ibid. 381.

In 1819, Coleridge and John Keats encountered each other on Hampstead Heath. Keats describes the two-mile walk, commenting:

> I walked with him at his alderman-after-dinner pace for near two miles I suppose. In those two Miles he broached a thousand things […] Nightingales - poetry- on poetical sensation- metaphysics- different genera and species of dreams- nightmares- a dream accompanied by a sense of touch- single and double touch- a dream related- first and second consciousness- the difference explained between will and volition- so many metaphysicians from a want of smoking- the second consciousness- monsters- the kraken- mermaids- Southey believes in them- Southey's belief too much diluted- a ghost story […] He was civil enough to ask me to call on him at Highgate.[285]

The encounter appears to have been positive, although short-lived and within two years of the encounter, Keats would be dead.[286] The Anglo-American poet Thom Gunn would write about the encounter where the "cheerful youth [who] joined Coleridge on his walk" is described as "Listening respectfully to the talk talk talk…"[287] Gunn's image is evocative of the relationship between teacher and student, with the young Keats intently drawing on Coleridge's wise words of wisdom. The passive nature of Keats reflects the learned position of the Highgate Coleridge and his role as the incessant orator, emphasising his transformation where, as Alan Vardy notes, "Coleridge the walker and Coleridge the talker merged into one."[288] For Emerson, Coleridge embodied selfishness as a talker who appeared to enjoy being the centre of attention, preferring the role of the speaker rather than the listener. Coleridge the thinker and Coleridge the poet can be regarded as two wildly different personas, yet both demonstrate a knowledgeable individual who was widely read and educated.

To return to the nineteenth-century, Emerson was dismissive of the Coleridge he encountered in Highgate in 1833, the sentiment being that to meet such a distinguished poet was anti-climactic and disappointing, stating how "Almost nobody in Highgate knew his name […] at last a porter wished to know if I meant an elderly gentleman with white hair?

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[285] John Keats to George and Georgiana Keats, in *The Letters of John Keats, 1814-1821*, Volume Two. 88-89.
[286] Coleridge recorded his own thoughts on the meeting some time later in 1832, writing: "A loose, not well dressed youth, met Mr Green and me in Mansfield Lane—Green knew him and spoke. It was Keats—he was introduced to me, and stayed a minute or so—after he had gone a little, he came back, and said, "Let me carry away the memory, Coleridge, of having pressed your hand." There is death in his hand said I to Green when he was gone. Yet this was before the consumption showed itself." (*CW* 14.1, 325)
See also: Chris Murray. "Death in his hand": Theories of Apparitions in Coleridge, Ferriar, and Keats," *Nineteenth-Century Literature*. Volume 78, Issue 3. (December 2023): 197-210.
[287] Thom Gunn. "Keats at Highgate" in *The Passages of Joy* (1982) in *Collected Poems* (London: Faber and Faber, 1994) 350.
[288] Alan Vardy. "Coleridge the Walker," in *The New Cambridge Companion to Coleridge*. ed. Tim Fulford (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2023) 142.

'Yes, the same'- Why he lives with Mr Gillman. Ah yes that is he."[289] Emerson portrays Coleridge as an isolated and hermit-like figure unknown by the locals, and indeed, Coleridge was becoming less mobile in his later years. Emerson recognised his talkative nature as self-indulgent and difficult for unprepared individuals.[290] Indeed, by the time Emerson visited, Coleridge's mobility and health issues had confounded any hope of physical activity, as evidenced by the encounter with Keats, but that did not prevent him from being able to exercise his mind and oratorical skills.

Furthermore, Watson comments on Coleridge's local popularity, noting how during "his walks around Highgate, the poet was often followed by children, to whom he was a familiar and welcome figure. They would surround him […] and pull at his coat-tails, well knowing that sweets would be forthcoming."[291] Additionally, there were encounters with his neighbours, including Hyman Hurwitz, who would go on to collaborate with Coleridge, as discussed later in this chapter. Although Emerson travelled thousands of miles, many British citizens also made the pilgrimage to Highgate for an audience and to hear his thoughts and wisdom.[292] These included "Leslie the Royal Academician, Judge Talfourd, Basil Montagu, The Right Hon. J. Hookham Frere, Professor Joseph Henry Green, Archdeacon Julius Hare, his friend Sterling, Frederic Denison Maurice, Edward Irving" and numerous others.[293] Coleridge was a focal point in Highgate, just as he had been central to West Country Romanticism, the difference being that this later Coleridge was a more learned figure rather than a solely creative one.

Unlike Emerson's negative experience, meetings with Coleridge were significant moments for many others where "he aimed to allow his intimate conversation to inspire."[294] Fulford notes that a "number of the young men who came to hear Coleridge subsequently made ideas developed from him central to the reform of education and of the church in the Victorian era."[295] The Highgate Coleridge remained an influential and significant figure for

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[289] Ralph Waldo Emerson. *The Journals and Miscellaneous Notebooks of Ralph Waldo Emerson*. Volume IV, 1832-1834. ed. Alfred R. Ferguson (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1964) 411-12.
[290] Emerson provides a lengthy account of the meeting and notes how Coleridge appears nonchalant in avoiding specific questions and discussions- Emerson. *The Journals and Miscellaneous Notebooks. Volume IV.* 407-8, 409-12.
[291] Watson. *Coleridge at Highgate*. 53.
[292] One visitor was Gabriel Rossetti, the father of Christina Rossetti, who had fled from Naples and was penniless and unable to speak English. He was well received by Coleridge, who wrote a letter of recommendation for him. See. Holmes. *Coleridge: Darker Reflections*. 544.
[293] Watson. *Coleridge at Highgate*. 83-84.
[294] Fulford. *The Late Poetry of the Lake Poets*. 153.
[295] Ibid. 153.

subsequent generations. He had long believed in the duality of the writer and that "no man was ever yet a great poet, without at the same time being a profound philosopher." (*CW* 7.II, 25-26) I argue that in this period, Coleridge became the "profound philosopher" and that his ever-maturing thinking and writing were a central source of inspiration. The pilgrimages to Highgate to visit Coleridge do not suggest a poet in decline; instead, they present a figure who has undergone a renaissance. This reverence of his intellectual brilliance, although still called into question at times,[296] suggests something to be championed by younger generations. The stability and consistency offered by the Highgate residency were central to maintaining and growing Coleridge's popularity and ensuring his literary and theological legacy.

**Documenting Orthodoxy: Coleridge's *On the Constitution of the Church and State* (1829)**

The fate of the radical writer and journalist John Thelwall gave Coleridge an idea of what could happen to subversive thinkers in England. In 1794, Thelwall was imprisoned for six months and tried for high treason after giving lectures to protest against the arrest of other political activists.[297] At the time, Great Britain was still reeling from its loss in the American Revolution, while the French Revolution caused fear closer to home. Thelwall, on his eventual release, was implicated by parliament's approval of the Seditious Meeting Act 1795 and the Treason Act 1795 (known collectively as the Gagging Acts), which were a direct result of his actions.[298] The acts made the process of protesting and speaking out against the government and the establishment a highly dangerous and potentially life-threatening act. As John Barrell highlights, the definition of rebellious behaviour and free thinking was distorted by those in power, meaning radicals believed "it was the result of a deliberate conspiracy."[299] Attempts to dampen the rise of radical thinkers included the arrest and trials of Thelwall, Thomas Hardy (Founder of the London Corresponding Society), and the politician and clergyman John Horne Tooke in 1794, among others, which highlighted the extent to which

[296] An example of the poor reception of Coleridge's later works, such as 'Christabel' and 'Sibylline Leaves', is presented by Fulford in *The Late Poetry of the Lake Poets*. 153-55.
[297] See: E. P. Thompson. "Hunting the Jacobin Fox," *Past & Present*, no. 142 (1994): 94-140, and Judith Thompson. *John Thelwall in the Wordsworth Circle: The Silenced Partner* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012).
[298] Steve Poole. *John Thelwall: Radical Romantic and Acquitted Felon*. (London: Routledge, 2009) xiv.
[299] John Barrell. *Imagining the King's Death: Figurative Treason, Fantasies of Regicide, 1793-1796* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000) 3.

the government would try to prosecute such actions.[300] Coleridge remarked in his 1795 Lectures that: "The first of these Bills is an attempt to assassinate the Liberty of the Press: the second, to smoother the Liberty of Speech." (*CW* 1, 286) He would go on to discuss how the disenfranchised and poverty-stricken were incensed by "the dictate of hunger, the present unjust, unnecessary and calamitous War - a War that brought dearth, and threatens slavery!" (*CW* 1, 287) For Coleridge, the restrictions and limitations of speech and politics were a "misplaced indignation" (*CW* 1, 287) that unfairly targets the oppressed.

Although Coleridge described Thelwall as "intrepid, eloquent, and honest; perhaps the only acting democrat that is honest" (*CL* I, 339), it was also apparent that their differing views on religion were becoming increasingly incompatible. According to Coleridge, Thelwall's letters "demand my friendship & deserve my esteem", yet he notes that the letters also "attacked my supposed *Delusions*." (*CL* I, 212) Coleridge continued to defend his Christian faith in the face of criticism from Thelwall. By November 1796, Coleridge concludes that the friendship had become difficult and fraught, writing to Thelwall:

> … we run on the same ground, but we drive different Horses. I am daily more and more a religionist—you, of course, more and more otherwise. I am sorry for the difference, simply because it impoverishes our sympathies…
>
> (*CL* I, 253)

The friendship was amicable, but their differences increasingly began to rise to the forefront. Coleridge's talk of "sympathies" highlights a thinly veiled comment on failing to fully understand each other's allegiances. Notwithstanding their amicable beginnings, the divergences between them eventually became the most formidable challenge to surmount. Their different approaches and attitudes to religion and politics lead to the gradual breakdown of their relationship, and as such, communication becomes sparse between the two.

When Coleridge wrote: "No Christ, No God! […] No Trinity, no God" (*Notebooks* II, 2448) in 1805, he had significantly moved on from his former Christian beliefs.[301] The issue related to how God was represented and, in Coleridge's opinion, to underestimate the role of Christ is also to minimise the role and power of God. Christ and God are part of the same Trinitarian doctrine and cannot be separated. It becomes clear that Coleridge's appeal and belief in Unitarianism begins to waver, and he later states that "Unitarianism in all its forms

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[300] Thompson. *The Making of the English Working Class*. 19-27; and Thompson. "Hunting the Jacobin Fox," 94.

[301] This is in notable contrast to Coleridge's earlier Unitarian leanings, see my previous analysis in Chapter One on pages 45-53.

is idolatry." (*Notebooks* II, 2448) That bold statement on Coleridge's part, particularly as the concept of idol worship in the established and free Protestant churches is condemned.[302] Jeffrey Barbeau rightly argues that Coleridge's return to Trinitarianism was part of "an increasing need for embodied participation, a strong sense of the power of evil and an unrelenting distrust of the sinful weakness of his character..."[303] Coleridge's statement is, therefore, not an outright rejection of religious beliefs or convictions but is, I would argue, a recalibration of his Christian faith. The active participation of the sacraments represents a renewed connection with High Church beliefs, which offered a greater sense of atonement and unity with God.

The publication of Coleridge's political and religious treatise entitled *On the Constitution of the Church and State, according to the Idea of Each* (1829)[304] demonstrates the onward progression and expression of his theological position to one that was more orthodox and conservative. By the nineteenth-century, as Jonathan Bate notes, "radical" became "a synonym for 'Jacobinical', used (pejoratively) to denote an English supporter of the French Revolution."[305] The term's association, particularly with revolution, would, in turn, become troubling for men like Coleridge as the events in France became more aligned with atheism and the removal of a state church.[306] In *The Statesman's Manual; or the Bible the best Guide to Political Skill and Foresight. A Lay Sermon, addressed to the Higher Classes of Society* (1816),[307] Coleridge criticised Jacobinism, writing that it "betrays its mixt [sic] parentage and nature" through "brute passions and physical force of the multitude" (*CW* 6, 64). He wishes to distance himself from this violence and secularisation, attempting instead to explain and rationalise the importance of a mutual relationship between faith and politics in society.

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[302] The Ten Commandments condemn idol worship: "You shall have no other gods before me." Furthermore, the Bible warns against idolatry worship on several occasions. For example, in Matthew 4:10, "Then saith Jesus unto him, Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve." Furthermore, *Leviticus* 26:1 says, "Ye shall make you no idols nor graven image, neither rear you up a standing image, neither shall ye set up *any* image of stone in your land, to bow down unto it: for I *am* the Lord your God."

[303] Jeffrey Barbeau. "Religious Coleridge," in *The New Cambridge Companion to Coleridge*. ed. Tim Fulford (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2022) 186.

[304] Hereinafter referred to as *Church and State*

[305] Jonathan Bate. *Radical Wordsworth: The Poet Who Changed the World.* (London: William Collins, 2020) xxi.

[306] For more on Romanticism, the French Revolution, and Napoleon, see: Simon Bainbridge. *Napoleon and English Romanticism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006); Jeffrey N. Cox. *Romanticism in the Shadow of War: Literary Culture in the Napoleonic War Years* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014).

[307] Hereinafter referred to as *The Statesman's Manual.*

*The Statesman's Manual* also addressed the individuals who he believes have "ampler means entrusted to you by God's providence." (*CW* 6, 7) This was followed by a defence of reason and imagination and the desire for "a more extensive study and a wider use of his [God's] revealed will and word." (*CW* 6, 7) Ian Balfour notes that *The Statesman's Manual* was "scarcely read and barely understood in its own time" yet was "both marginal and central in Coleridge's corpus."[308] An anonymous review was critical of Coleridge's religious leanings, going as far as to accuse him of papist sympathies and suggesting that Coleridge "has not made up his own mind on any of the subjects of which he professes to treat."[309] This criticism may have influenced Coleridge to write his other political and religious treatise *Church and State*. John Colmer describes it as the "only one of his works which achieved anything like a popular success."[310] The connection with Catholic Emancipation, a process of undoing centuries of restrictions towards Roman Catholics and non-Anglicans, was crucial to *Church and State* because it allowed Coleridge to further reflect on the changing relationship between the nation, government, and the church.[311] Julius Charles Hare wrote that *Church and State* was "a kind of apology" for Catholic Emancipation,[312] although I would argue that the issue was much more complicated than that.

The passing of the Corporation Act of 1663 and the Test Act of 1673 had significantly hindered non-Anglicans from holding public office (such as members of Parliament) and owning property, as well as restricting Oxford and Cambridge universities to practising communicant Anglicans. This created a gulf that separated the legal and social recognition of Anglicans and Roman Catholics. Catholics were prevented from holding positions of influence or significance, which meant that they could not have a voice on important matters concerning the state.[313] In 1829, the Roman Catholic Relief Act was passed under the Duke of Wellington's Tory government, removing most of the remaining restrictions on Roman

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[308] Ian Balfour. *The Rhetoric of Romantic Prophecy* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2002) 251.
[309] "Article VIII: The Statesman's Manual; Or the Bible the Best Guide to Political Skill and Foresight: A Lay-Sermon, addressed to the Higher Classes of Society. With an Appendix. By S.T. Coleridge, Esq. London, Gale and Fenner, 1816," *The Edinburgh Review*, Volume 27, (September to December 1816): 446
[310] John Colmer. *Coleridge: Critic of Society*. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1959) 165.
[311] A revised *Church and* State was published in 1830 and contained an additional piece of writing entitled "Aids to a Right Appreciation of the Bill Admitting Catholics to Sit in Both House of Parliament"- *CW* 10, 147-61.
[312] Julius Charles Hare. *The Contest with Rome* (London: John W. Parker, 1852) 246.
[313] The laws that gradually paved the way for the disassembly of restrictions for Roman Catholics included the Papists Act of 1778, the Roman Catholic Relief Act of 1791, the Roman Catholic Relief Act of Ireland 1793, the Roman Catholic Relief Act of 1813, and the Sacramental Test Act 1828.

Catholics in Great Britain and Ireland.[314] The Acts of Union of 1800 had seen the merger of the parliaments of Great Britain and Ireland, and as a result, the parliament based in Westminster had control over the lives and future of approximately an additional seven million people "of whom about five and a half million were Roman Catholics."[315] London's dominance over Ireland remained a contentious subject for nearly two centuries after, not least with the concerns that the Roman Catholic voice was not being heard with the repeal of earlier Test Acts acting as a gentle attempt to quash rebellious thoughts and Popish sympathies in Ireland.

A right-wing Anglican faction appeared in 1820s British politics known as "Ultra-Tories" who opposed Catholic Emancipation. As James J. Sack highlights, they were "staunch defenders of the Protestant constitution enshrined in 1689, they displayed a consummate hatred for their political opponents that often verged on obsession."[316] The result was an "orgy of hatred and recrimination" following the passing of the 1829 act, which was "viewed as the destruction of the protestant constitution"[317] and was instrumental in bringing down Wellington's government in 1830.[318] Coleridge could not be considered an "Ultra-Tory", but indeed, the publication of *Church and State* came at an extreme time of social and political change in the country, in which the religious tensions and prejudices of past centuries played an important role. The crucial element is how *Church and State* was the culmination of traditional, High Church thinking, representing one of the most profound insights into Coleridge himself, cementing his thoughts and beliefs that he held to be accurate and benefitting wider society.

James Engell argues that through *Church and State:* "Coleridge opposes the status quo. Yet, he conserves certain principles so that reforms do not sweep away what is valuable and enduring. The stance is not ideological but at once ideal, practical, and progressive."[319]

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[314] Some other restrictions still applied, but much of this was gradually dismantled or swept away in the intervening decades. Friction still occurred, such as the Tithe War in Ireland (1830-6), which saw various campaigns (both violent and non-violent) against the compulsory contribution of payment from the Roman Catholic majority towards the upkeep of the Anglican Church of Ireland.

[315] Owen Chadwick. *The Victorian Church: Part 1*. 2nd ed. (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1970) 8.

[316] James J. Sack. "Ultra tories (act. 1827–1834)." *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography.* May 24, 2008 <https://www.oxforddnb.com/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-96357> (Accessed April 25, 2023).

[317] Sack. "Ultra tories (act. 1827–1834)."

[318] Further political meddling in church matters was believed to have occurred following the passing of the Church Temporalities (Ireland) Act 1833, which reduced the number of bishops in the Church of Ireland from 22 to 12, along with other financial restructuring. Such a move had significant political repercussions and led to the establishment of the Anglican pressure group known as the Oxford Movement.

[319] James Engell. "Coleridge's *Church and State*: A Reassessment of Culture, Clerisy, Catholicism, the Humanities, and a National Trust," *The Wordsworth Circle*. Volume 52, Issue 1 (Winter 2021): 155.

As much as it appears progressive and socialist in its stance, *Church and State* embodies traditional Christian beliefs, where religion remains an essential part of society. He expresses concern in attempting to understand that "three-fourths of His Majesty's Irish subjects are Roman Catholics, with a papal priesthood." (*CW* 10, 150) He does, however, go on to "thank God also for the Constitutional and Ancestral Church *of* England (*CW* 10, 125), voicing a desire for a Christian Church that "is neither Anglican, Gallican, nor Roman, neither Latin nor Greek." (*CW* 10, 124) His primary concern is a Christian faith that transcends politics and allegiances to become one that is truly "universal" and as a result is "spiritually perfect." (*CW* 10, 125) Engell further explains, "Coleridge was not aligning himself with the Tories. He was willing to accept Catholic Emancipation under certain conditions when many "liberals" opposed it."[320] Coleridge's agreement with the principle of Catholic Emancipation does not necessarily support the motion; however, it recognises the importance of reform and the significance of a shared heritage and community. Colmer argues that *Church and State* reflect "Coleridge's mature thoughts on the British Constitution."[321] At the same time, Tom Duggett notes that it "represents the culmination of Coleridge's analysis of the social efficacy of ideas and of historical thinking,"[322] reflecting a deep and meaningful meditation on human existence and knowledge. *Church and State* is a text grounded in historical meaning and context, where this history is significant and "necessary"[323] to understanding the current predicament of the nation and religion.

In *Church and State,* Coleridge introduces his notion of the state's educational establishment, or "clerisy", comprised of "individuals dedicated to a moral and spiritual education open to the entire populace."[324] In *Aids to Reflection* (1825), Coleridge advocates the importance of those who "have dedicated their future lives to the cultivation of their Race, as Pastors, Preachers, Missionaries, or Instructors of Youth." (*CW* 9, 6) The "clerisy" of *Church and State* does not specify those ordained in faith or not but relates to "the learned of all names" (*CW* 10, 45) as the embodiment of good and justice. They are described, by Coleridge, as:

> … the learned of all denominations, the sages and professors of the law and jurisprudence, of medicine and physiology, of music, of military and civil architecture, of the physical sciences […] in short, all the so-called liberal arts and

[320] Engell. "Coleridge's *Church and State,*" 169.
[321] Colmer. *Coleridge: Critic of Society*. 153.
[322] Tom Duggett. "Coleridge and History," in *The New Cambridge Companion to Coleridge*. ed. Tim Fulford (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2023) 253.
[323] Ibid. 248.
[324] Engell. "Coleridge's *Church and State,*" 154.

> sciences, the possession and application of which constitute the civilisation of a country.
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> (*CW* 10, 46)

As Rosemary Ashton observes, "Coleridge seems to be including, quite simply, people like himself or Wordsworth or Southey, along with others outside the Church hierarchy such as scientists- the late Thomas Beddoes and Humphry Davy- and philanthropists like the Wedgwoods and Thomas Poole."[325] For Coleridge, a society cannot function on religion alone; it also requires the artists, poets, and scientists to provide the direction and purpose it needs to be civilised. These individuals were "to guard the treasures, of past civilization, and thus to bind the present with the past; to perfect, and add to the same" (*CW* 10, 43-44). Their role was the protection of tradition, whilst also acting as moral and cultural links to the future. They were to "diffuse through the whole community, and to every native entitled to its laws and rights, that quantity and quality of knowledge which was indispensable both for the understanding of those rights, and for the performance of the duties correspondent." (*CW* 10, 44) Andy Hamilton argues that such a process "aims not to civilize, but to cultivate, counteracting the dehumanizing materialism of political economy."[326] Culture and knowledge should not be an oppressive tool, but is instead essential for the spiritual and moral growth and development of society, as part of a move "towards material progression" as Hamilton puts it.[327]

The cultivation of society, much like the cultivation of the land, must be "guard[ed]" (*CW* 10, 43) to prevent decay and poor nourishment in terms of physical and symbolic attributes. It is no longer an aspiration of self-sufficiency and escapism, as seen in Nether Stowey, but instead reflects on a collective goodness that emphasises the importance of culture and knowledge as sources of great value. *The Statesman's Manual* critiques Jacobinism on the belief that it represented "the science of cosmopolitanism without country, of philanthropy without neighbourliness or consanguinity" (*CW* 6, 63), demonstrating disharmony between the public and the state. It does not tenderly cultivate society and fails to provide a community with a shared connection. *Church and State* encourages an adherence to tradition, such as the aristocracy, due to a "recognition of the historical condition of the state…"[328] It also advocates for the promotion of radical concepts such as further education and support for the lower classes. Both should act in support of each other and keep the other

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[325] Ashton. *The Life of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*. 363.
[326] Hamilton. "Coleridge and Conservatism," 155.
[327] Ibid. 154.
[328] Engell. "Coleridge's Church and State," 161.

in check to ensure a balance, with those in positions of power having a duty of care to "the flocks committed to their charge." (*CW* 10, 124) Coleridge views this balance of power as intrinsically linked with a National Church that fosters the public with a common purpose and the creation of a moral objective.

In a letter to his nephew, Coleridge wrote, "I have advanced, respecting the National Church, and it's Revenue – and the National Clerisy, as a co-ordinate of THE STATE, in the minor and antithetic sense of the term, State!" (*CL* VI, 884) The adherence to respecting the National Church remains central to his belief in the harmonious "co-ordination" of the country. He is concerned with the state of things, expressing trepidation on the poor condition of government matters and the failure to truly serve and add value to the lives of the public. The proposals put forward in *Church and State* can be seen as an alternative reworking of the concept of pantheism, which Coleridge referred to as the belief "that every Thing has a Life of it's [sic] own, & that we are all *one* Life." (*CL* II, 864) The vitality of existence, in this instance, relates not solely to "the active role of nonhuman materials in public life," as Jane Bennett refers to it,[329] but also to the moral and spiritual covenants and connections that bind society. These checks and balances are part of a political and theological economy that should support and enliven human existence.

Ashton lists *Church and State* as one of "six 'disquisitions' on faith, the Eucharist, the philosophy of prayer, the Hebrew Prophets, the Church, and the use of the scriptures" that Coleridge had proposed in 1825.[330] As with most of Coleridge's grand writing ambitions, many of the texts were never completed, although *Church and State* serves the function of the fifth text that Coleridge had planned. Although the process of Catholic Emancipation appears to be the catalyst for writing *Church and State,* the section devoted to addressing that decision is the smallest part of the text and is positioned at the very end, and as Ashton has highlighted, such a meditation on the Church had been at the forefront of Coleridge's mind for some time. Instead, *Church and State* embodies Coleridge's attempts to use church history and his understanding of society and politics to comprehend the necessity and importance of a state church. In *Aids to Reflection*, Coleridge wrote that "the CHRISTIAN FAITH (in which I include every article of belief and doctrine professed by the first Reformers in common) IS THE PERFECTION OF HUMAN INTELLIGENCE." (*CW* 9, 6) As a result, Coleridge's idea of a "National Church" (*CW* 10, 77) does not refer specifically to the Church of England but instead advocates an alliance of Christianity as a whole. It can

[329] Bennett. *Vibrant Matter*. 2.
[330] Ashton. *The Life of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*. 367.

be seen as a form of "trans-Protestant[ism]" where there was a "'clerisy' that would include paid Dissenting pastors"[331] as long as they remained faithful and adhered to the principles of checks and balances that ensure goodness, as Coleridge outlines.

Thomas Carlyle would criticise Coleridge's championing of "this dead English Church,"[332] but Coleridge was critical of the Protestant churches in England. *Church and State* also drew attention to "the mistaking of symbols and analogies for metaphors [which] has been a main occasion and support of the worst errors in Protestantism." (*CW* 10, 120) The church, according to Coleridge, was by no means perfect and was flawed in many respects; indeed, an entire chapter of *Church and State* is entitled "Regrets and Apprehensions." (*CW* 10, 61) Here, Coleridge addresses some of his concerns, particularly those relating to church schools where children were to be "taught as much as possible empirically" (*CW* 10, 62) without the development of the individual through "knowledge being derived from the Senses." (*CW* 10, 61) This criticism of the Anglican Church extended to the publication of *Table Talk (1835),* which offered harsher comments against the church when he argued that it was "positively cursed and rotted and blighted with- Prudence." (*CW* 14.1, 188). Further still, he believed the Church of Rome was "wiser" partly because it did not have the same failings as the Anglican Church, which was built on "Court and State instead of cultivating the People." (*CW* 14.1, 187-88) For all its criticism, Lucy Watson argues that *Church and State* was a testament "to the fullest extent [in] his pride of citizenship, and anxiety to teach others to know and act out the glory of Englishmen," which presented Coleridge "not only [as] a Philosopher and Poet [… but] also a keen politician."[333]

*Church and State* offered the opportunity "to re-examine the function of the Established Church […] [which] would reawaken a sense of social responsibility in the Whig and Tory parties."[334] Andy Hamilton notes how Coleridge's writing would go on to influence "J. S. Mill's liberalism, Disraeli's 'One Nation' Toryism, the Christian socialism of F. D. Maurice, and the work of Cardinal Newman, Charles Kingsley, Thomas and Matthew Arnold, and Bernard Bosanquet," as such creating a mix of interests between "both Tories and Liberals" who each claimed Coleridge as their own.[335] Ashton argues that we see the actual "liberal-conservative thinker he was" in texts such as *Church and State* and *Table*

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[331] Pamela Edwards. *The Statesman's Science: History, Nature, and Law in the Political Thought of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*. (United States: Columbia University Press, 2004) 30.
[332] Thomas Carlyle, "Life of John Sterling" in *Thomas Carlyle's Works,* Volume 4 (London: Chapman and Hall, 1885) 59.
[333] Watson. *Coleridge at Highgate*. 66.
[334] Colmer. *Coleridge: Critic of Society.* 165.
[335] Hamilton. "Coleridge and Conservatism," 144.

*Talk*.[336] Coleridge, however, avoided party allegiances, writing in a letter to Henry Nelson Coleridge that "I almost despair of the Conservative Party" (*CL* VI, 884). Therefore, I would avoid inferring political leanings, but his religious beliefs fell within traditional orthodoxy.

The change Coleridge advocated was undoubtedly part of a broader national move for improvement, although it does not outright call for the dismantling of traditional values and structures. Coleridge's orthodox, conservative views are not borne of political party inclinations but are instead related to the value of human experience and the importance of spiritual connection, which maintains a traditionalist framework. As Colmer argues, "his last political work […] would leave a permanent mark on the thought of the nineteenth century."[337] Despite the political tendencies, Sara Coleridge maintained that her father:

> …was no party man. He cared for no public men or ministry except so far as they furthered what he considered the best interests of the Country […] the pomps and vanities of this world were tasteful to him rather than otherwise. He had lived in a cottage himself and he loved cottages, and he took a friendly interest in the inhabitants of them. He thought himself a true friend to the people in upholding the Church which he considered the most popular institution in the country.[338]

*Church and State* was the culmination of a lifetime of experience and thinking, with Hare writing that "it was his last work, written in the fullest maturity of his judgement, the result of observations and meditations of his life."[339] Despite acknowledging the church's importance in public life, Church and State was unafraid to point out its flaws and shed light on areas that require improvement and flexibility to maintain the church's integrity. In doing so, it aimed to promote the harmonious growth and development of both the church and the nation.

The 1832 opening of St Michael's Church in Highgate, a short distance from Coleridge's home with the Gillmans, was significant as it marked the prominent growth of High Church and traditional Anglican beliefs in the area.[340] Coleridge attended the

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[336] Ashton. *The Life of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*. 392.
[337] Colmer. *Coleridge: Critic of Society*. 165.
[338] Sara Coleridge. *Memoir and Letters of Sara Coleridge*, Volume 1. ed. Edith Coleridge (London: Henry S. King, 1873) 130.
[339] Hare. *The Contest with Rome*. 246.
[340] As Max A. Robertson and Geoffrey Ellis explain, "the hamlet of Highgate was situated in three different parishes, the churches of each of which were at a considerable distance from it; [and] that the inhabitants of Highgate had no sittings in any of the three churches."- Max A. Robertson and Geoffrey Ellis. *The English Reports: Chancery*. Volume XXXVIII (London: Stevens & Sons, 1904) 42.
The chapel at Sir Roger Cholmeley's School, or Highgate School, served as the Chapel of Ease and burial ground. Formal separation of the school and the chapel would only occur when St Michael's Church opened in 1832, a short distance from where Coleridge had been living at The Grove, on the site of the seventeenth-century Ashurst House. The Church was described as: "a particularly large and ambitious church of the 1830s […] designed to seat 1500," of which a third of the accommodation was designated for the poor, while the remaining seats would have been rented, a common occurrence in English churches designed to raise an income. "St Michael's Church, Highgate," *Historic England*. <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1378767> (Accessed April 6, 2020) [ellipsis my own insertion].

consecration conducted by the Bishop of London, Charles Blomfield,[341] who is reported to have remarked to Coleridge, "You must have perceived, Mr. Coleridge, that the substance of my sermon was taken from your work on *Church and State*." (*CW* 10, lxv-lxvi fn.7)[342] Coleridge's daughter, Sara, was also surprised to find herself considered by Blomfield as "on equal terms with [John Henry] Newman and judges her to have overcome the great man's arguments."[343] The Bishop's comment on having read *Church and State* provides some impression of Coleridge's broader influence in theological circles, including high-ranking clergy such as the Bishop of London.[344] Coleridge had been complimentary of Blomfield's church policy, with Colmer noting how Coleridge "approved Blomfield's remarks on the religious education of the poor and the education and moral fitness of the clergy." (*CW* 10, lxv fn.7) That is not to suggest that Coleridge was entirely positive, with him later critical of "Blomfield's failure to distinguish between the Church of Christ and the National Church" (*CW* 10, lxv fn.7) to which, arguably, this distinction is one of the critical arguments in *Church and State*. It was undoubtedly a point of contention and concern, and this religious struggle was significant during the nineteenth-century.

**Coleridge and Hurwitz: A Literary Collaboration and Friendship**

In 1817, Coleridge embarked on a collaborative writing project with his Highgate neighbour, Hyman Hurwitz. In addition to being a local resident, Hurwitz was also the "gifted director of the private Hebrew Academy for Jews at Highgate."[345] It was Hurwitz's role as a poet and Hebrew scholar that saw him offered a post at the University of London (now University College London)[346], where he was the first professor of the Hebrew

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[341] In the second volume of his seminal biography of Coleridge entitled *Darker Reflections*, Richard Holmes comments on Coleridge arriving in Highgate in 1816 and visiting "Moreton House, situated close to the Parish Church of St Michael's with its tall spire" (pp.426-7). This, however, could not have been the view that Coleridge saw, as construction began on the church fourteen years later in 1830. At the time of Coleridge's 1816 arrival in Highgate, Ashurst House, a late seventeenth century home to a former Lord Mayor of London, was still in situ until its demolition in 1830.
See: "Church of St Michael," *Historic England*.
[342] See also: *CL* VI, 995n.
[343] Robin Schofield. *The Vocation of Sara Coleridge: Authorship and Religion* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018) 75.
[344] Blomfield himself had only been elected to the role of Bishop of London a year before the publication of *Church and State*.
[345] Holmes. *Darker Reflections*. 460.
[346] The University of London was the first non-religiously affiliated university in England but drew criticism from many, including the educator and Broad-Church Anglican Thomas Arnold, the father of the poet and critic Matthew Arnold, who referred to "The Gower Street College" as being "Anti-Christian."- Thomas Arnold. *Thomas Arnold on Education.* ed. T. W. Bamford (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970) 162.
There is a quotation attributed to Arnold that he referred to UCL as "the godless institution in Gower Street", but this appears to be a misquotation of his "Anti-Christian" comment. Arnold does refer to "Godless

language and the first Jewish person to hold an academic post in England.[347] Significantly, as Holmes explains, it was "Coleridge [who] was instrumental in obtaining for Hurwitz the first professorship in Hebrew,"[348] with letters showing that Coleridge submitted a letter of recommendation in 1826 (*CL* VI, 668).[349] Intellectually, Hurwitz and Coleridge seemed like the perfect match, finding, as Holmes notes, a "common ground in biblical scholarship, linguistics and learned discussions of religious symbolism."[350] They held a close bond, and so important were their religious discussions that Coleridge called Hurwitz "my Christian Neighbour of the Jewish Persuasion, that excellent Man and Scholar" (*CL* V, 131). It may seem an odd comment to make, but it does summarise how, over the following years, Hurwitz's advice and conversations helped Coleridge to understand Christianity at a greater level.[351]

Another letter describes Hurwitz as a "strictly orthodox Messianic Jew whose learning and sound judgement would qualify him to be the Luther of Judaism." (*CL* V, 132) Coleridge expresses similar sentiments when writing that he had not realised "that a learned, unprejudiced, & yet strictly orthodox Jew may be much nearer in point of faith & religious principles to a learned & strictly orthodox Christians, of the Church of England, than many called Christians." (*CL* V, 92) The result of such discussions and debates undoubtedly influenced the composition of Coleridge's theological writing, which increased significantly during this period. As Chris Rubenstein highlights: "Coleridge relied on Hurwitz for much of his understanding of meanings in the Old Testament, as Hurwitz was authoritative regarding the subtleties of Hebrew."[352] Coleridge was, however, already familiar with many elements of the Hebrew language and in a note on Psalm LXXXVII, described by J. A. Emerton as "one of the most difficult poems in the Psalter,"[353] Coleridge writes, "I would fain understand

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Utilitarianism" in a letter to Chevalier Bunsen in May 1833, a reference to Jeremy Bentham being regarded as the founder of Utilitarianism and the founder of the London University- Thomas Arnold. *The Life and Correspondence of Thomas Arnold*. Volume One. ed. Arthur Penrhyn Stanley. 6th edition (London: Ward, Lock, and Bowden Limited, 1890) 203.

[347] "Our History: Pioneering Jewish Studies since 1826" *UCL Department of Hebrew and Jewish Studies* <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/hebrew-jewish/about/our-history> (Accessed April 17, 2023).

[348] Holmes. *Darker Reflections*. 460.

[349] A further recommendation was sent in November 1827 from Coleridge to Leonard Horner, who would become the Warden of the University of London (later University College London) in 1828. (*CL* VI, 709-10).

[350] Holmes. *Darker Reflections*. 460.

[351] Some scholars have commented on anti-Semitic elements in Coleridge's works, but as Rubinstein notes: "One of these strands and themes to be mentioned at the outset, was his occasional inclination to stereotype in accordance with the then generally prevailing social trend. This tendency to insult Jews never completely disappears, but it should not be overestimated, and I believe it derives mainly from his schooldays in London." Chris Rubinstein. "Coleridge and Jews," *The Coleridge Bulletin*, New Series 24 (Winter 2004): 91.

[352] Rubinstein. "Coleridge and Jews," 94.

[353] J. A. Emerton. "The Problem of Psalm LXXXVII." *Vetus Testamentum,* Volume 50, no. 2 (2000): 183.

this psalm; but first I must collate it word by word with the original Hebrew" (*LR* III, 15). His understanding of the Bible goes beyond superficial analysis and demonstrates a remarkable insight into its complexities and nuances. His return to the original Hebrew attempts to work through any possible translation errors and collate the text into a more perfect and error-free form.

That sense of reliance on Coleridge's part is vital as it indicates his willingness and desire to learn. He hopes to develop his thoughts and understanding with the assistance of those, such as Hurwitz, who were more knowledgeable in the field. Therefore, the friendship forged in Highgate was extremely strong, similar to the kinship with Wordsworth in the West Country. The friendship and collaboration between Coleridge and Hurwitz, however, rarely receives attention in biographies or academic papers, when the reality is that it was one of the most critical moments of Coleridge's life and arguably the most important in those later years. In London, he visited several synagogues, with a Jewish population of around 15,000 "chiefly [in] Whitechapel, East of the City and Holywell Street in the area north of the Eastern end of the Strand. A few very wealthy Jews operating high level finance owned mansions and estates in the scenic environs of London."[354] At this synagogue, the product of Coleridge and Hurwitz's friendship was revealed, a collaboration in the form of the 1817 poem 'Israel's Lament'. The poem encapsulates the Romantics' interest in Judaism,[355] with Efraim Sicher emphasising that many Romantic poets were enlightened "and preferred to observe the truth [of Jewish people] with their own eyes and filter through a more humane sensibility [of] their perception of the Jew."[356] Sicher argues that Coleridge "realized the injustice of the stereotype of the Jew,"[357] and it is to this extent that I believe Coleridge's collaboration with Hurwitz reflects that desire for truth.

Contextually, 'Israel's Lament' was "chanted in St James's Place Synagogue on the day of Princess Charlotte's funeral, 19 Nov 1817." (*CW* 16.I.2, 945) The granddaughter of George III and second in line for the throne after her father, George, Prince of Wales, Princess Charlotte's death at the age of twenty-one followed complications from childbirth, a tragedy that sent shockwaves through the nation. The loss of two young generations of royals, the princess and her newborn child, resulted in deep mourning for the "destin'd

[354] Rubinstein. "Coleridge and Jews," 90.
[355] For further insight into the Romantics' interest in Judaism, see: Sheila A. Spector, ed. *British Romanticism and The Jews: History, Culture, Literature* (Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008); and Sheila A. Spector, ed. *Romanticism/Judaica: A Convergence of Cultures* (London: Palgrave, 2011).
[356] Efraim Sicher. "Imagining "the Jew": Dickens' Romantic Heritage," in *British Romanticism and The Jews: History, Culture, Literature.* ed. Sheila A. Spector (Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008) 142.
[357] Ibid. 142.

Queen, a future King" (I.2), as referenced in the poem. Henry Brougham wrote of the public reaction to the death: "This most melancholy event produced throughout the kingdom feelings of the deepest sorrow and most bitter disappointment […] it really was as though every household throughout Great Britain had lost a favourite child."[358] Karen A. Weisman argues that Charlotte was the "ill-treated child of an irresponsible father and banished mother and granddaughter of a madman" and as a result "she could be perceived as something of an outsider: a sad but true royal […] an incorruptible princess adored by the nation."[359] The abundant outpouring of grief is evident as part of the motivations for the composition of Hurwitz and Coleridge's piece.

Mays further highlights how some saw the poem "as a contribution to Tory propaganda" (*CW* 16.I.2, 945), and this would fit with Thompson's argument of "Tory paternalism" by Coleridge and his contemporaries.[360] Mays does, however, note that Princess Charlotte "appear[ed] to have been universally liked" (*CW* 16.I.2, 945). It is right to say that Coleridge "wrote political poems throughout his life," and, as Mays explains, this is perhaps more apparent "after 1800 than in the 1790s."[361] The political works of the Highgate years may appear to be muted compared to the radical declarations made whilst living in the West Country; however, there is no doubt that Coleridge continued to be concerned with social and moral events.[362] By documenting the passing of the Princess, Hurwitz and Coleridge are marking a significant moment in history. The poem does not make an overt political statement and by no means exhibits the headstrong and radical viewpoints that coloured his earlier works. The poem's grief is expressed as being a "universal woe" (l.13), in which the reader is directed to "Mourn the young Mother snatch'd away" (l.5) and to also "Mourn for the Babe." (l.7) Despite the high status of the individuals they are referred to as "Death's voiceless prey" (l.7), whose passing ends the hope of a new "bud" (l.11, l.22). The deaths result in a nation where now "Britannia's hopes [are] decay'd" (l.25). The "hopes" that were offered by the young lives removes republican sentiments from the poem; instead, it advocates for the continuation of monarchy where the young Princess was part of "the

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[358] Henry Brougham. *The Life and Times of Henry Lord Brougham, Written by Himself*. Volume 3 (Edinburgh and London: William Blackwood and Sons, 1871) 332.
[359] Karen A. Weisman. *Singing in a Foreign Land: Anglo-Hewish Poetry, 1812-1847* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2018) 73.
[360] Thompson. *The Making of the English Working Class*. 378.
[361] Mays. "The Later Poetry," 96.
[362] May draws attention to the numerous poems written during this period that engaged with political matters: "'The Bridge Street Committee' and on the Catholic Question ('Sancti Dominic Pallium'), on the new University of London ('Association of Ideas') and the Reform Bill ('The Three Patriots')."- Mays. "The Later Poetry," 96.

monarch's path." (l.29) In doing so, the poem aligns with accepting monarchy by presenting a traditionalist and conservative stance that mourns the death of the royal lineage, rather than celebrating its demise.

The poem follows Jewish traditions, including, as May notes, its "Hebrew echoes, in both form and structure, [as] a lament over the destruction of Jerusalem which continues to be sung to the present day after the reading of Lamentations." (*CW* 16.I.2, 945) Therefore, 'Israel's Lament' is a poem that blends the tradition of the Jewish faith with that of a national tragedy that was unfolding following the deaths of Princess Charlotte and her child.[363] The emphasis is the "universality not only of the grief inspired by the death of the princess but also the common ground of the response it provokes."[364] Coleridge's version implores the reader to "Mourn for the universal Woe" (I.13) and "Mourning yearly" (l.38), which will continue on each anniversary. The original Hebrew text by Hurwitz was recited at the Great Synagogue on 19th November with a letter from Coleridge to Hurwitz stating that he would begin, and hopefully finish, "the trial of translation" on 24th November because he had been preoccupied with working on another piece. (*CL* IV, 784) As a result. Mays concludes that the English translation "must have been printed and published during the following two weeks." (*CW* 16.I.2, 1355) Hurwitz spoke English, of course, and could, therefore, have written the translation himself; however, the fact that Coleridge undertook this task is a significant display of their friendship and mutual respect. Weisman notes Hurwitz's original was "set to a tune famously used during the annual services on Tisha B'Av […] a day of fasting and lamentation […and] part of a renowned medieval Hebrew poem."[365] Hurwitz's version is deeply rooted in Jewish tradition and culture, but Coleridge's translation softens these elements by assimilating it into a more Christian and arguably British context.

The reason that the poem can be seen as a form of collaboration is down to the fact that Coleridge does not provide a direct translation; instead, his version "changes the character of the original considerably. Shorter rhyming lines make it less antiphonal and public, and specific biblical allusions are generalised." (*CW* 16.I.2, 948) There is a necessity

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[363] The death of Princess Charlotte can be seen as a constitutional successional crisis, as it left the Prince of Wales (the future King George IV) without a legitimate heir, and he was unlikely to have any more children. Many of the Prince of Wales's unmarried brothers decided that getting married and having children was necessary to create legitimate heirs. George III was succeeded by his son in 1820, who had also served as Prince Regent from 1811-1820 following George III's bouts of mental illness. Following George IV's death in 1830, he was succeeded by his brother, who became William IV and upon his death in 1837, he was succeeded by his eighteen-year-old niece Victoria. Victoria's parents were married in May 1818, just six months after the death of Princess Charlotte, with Victoria (their only child together) being born a year later.

[364] Weisman. *Singing in a Foreign Land.* 76.

[365] Ibid. 73-74.

to Coleridge's approach as the poem is being written for a general readership in which "nowhere in the public domain would the Tisha B'Av references, or the quotations of and references to medieval Hebrew lament […] have been obviously accessible to the general public."[366] Coleridge, in a letter to Hurwitz, expresses concern about the piece because "the difficulty consists in the simplicity of the Thoughts, well suiting a dirge and still more a Hebrew Dirge." (*CL* IV, 784) For Weisman, within the first few lines of "As wails, of her first Love forlorn/ The Virgin clad in robes of woe" (ll.3-4), there is evidence of Coleridge "transforming Charlotte into some amalgam of both mother of Christ and Christ himself,"[367] an image that would not have been present in Hurwitz's text. The poem demonstrates Coleridge's creative alterations to the poem into a more orthodox Christian style, reflecting his High Church beliefs during this period. The poem states concern "for Britannia's hopes decay'd" (l.25) and address God directly to "Be Thou their Comforter" (l.36). God is shown to be a brutal force in which the women of the nation "wail their defence" (l.26) for "chaste love, and fervid innocence" (l.27). Although the "hopes [are] decay'd" (l.25), hope is not entirely lost with the process of mourning acting as a leveller of the nation where "Prince and People kiss the rod" (l.34). In doing so, they acknowledge the power and beauty of God as both the "chastising Judge" (l.35) and the "Comforter" (l.36) of all believers.

Hurwitz and Coleridge would collaborate again on another Hebrew dirge to mark King George III's death in 1820. The resultant poem, 'The Tears of a Grateful People', was performed at a London synagogue on the day of the King's funeral on 16th February.[368] In this version, Coleridge's contribution as the translator is unlisted; instead, it is listed as being written by a "friend" (*CW* 16.I.2, 975)[369] without further acknowledgement beyond Hurwitz's name. The difference between the poem and that of 'Israel's Lament' is that 'The Tears of a Grateful People' "was not printed for publication and perhaps not even for distribution, except to the audience at the synagogue." (*CW* 16.I.2, 975) The poem appears to be much more muted in its emotions when compared to that of 'Israel's Lament', with the English text seemingly being "hastily set, or else set by a compositor less familiar with English than with Hebrew." (*CW* 16.I.2, 975) Mays notes that the translation on Coleridge's part was not a simple task due to the need to convert "back into English terms allusions which in Hurwitz's

[366] Weisman. *Singing in a Foreign Land*. 75.
[367] Ibid. 75.
[368] This information is provided in the long form title, which is given on the title page: "The Tears of a Grateful People, a Hebrew Dirge & Hymn, Chanted in the Great Synagogue, St. James's Place, Aldgate, On the Day of the Funeral of His Late Most Sacred Majesty King George III of Blessed Memory"- *CW* 16.I.2, 975.
[369] One of the surviving pamphlets owned by the Green family is inscribed by Coleridge as "a gift of the author" and his initials "S. T. C." written beneath the "by a friend" print. (*CW* 16.I.2, 1356).

text assimilate English events to Hebrew tradition." (*CW* 16.I.2, 979) Coleridge, therefore, attempts to anglicise not only the language of Hurwitz's work but also the imagery to make it more palatable to Christian and English readers.

There is also a noticeable slowing down in the poem's production and publication, with a pamphlet not appearing until the "following months" (*CW* 16.I.2, 1355). In contrast, the poem was not written with the same outpouring of grief or urgency when compared to the death of Princess Charlotte, a reflection of the fact that "George III was a more complicated affair, and there was by no means universal admiration for him."[370] Indeed, Alan G. Hill states that George III, at the time of his death, was "a pathetic and lonely old man, after years of isolation and mental decline."[371] It is a harsh assessment that taps into the reality of an aged king after fifty-nine years on the throne. What arguably redeems George III is the remarkable longevity of his reign, surpassing all previous British monarchs in length. As a result, 'The Tears of a Grateful People' should not be considered an emotional goodbye and remembrance of a king in the same manner as marking Princess Charlotte's death in 'Israel's Lament'. Instead, it can be seen as a way of marking the end of an era in which few could remember life before the start of the king's reign in 1760, and a hopeful outlook on the future of the nation.[372] The "Grateful People" of the title are never specified, yet there is an element of optimism towards the end of the poem, which asks for the people to be "United then let us repair" (l.65). The emphasis in this poem is less about the universality of death, but more about the hope of better times ahead. Whereas 'Israel's Lament' meditated on the sadness of the anniversary, 'The Tears of a Grateful People' instead is optimistic when the "Mourner's groan" turns towards "smiles of joy" (ll.71-72). The poem ends positively, driven by the prospect of new beginnings and hope in life after the monarch's passing.

These poems are significant to this thesis's exploration because they seemingly demonstrate a reversal of allegiances from the younger Coleridge, who had once advocated for societal reforms and fairness and supported the French Revolution, which had brought down the French monarchy. In his *Lectures from 1795*, he recalled:

> …how often have the fierce Bigots of Despotism told me, that the poor are not to be pitied, however great their necessities: for if they be out of employ, the KING wants

[370] Weisman. *Singing in a Foreign Land*. 82.
[371] Alan G. Hill. "Three 'Visions' of Judgement: Southey, Byron, and Newman," *The Review of English Studies*, New Series, Volume 41, No. 163. (August 1990): 334.
[372] Wordsworth was born in 1770, Hurwitz in 1770 (in Poland, arrived in England in 1797), Coleridge in 1772, and Southey in 1774- as such, none knew of life before George III other than what they had been told from older generations or had read.

> men! - They be shipped off to the Slaughter-house abroad, if they wish to escape a Prison at home!
>
> (C*W* 1, 70)

The monarch is regarded as viewing the public as fodder for wars and political gain, resulting in Coleridge's note that "for murder read Fight for his King and Country" (*CW* 1, 70 n.2), although he did not go as far in supporting the execution of the monarch. The lament for Princess Charlotte and King George III dispenses with anti-monarchy sentiments, instead opting for an emotional piece on the loss of Britain's future and the connection with the past through the state heads who embody it.[373] Jacob Lloyd affirms that "Coleridge's later royalism may have derived from his fear that republicanism and democracy could easily degenerate into military dictatorship, as he saw happening under Napoleon in France."[374] Indeed, despite being critical of aristocratic rankings in *Church and State*, Coleridge saw the monarch as part of the "symbolic unity of the whole nation, both of the state and of the persons" (*CW* 10, 41). The crucial factor for Coleridge is the unity offered by the monarchy, as long as the monarch supports the community and cultivation that he believes should exist for the common good in society.

**Poetry and Highgate**

The West Country Years, explored in the previous chapter, represented a period of great creativity and poetic flourish. By 1801, Coleridge had begun to doubt his abilities, writing to William Godwin that: "The Poet is dead in me—my imagination (or rather the somewhat that had been imaginative) lies, like a Cold Snuff on the circular Rim of a Brass Candlestick…" (*CL* II, 714) Following this statement, James D. Boulger notes that there was a change in Coleridge's poetry, with the earlier poetry being "in structure and ideas informed by the doctrines of immanence and pantheism; they reflected the breakdown in modern thought of the old beliefs about the composition of body and soul."[375] What becomes evident in the later poetry, as Boulger argues, is that "Coleridge was caught between the old and the new view. Pessimism replaced his earlier optimism about Nature, which became more and more an alien object, opposed or at best indifferent to spirit, while there was a constant

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[373] In composing the poems, Rosemary Ashton comments that they were "unofficially rivalling Southey, who as Poet Laureate had to mourn George III." Ashton. *The Life of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*. 324.
Southey's commemorative poem, A Vision of Judgement, was not published until 1821, a year after Hurwitz and Coleridge's poem. Lord Byron satirised and derided Southey's poem in a similarly titled poem, published in *The Liberal* magazine under the editorship of John Hunt in October 1822.
[374] Jacob Lloyd. "Political Coleridge," in *The New Cambridge Companion to Coleridge*. ed. Tim Fulford (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2022) 17.
[375] Boulger. *Coleridge as Religious Thinker*. 197.

recognition of the presence of sin and evil and the world."[376] The earlier optimism saw Nature as the pantheistic manifestation of God's benevolent creation, but the change, as Boulger describes, suggests an alteration to its spiritual meaning in later years.

This may have been related to the advancement of geology, natural history, and palaeontology;[377] however, Coleridge did not view these scientific advancements as hindering faith, instead seeing them as necessary for an "education reformed." (*CW* 10, 62) Trevor H. Levere argues, "Science was valuable to Coleridge because it revealed and constituted relations in nature."[378] Coleridge embraced developments that led to a closer spiritual truth and what Levere calls "the antidote to speculation in philosophy."[379] In adopting this position, Coleridge aims to mature his thinking with spiritual truth in keeping with what Gerard Manley Hopkins would later define as an "Incomprehensible Certainty." (*LI,* 187) Despite some of the noticeable changes, it is also apparent that some "permanent features of Coleridge's style survive,"[380] demonstrating a hybridity which warrants further exploration. Despite Coleridge's concern that his poetic ability was dead, he would end up publishing several poetry collections, including an 1816 pamphlet that included 'Christabel' along with 'Kubla Khan' and 'The Pains of Sleep', *Sibylline Leaves* (1817) and editions of *Poetical Works* in 1828, 1829, and 1834. In addition, Coleridge undertook several revisions to 'The Ancient Mariner', initially published in 1798 but with further editions occurring between 1800 and 1834—with other often undocumented or unpublished versions.[381]

Despite Coleridge's 1801 letter, which declared his sense of loss as a poet, Morton Paley argues that Coleridge's "need to write poetry remained strong"[382] and that "the last decade of his life was especially productive."[383] Richard Holmes further highlights that "from 1827 a number of editors of rival anthologies - the annual *Bijou*, *Amulet*, and *Literary Souvenir* - were pressing him for new and unpublished work, and the demand produced an

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[376] Boulger. *Coleridge as Religious Thinker*. 198.
[377] Such as James Hutton's *Theory of the Earth* (1788), Jean-Baptiste Lamarck's *Philosophie Zoologique* (1802), and Georges Cuvier's *Essay on the Theory of the Earth* (1813), among others.
[378] Trevor H. Levere. *Poetry Realized in Nature: Samuel Taylor Coleridge and Early Nineteenth Century Science* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981) 4.
[379] Levere. *Poetry Realized in Nature*. 4.
[380] Boulger. *Coleridge as Religious Thinker*. 197.
[381] Jack Stillinger also notes how even these dates are only a starting block in understanding the many editions that potentially exist because the poem "exists not just in a single text, but in several separate versions, some of which differ drastically from others, and every one of which is independently authoritative in the sense that it was authored by Coleridge himself." - "The Multiple Versions of Coleridge's Poems: How Many 'Mariners' Did Coleridge Write?" *Studies in Romanticism*, Volume 31, No. 2 (Summer 1992): 127.
[382] Morton D. Paley. *Coleridge's Later Poetry*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000) 1.
[383] Ibid. 2.

Indian summer of inspiration."[384] This demonstrates that the older Coleridge was widely engaged with and frequently read. Crucially, at least one hundred and seventy-three poems, either complete or incomplete pieces, can be attributed to having been written or revised by Coleridge between his arrival in Highgate in 1816 and his death in 1834.[385] The later poems, however, are seldom anthologised or republished in collected editions of Coleridge's works in contrast to some of the earlier and better-known pieces of poetry. Such evidence appears to suggest that declining attention to Coleridge's later works was exacerbated by public preferences and tastes that came after his death.

L. D. Berkoben argues that these later works are of poorer quality because Coleridge could not replicate the success and innovation of *Lyrical Ballads,* declaring that Coleridge suppressed aspects of his thinking "in [the] hope of protecting his religious and philosophic beliefs from his emotional world of guilt and chaos."[386] More recently, Jonathan Bate states, "Wordsworth and Coleridge both began writing their best poetry when they met each other. They both stopped writing their best poetry when they fell out with one another."[387] These comments confront the difficulties of exploring Wordsworth and Coleridge, namely that their later lives appeared unexceptional compared to their earlier writing. The later years appear to suggest that they became increasingly conservative figures and seemingly dropped many of their earlier political and spiritual beliefs.

I, however, am interested in the alternative analysis of Coleridge's later years, such as Karen Swann's argument that there is a "richness, depth and continuity throughout his life of his interest in prosody, his experiments in form and metre; they suggest the degree to which he consistently thought in and through verse."[388] Although "guilt and chaos", to use Berkoben's phrasing,[389] was still prevalent, the older Coleridge that I am presenting here reflects and channels his energy and thoughts differently. His writing becomes grounded in the more orthodox Christian outlook that I describe above, influenced by his progressive shift towards High Church doctrine rather than political conservatism. The result was a greater confidence in his theological and philosophical position, which strove to provide certainty of belief.

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[384] Holmes. "Introduction" in *Coleridge: Selected Poetry*. xvi.
[385] This number is based on J. C. C. Mays' contribution to *The Collected Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge* where Mays attributes 173 poems (full length or fragmentary) within the sections marked "1816-1818", "1819-1821", "1822-1842, "1825-1826", "1827-1829", "1830-1832", and "1833-1834" (*CW* 16.I.1, xxvii- xxxii).
[386] L. D. Berkoben. *Coleridge's Decline as a Poet* (Netherlands: Mouton & Com, 1975) 169.
[387] Bate. *Radical Wordsworth.* 8.
[388] Karen Swann. "Coleridge's Later Poetry," in *The New Cambridge Companion to Coleridge*. ed. Tim Fulford (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2023) 225.
[389] Berkoben. *Coleridge's Decline as a Poet*. 169.

Indeed, as Tim Fulford acknowledges, by 1814, "Coleridge was determined to dissociate himself from the Jacobin poetics of the Preface to *Lyrical Ballads* and revive his separate poetic reputation."[390] As a result, the poems reflect on different subject matters compared to those earlier works and may seem tamer, but to dismiss this period due to a difference in political and poetic persuasions is short-sighted. The selected poems analysed here represent some little-known or rarely published pieces outside the traditional Coleridge literary canon. Morton Paley's *Coleridge's Later Poetry* (2000) is hugely valuable in this respect, but even then, it can only cover a small number of the nearly two hundred poems written or revised at Highgate. Additionally, Mays' "The Later Poetry" in *The Cambridge Companion to Coleridge* (2002) and Swann's revisit and expansion in "Coleridge's Later Poetry" in *The New Cambridge Companion to Coleridge* (2023) are significant to understanding what this later poetry embodies, particularly in my exploration of faith and the environment. It will, however, be necessary to consider poems not used by Paley, Mays, or Swann to expand on this research and analyse further contexts and connections to demonstrate Coleridge's increasing Christian orthodoxy and his position on society.

The 1817 iteration of 'The Rime of the Ancient Mariner' was the first to include a marginal gloss, making it one of the most significant revisions to the poem. As Timothy Corrigan explains, "the margins of the text [are] where the reader annotates,"[391] and indeed, the extensive collected works of Coleridge contain his marginalia, demonstrating his active notetaking and engagement as a reader. The inclusion of the gloss represents a blurring of the "middle area between reading and criticism,"[392] especially when the ability to infer meaning from the text is partially stripped. Wendy Hall highlights that adding the gloss was "counter criticism" that suggests the poem was "obscure and lacked a clear narrative glue."[393] The gloss attempts to illuminate and clarify the text by removing or explaining away any possible notion of doubt and uncertainty in favour of a clarity-driven structure. Corrigan further argues that for Coleridge, "the margins were to be as full as the text itself, and his task as a reader-critic was to carry poetry's message into the many meanings of the margins."[394] As a result, the gloss appears counter-intuitive by removing the participatory, interpretive spontaneity on the reader's part and, at times, borders on patronising the reader through

[390] Fulford. *The Late Poetry of the Lake Poets.* 125.
[391] Timothy Corrigan. *Coleridge, Language and Criticism* (Athens, Georgia: University of Georgia Press, 2008) 10.
[392] Ibid. 10.
[393] Wendy Hall. "Interpreting Poetic Shadows: The Gloss of "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner"," *Criticism*, Volume 29, No.2 (Spring 1987): 180.
[394] Corrigan. *Coleridge, Language and Criticism*. 197.

obvious comments because, as Hall argues, "figurative language is literalized."[395] This apparent sterilisation of the poem through the addition of the gloss remains a point of discussion for critics, with William Empson arguing against its inclusion by remarking that it is a "parasitic growth" that offers little to the poem.[396]

Therefore, the gloss's value is complex, especially when not every stanza is provided with notation. Furthermore, the notes often indicate something absent from the text, with Dilworth outlining "the Catholicism" of the Mariner and "the vaguer Christianity of the gloss-writer," who is seemingly a separate voice from Coleridge's own.[397] When the albatross appears, the note states that it "was received with great joy and hospitality" (*CW* 16.I.1, 377) and that the "ancient Mariner inhospitably killeth the pious bird of good omen." (*CW* 16.I.1, 379) Despite attempts for the gloss to provide clarification and cohesion, notable elements such as the reasoning behind the Mariner's actions remain an unexplained mystery. The Mariner is shown to act in opposition to his peers, but even this is diluted by using "inhospitably" to refer to the Mariner as being merely unwelcoming or unreceptive to the goodness of the albatross. Coleridge's inclusion of the gloss is also problematic because the attempt to introduce clarity and certainty to the poem is sometimes misleading. Mays outlines how the 'Ancient Mariner' revisions were part of Coleridge's later attempt to "articulate the necessity of that incompleteness," which had shrouded the earlier iterations.[398] The gloss, therefore, is not an attempt to complete the 'Ancient Mariner' under the Coleridgean principles of the 1790s but rather a re-evaluation under the framework of a more mature, traditionalist view.

Frans van Liere illustrates how a Biblical gloss "could exist either as additions to the biblical text written on the same page (either in the margins or between the lines, as an "interlinear gloss") or gathered independently of the text,"[399] forming part of a Christian commentary tradition.[400] This tradition links to historical and traditional church teaching and

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[395] Hall. "Interpreting Poetic Shadows," 182.
[396] William Empson quoted in John Haffenden. *William Empson: Against the Christians* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006) 571.
[397] Dilworth. "Symbolic Spatial Form," 523.
[398] Mays. "The Later Poetry," 96.
[399] Frans van Liere. *An Introduction to the Medieval Bible* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014) 152.
[400] The Geneva Bible, first published completely in 1560, predates the King James Bible and was published as a successor to the Great Bible (1539). The Geneva Bible was "the first mass-printed Bible of personal and home use. A distinctive feature was its marginalia, copious explanatory notes in the margins of every page…"- John W. Harris "'Written in the Margent': Shakespeare's Metaphor of the Geneva Bible Marginal Notes," *Notes and Queries*. Volume 64.2 (June 2017): 301.
See also: Jeffrey Alan Miller. "'Better, as in the Geneva': The Role of the Geneva Bible in Drafting the King James Version," *The Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies*. Volume 47.3 (September 2017): 517–543.

relates to the influential works of the church fathers, such as St. Jerome and St. Augustine, figures revered by the High Church movements. William A. Ulmer makes the case for viewing the 1798 original from a Unitarian perspective,[401] and my previous chapter demonstrated how it contains both High and Low Church teachings. The 'Ancient Mariner' revisions are not about rewriting or retelling the story but instead offer a new framework to understand it. The 1817 gloss emphasises the Christian origins and influences of the poem, linking it to traditional methods and teaching of the church. In turn, it embodies a certainty of Christian doctrines that were held at this time by the orthodox-leaning Coleridge.

Further influence of Highgate can be seen in the light-hearted poem 'The Reproof and Reply or, The Flower-Thief's Apology' (1823). The poem responds to the local physical and intellectual environment, with the "long accustomed on the twy-fork'd hill" (l.49) being a reference, as Mays notes, to the "English Parnassus [which] is remarkable for its two summits of unequal height, the lower dominated Hampstead, the higher Highgate." (*CW* 16.I.2, 1005) The poem prominently features flowers, with Watson noting how Coleridge had a "fondness for flowers; the crimson roses that flourished abundantly in the garden of the Grove were his great delight; these and other blooms in their season Mrs. Gillman would herself arrange in his room."[402] Furthermore, Watson remarks on how "neighbours too, knowing this especial pleasure, would send in little presents of flowers."[403] So abundant were the flowers in Highgate that Coleridge expressed great "delight from this miscellany of Flora" (*CL* IV, 867) that he encountered. Therefore, the actions of the titular flower thief disrupt the seemingly idyllic garden environment.

The poem is specific in its provision of detail, with the subtitle stating, "for a robbery committed in Mr. and Mrs. Chisholm's garden, on Sunday morning, 25th of May, 1823, between the hours of eleven and twelve" (*CW* 16.I.2, 1003). It suggests that the perpetrator has been caught, but the circumstances of the crime are absent, which can be seen as a reflection of the lack of reasoning provided for the Mariner's slaughter of the albatross. The domesticity of this garden-centric scene does not indicate a great moral upheaval and spiritual penance as experienced by the Mariner. The accusation is aimed squarely at Coleridge when the opening speaker cries, "Fie, Mr Coleridge!- and can this be you?/ Break two commandments?- and in church-time too!" (ll.1-2) The archaic term "Fie", however, is seemingly light in tone as it is "often an expression of mock dismay rather than real

[401] Ulmer. "Necessary Evils," 327-56.
[402] Watson. *Coleridge at Highgate*. 52.
[403] Ibid. 52.

distaste."[404] The "Fair dame" (l.17) is likely Mrs Chisholm herself, who has accused Coleridge of having broken the vows of not stealing, not coveting a neighbour's property, and arguably for failing to keep the sabbath day holy. The speaker accuses Coleridge: "In broad open day/ Steal in, steal out, and steal our flowers away." (ll.9-10) By the end of the first stanza, any real sense of a crime has dissipated from the readers mind, as the implication is that Coleridge has committed the petty crime of picking flowers from his neighbour's garden.

The poem is whimsical with its regular rhyming lines, which provide a melodic, singsong quality that is not unlike the nursery rhyme qualities of Christina Rossetti's 'Goblin Market'- a poetic decision which downplays the severity of any possible crime. Coleridge declares that the incident occurred "from the bee-hive of my brain/ Did lure the fancies forth, a freakish rout,/ And witched the air with dreams." (ll.37-39) The incident is blamed on going "astray" (l.44, and the overwhelming sensations of "smell, sight, fancy, feeling" (l.53) and the "needs follow must his *nose*." (l.48) The flowers themselves are shown to have what Jane Bennett regards as "an inexplicable vitality or energy, a moment of independence from and resistance to us and other bodies: a kind of thing-power."[405] The vibrant matter is too irresistible for Coleridge to ignore, with its beauty and smell becoming an all-consuming addiction. The temptation caused by a "so-called in-animate" object[406] highlights the energy of the natural world and the weakness of human resilience. Timothy Morton describes matter as "a sensual object, an aesthetic phenomenon that appears as part of causality."[407] The sensual energy of the flowers is the alluring factor, yet cutting and stealing them begins the process of reducing that energy through gradual decay. The very thing that made them so tempting to steal leads to them being robbed from their natural ecosystem, becoming objects to see and smell until they inevitably waste away.

It appears to be a half-hearted apology, in which the thief seems to both apologise and justify their crime by suggesting that an uncontrollable urge and desire caused the events. There is an attempt to lessen the severity of the incident by suggesting that nothing of importance or significance was lost or stolen: "The spoons all right? The hen and chicken safe?/ Well, well, he shall not forfeit our regards." (ll.61-62) There was no violence to the

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[404] Andrew Keanie. "Coleridge, the Damaged Archangel (review)," *Essays in Criticism*, Volume 56, Number 1 (January 2006): 83.
[405] Bennett. *Vibrant Matter*. 18.
[406] Ibid. 18.
[407] Timothy Morton. *Realist Magic: Objects, Ontology, Causality* (University of Michigan Library, Ann Arbor: Open Humanities Press, 2013) 210.

crime and, indeed, no quick-footed or stealthy escape made by Coleridge, which draws into question the actual value of the theft as negligible. It is the final line which changes the argument of the poem when it is stated that "The Eighth Commandment was not made for Bards!" (l.63) The eighth commandment is that of "You shalt not steal" (*Exodus* 20:15), which Coleridge implies does not apply to him as a writer, however, accusations of plagiarism both came from him and were levelled at him throughout his life.[408]

Despite the whimsical brushing off these actions, there is a meditation on the possible ramifications of "common law" and "statue [on] my head" (l.52), along with "Five Acts of Parliament 'gainst private stealing!" (l.55) All of these are designed to prevent anyone from going out "to pluck both flower and floweret at my will," (l.50) yet the overwhelming beauty is what drives the actions, as those earlier letters from Coleridge attest to his love of his neighbour's flowers. The poem suggests moments of domestic tension in Highgate; however, as Rosemary Ashton suggests, "it might stand as a metaphor for those more serious thefts of which he was often accused- namely intellectual ones."[409] Andrew Keanie considers the veiled statements of guilt relating to plagiarism in Coleridge's works and the complications that arise from such issues.[410] According to Richard Holmes, Coleridge "made friends for life with the outraged proprietor, Mrs Chisholm, by sending her an apology in verse,"[411] demonstrating adept skills in diffusing difficult situations, in this instance in a "North London Eden where he wanders like a child, innocently stealing forbidden fruit."[412] For all the potential accusations, Coleridge can charm with great wit, whimsy, and mock epic and, as a result, becomes a somewhat "alluring"[413] figure who sometimes seems to be an elderly radical with a gift of persuasion.

**Coleridge and Cholera**

Fear would sweep across the world in the late 1820s and early 1830s with the spread of Asiatic cholera. In Britain, it is estimated that 32,000 people died from Cholera between

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[408] Coleridge once accused Walter Scott of plagiarising his then-unpublished Christabel in his 1805 *Lay of the Last Minstrel.* Daniel Cook "The Lay of the Last Minstrel and Improvisatory Authorship," *The Yearbook of English Studies,* Volume 47 (2017) 165-68.
See also: Tilar J. Mazzeo. "Coleridge, Plagiarism, and the Psychology of the Romantic Habit," *European Romantic Review*. Volume 15. Issue 2 (2004) 335-41.
[409] Ashton. *The Life of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*. 351.
[410] Andrew Keanie. "Coleridge and Plagiarism," in *The Oxford Handbook of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*. ed. Frederick Burwick (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012) 435-44.
[411] Holmes. *Coleridge: Darker Reflections*. 542-43.
[412] Ibid. 543.
[413] Ashton. *The Life of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*. 351.

1831 and 1832.[414] The bacterial disease, which spreads through contaminated water, food, and contact with infected victims, took hold in poorer areas of the cities that were overcrowded with poor sanitation and where human waste was prevalent in the streets. The sense of worry was justifiable because the disease did not discriminate and often resulted in "apparently healthy Londoners [who] would drop in the middle of the street and were often dead by the end of the day."[415] The speed of the infection and the resultant death, coupled with uncertainties about how and why the disease was spread, only heightened the public's concern. Coleridge's history of medical complaints and self-diagnosis, associated with his residency with a doctor, would likely have ensured that symptoms and the medical implications of a disease like cholera were a common topic of discussion.

In July 1832, nine months after the disease was said to have been first reported in Britain, Coleridge wrote: 'Cholera Cured Before Hand'. The poem is dedicated explicitly to the residents "in St Giles's, Saffron Hill, White Chapel and Bethnal Green" (*CW* 16.I.2, 1130), all of which were poorer areas of the city. Saffron Hill, for example, is located in the Farringdon area of London, a short distance from Smithfield Market and the working-class East End.[416] Heather Sullivan refers to "the dichotomy dividing our material surroundings into a place of 'pure, clean nature' and the dirty human sphere."[417] These dirty parts of the city are closely aligned with the spread of disease, and for Coleridge, there is a clear distinction to what Sullivan calls the "long-term [in]stability for the boundaries we declare between clean and unclean, sanitary and unsanitary, or the pure and the dirty."[418] The bleakness of the poem recognises the many unknown factors associated with cholera by declaring: "There's no Cure for *You.*" (l.23) The emphasis on "you" is Coleridge's own and creates an important debate on the significance of class difference and the impact of cholera based on that divide. The poorest people in the slums were disproportionately affected by cholera due to their existing overcrowded and unsanitary conditions. There was little

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[414] "Cholera in Sunderland," *UK Parliament* <https://www.parliament.uk/about/living-heritage/transformingsociety/towncountry/towns/tyne-and-wear-case-study/introduction/cholera-in-sunderland/> (Accessed May 9, 2023).
[415] Miriam Reid. "John Snow Hunts the Blue Death," *Science History Institute*. March 8, 2022. <https://www.sciencehistory.org/distillations/john-snow-hunts-the-blue-death#:~:text=King%20Cholera,a%20sickly%20shade%20of%20blue.> (accessed May 10, 2023).
[416] In Charles Dickens' *Oliver Twist* (serialised between 1837 and 1839, published in full 1838), Fagin's Den is described as "thence into Little Saffron-Hill; and so into Saffron-hill the Great […] a dirtier or more wretched place he had never seen. The street was very narrow and muddy, and the air was impregnated with filthy odours."- Charles Dickens. *Oliver Twist*. ed. Kathleen Tillotson (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1966) 48-49.
[417] Sullivan. "Dirt Theory and Material. Ecocriticism," 515.
[418] Ibid. 528.

possibility of being able to escape or hide from the disease, and a cure or prevention for them was highly unlikely.

The political stance of the poem is striking, not least because of its dedication to the poorest in society but also due to the political commentary and allusions that Coleridge employs. Alan Bewell notes how Coleridge had previously intended to write three *Lay Sermons* aimed at the three respective classes, of which the one aimed at the working class was never composed and, therefore, the poem could be seen "as a belated gesture" to correct this.[419] The poem instructs the reader to "Quit Cobbett's, O'Connell's and Belzebub's [sic] banners" (l.43), referring to William Cobbett, the British journalist and later politician who advocated Catholic Emancipation; Daniel O'Connell, the Irish politician who helped to gain Catholic Emancipation in Parliament to which he was elected twice; and Belzebub in reference to the devil.

Mays notes how the arrival of Asiatic cholera came "in the aftermath of the Bristol riots, it exacerbated the scared and apprehensive tone of politics and became associated with the orders connected with the Reform Bill." (*CW* 16.I.2, 1129) Additionally, Bewell draws attention to how Cobbett "saw the epidemic as a fiction disseminated by health authorities,"[420] a scepticism that certainly would have frustrated Coleridge as someone who claimed to have had the disease more than once. Coleridge continues to follow political and religious outrage by beseeching the "Dear Mud-larks! My Brethren" (l.35) to turn away from demonic beliefs. The final stanza mirrors the sermon format, pleading to "all Scents and Degrees" (l.36) to reject the satanic trinity of Cobbett, O'Connell and Belzebub. Coleridge had previously listed Cobbett as one of the demagogues in the "Sancti Dominici Palium" (1826), which was deeply "rooted in the controversy surrounding Catholic Emancipation." (*CW* 16.I.2, 1048) Coleridge is therefore arguing that political injustice is responsible for the evil that has fallen on society.

Coleridge describes the disease as "a devil" (l.21) but lacking the "horns, hoof and tail" (l.20) that people associate with such a figure. Instead, it is more threatening and terrifying because "nobody never has see'd him" (l.21). Its impact only makes an appearance when it is too late, and the disease has taken hold with "Pains ventral, subventral,/ In stomach or entrail" (ll.1-2) and eventually "turn you as blue/ As the gas-light unfragrant." (ll.29-30)[421]

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[419] Alan Bewell. "'Cholera cured Before Hand': Coleridge, Abjection, and the 'Dirty Business of Laudanum'," *Romanticism*, Volume 4, Issue 2. (July 1998): 158.
[420] Ibid. 156.
[421] Cholera became known as "the Blue Death" due to the dehydration caused by the disease. This eventually caused the blood to thicken and become starved of oxygen, thus making the skin appear a shade of blue.

The stomach pains which open the poem again emphasise symptoms that bore a remarkable similarity to the pain and digestive discomforts, exacerbated by opium in the form of laudanum, that Coleridge suffered with for much of his life. George S. Rousseau and David Boyd Haycock note how men of science and medicine often surrounded Coleridge, yet his "relationship with specific disease has been less closely configured."[422] Rousseau and Haycock further argue that Coleridge has "experience with two (or perhaps three) diseases in particular: dysentery and cholera - because he himself was so persuaded that they were the specific afflictions forming the bane of his health."[423]

The poet and dramatist Henry Taylor wrote of a visit to Coleridge in September 1831: "Poor man, he has been for two month past under the influence of cholera and other extra disorders, by which he seems sadly enfeebled and even crippled." (*CW* 14.1, 249 fn.7) Whether Coleridge was officially diagnosed with cholera is less than certain, with the possibility of "self-diagnosis" and "misdiagnoses" further complicating the truth of the matter.[424] When his nephew Henry Nelson Coleridge visited in October 1831, he wrote in a letter to Thomas Poole that his uncle "had two very severe attacks of the prevailing cholera, & suffered dreadfully under them." (*CL* VI, 874n) Officially, the first case of cholera was not recorded in Britain until October 1831, when it struck Sunderland and the north. It had yet to be documented in London when Taylor and Henry Nelson Coleridge made their claims. There is certainly a possibility that the fear of the disease may have been a factor and that any sensation of being unwell, no matter how minor, could easily be attributed, albeit unfounded, to being caused by that "prevailing cholera." (*CL* VI, 874n) This interpretation is crucial to furthering the understanding of 'Cholera Cured Before Hand', as it links Coleridge to the disease on one or more occasions.[425] It would then shift the tone of the poem by implying that Coleridge had written about his perceived own experience, and as a result, this is a far more biographical poem than at first thought.

Regardless of whether Coleridge had cholera, the crucial factor is that his letters and the accounts of those who met him indicate that he genuinely believed it was one of the

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[422] George S. Rousseau and David Boyd Haycock. "Coleridge's Choleras: Cholera Morbus, Asiatic Cholera, and Dysentery in Early Nineteenth-Century England," *Bulletin of the History of Medicine,* Volume 77, No. 2. (Summer 2003): 299.
[423] Ibid. 299-300.
[424] Ibid. 300.
[425] In 1804, Coleridge describes being ill, which he attributes to "cholera morbus" (*CL* II, 1100-01) Additionally, there were other types of cholera or forms of dysentery which had been common in England, although they should not be "confused with 'Asiatic' cholera, which was an entirely different disease […] it is also necessary to point out that in the 1820s and 1830s they were confused, both medical practitioners and by patients."- Rousseau and Haycock. "Coleridge's Choleras," 300.

afflictions that burdened him. If Coleridge did have cholera, then his dedication to the residents "in St Giles's, Saffron Hill, White Chapel and Bethnal Green" (*CW* 16.I.2, 1130) is redundant when the disease appears to have crossed the unstable boundary between urban and rural. The "efforts made to remove or conceal bodily filth, waste, and the sweaty labor of agricultural processes,"[426] as Sullivan suggests, had done little to prevent the spread of cholera. Rousseau and Haycock are keen to stress that a form of cholera had existed in Europe and was sometimes known as "Cholera morbus, cholera nostra, 'autumnal' or 'English' cholera,"[427] with Coleridge referencing "CHOLRERY MORPUS" in the poem (l.19) Despite the prevalence of this 'English' cholera, the 'Asiatic' cholera that arrived in September 1831 was "an entirely different disease" and "were confused, both by medical practitioners and by patients."[428]

The poem ends with the scatological line "Philodemus Corophilus" (l.45) from the Greek meaning "Lover of People, Lover of Excrement" (*CW* 16.I.2, 1131). It refers to the disease being found and thriving in unsanitary conditions and humans with unclean habits. Samuel Busey's account from the time states that "those direful and pestilential diseases, ship fever, yellow fever, and small pox, are almost exclusively confined to the filthy alleys, lanes, and streets, and low, damp, filthy and ill-ventilated haunts."[429] Sullivan notes how "dirt and dust can be highly toxic or radioactive, and this can impose a destructively agentic influence onto most of the living things they contact."[430] Although Coleridge and many others in society were unaware of how the disease spread, he appears to have made the connection between dirt and human waste, which blighted the unsanitary and poor areas of the city. It further emphasises the cleanliness and goodness of the countryside when compared to the grime and disease that Coleridge was associating with the city. Busey, however, draws attention to these locations being "exclusively tenanted by *foreigners*,"[431] with Bewell commenting on how disdain for outsiders was prevalent, especially concerning the origin and spread of the disease.[432]

Coleridge wrote to J. H. Green in February 1832 about the "new-imported Nabob, from the Indian Jungles, his Serene Blueness, Prince of the Air." (*CL* VI, 916) He further

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[426] Sullivan. "Dirt Theory and Material. Ecocriticism," 526.
[427] Rousseau and Haycock. "Coleridge's Choleras," 300.
[428] Ibid. 300- Rousseau and Haycock go to great lengths to highlight the initial origin and confusion caused by 'Asiatic' cholera on pp.312-16.
[429] Samuel Busey. *Immigration: Its Evils and Consequences* (1870) (New York: Arno Press, 1969) 125.
[430] Sullivan. "Dirt Theory and Material Ecocriticism," 516.
[431] Busey. *Immigration: Its Evils and Consequences*. 125.
[432] Bewell. "Cholera cured Before Hand," 162.

includes many references to various communities in the poem, particularly those who represent that essence of 'otherness' such as the "Gypsy" (l.15) and the Irish poor through its reference to O'Connell as mentioned earlier—communities who were "often blamed for the spread of epidemics, especially typhus and cholera."[433] The use of Scots-Irish in the line "Och! The Hallabaloo!/ Och! och! how ye'll wail" (ll.26-27) appears to be rooted in Coleridge's depiction of otherness, with Mays noting several Irish and Scots-Irish phrases in the poem (*CW* 16.I.2, 1130-31). Seamus Perry argues that Coleridge's view of Scotland can be distinguished between "Scotland as a place—a landscape, an imaginative space, and a place to tour" and "Scotland as a state of mind: to Scottishness, that is to say, an attribute, or rather a defect, of the human intelligence."[434] In adopting a traditional, orthodox attitude in the comfort of Highgate, Coleridge seemingly dispenses with any form of social empathy and camaraderie. Instead, he appears to directly blame the Irish poor, Catholics, and foreigners for the spread of the disease and their inability to contain it and other evils. As a medium of social commentary, Coleridge uses cholera to pass judgment on the decadence and depravity of society, including the drunks "like Old Cato" (l.10) and the "Gin and Whisky/ [which] May make you feel frisky." (ll.13-14) The failure to prevent such debauchery and sin, in the eyes of Coleridge, brought with it the inevitable punishment of the "Offal-fed Vagrant" (l.28) that now infects the population with indiscriminative ease.

In another letter to Green, he writes of a "connection from an Essex Ague thro' a Pontine Marsh-Fever to the present Malignant Cholera […] they are likely to be modified by aerial in unlucky states of the atmosphere." (*CL* VI, 887) As Rousseau and Haycock comment, this was "his basic understanding" of the matter, and his argument reflects a "more exceptional and more lingering" version of what already existed, albeit in harsher conditions.[435] Despite Coleridge's lack of medical knowledge about the ongoing and uncertain evolving spread of the disease, he does provide a way, as Rosseau and Haycock say, "to verbalize its symptoms and manifestations, as well as possible causes with a detail that few, especially those not medically trained, could match."[436] As a result, the poem written in Highgate was a meditation on a lifetime of ailments in the face of political tensions and health uncertainties.

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[433] Bewell. "Cholera cured Before Hand," 165.
[434] Seamus Perry. "Coleridge's Scotland," *The Coleridge Bulletin*. New Series 17, (Summer 2011): 58.
[435] Rousseau and Haycock. "Coleridge's Choleras," 320.
[436] Ibid. 301.

**Highgate and Death in Poetry**

Death would become central to several of the later poems, which Morton Paley highlights as "the culmination of a lifelong interest,"[437] a period in which Coleridge wrote several epitaphs for himself and others. The beginnings of the self-epitaph poems can be traced to a four-line stanza from around 1807, with further variations appearing in 1833, when it is believed that Coleridge wrote at least six versions of the poem over ten to eleven days. (*CW* 12.II, 903-6) The variations on Coleridge's self-penned epitaph are notable, particularly in 'Epitaph on Poor Col, By Himself' from 1807 and an 1833 edition to be known as 'S.T.C.'[438] Paley refers to 'S.T.C.' as "the last important poem to be written by Coleridge" when it first appeared, fittingly, as the final poem of *Poetical Works* (1834). The consideration of death is significant because it marks Coleridge giving greater thought to his demise and legacy.

Mays affirms that the earlier 'Epitaph on Poor Col, By Himself' was composed "in his sleep under the notion he had died, during his tour of Scotland." (*CW* 16.I.2, 755) In this poem, there is a considerable emphasis on the "Poor Col" (l.1) who has "died as he had always liv'd- a dreaming!" (l.2) This four-line piece presents "Poor Col" as a lonely and isolated figure, who has died "alone and all unknown" (l.4), not in comfort or splendour but "in an Inn." (l.4) The unsettled status agitates Coleridge's depiction of himself, to the extent that he is represented as an anonymous individual who has passed away as a stranger in some non-descript inn surrounded by no friends or family. Loneliness as death approaches is a crucial feature of the poem, and although written merely as an imaginative notion of his mortality, it is far from a desirable fate that reflects the troublesome period that Coleridge experienced. In 'S.T.C.', Coleridge appears more optimistic about his legacy, writing instead that "Beneath this Sod/ A Poet lies" (ll.2-3). The Coleridge of this variation singles himself out as a poet who is recognisable and known through his initials "S. T. C." (l.4). There is no "Poor Col" in this instance; instead, the reader is presented with a figure who has worked "many a year with toil of breath" (l.5) and has found "Praise" and "Fame" (l.7), something that the "Poor Col" could only have aspired to.

Paley helpfully notes that two elements remain prominent in all versions of the poem: "the existence of the author/subject on a plane of reality signified by his initials, and the

[437] Paley. *Coleridge's Later Poetry*. 114.
[438] These are the names applied to the poems by J. C. C. Mays, which removes the confusion of multiple poems bearing the same name. Ernest Hartley Coleridge and Morton Paley give the titles as simply 'Epitaph', but here I will employ Mays titles to distinguish between the earlier 1807 piece 'Epitaph on Poor Col, By Himself' and 'S.T.C.' from 1833.

allusion to his past accomplishment as a poet."[439] That sense of a "past accomplishment as a poet" is crucial because it links to earlier criticism of Coleridge as failing to achieve anything remarkable in his later years. In a letter to William Godwin in 1801, he implores that booksellers be told on his death that he was "no Poet." (*CL* II, 714) If Coleridge believed that his poetic ability was dead by around 1801, then the 'Epitaph' of 1807 was an early self-eulogy to the young Coleridge and his waning talents in the aftermath of the West Country years. Karen Swann notes that there is a "constant reuse of older materials and his [Coleridge's] recycling of poetic elements,"[440] and I would argue that the 'S.T.C.' variation of 'Epitaph' from 1833 represents a revisit of death with a renewed outlook on life. It is no longer about the demise of talent but, instead, is a celebration of the hopeful longevity and legacy of his writing that continues beyond death.

A further version of the poem includes the words: "Epitaph/ In Hornsey Church yard", which, as Paley notes, is undoubtedly a reference to "his expected burial place."[441] This alternative wording does not appear in the latest edition of the poem, nor does it occur in the earliest iterations that predate the Highgate years. It is significant because it represents a greater reflection on the practicalities of his death, not just on the wording of a gravestone but also specifying the location of the burial. For Coleridge, the settlement of Hornsey, a little over a mile north-east of Highgate, was the place he envisaged, or at least anticipated, as his final resting place. I have previously explained in this chapter how a new church was built for Highgate in 1832; however, burial rights remained in the grounds of the chapel at Highgate School. Griggs provides the background about the uncertainty of burials, particularly for the Coleridge family plot at the site following the chapel's demolition in 1832. (*CL* VI, 993-97) I argue that the uncertainty surrounding the future of the chapel burial ground prompted Coleridge to consider other nearby locations, such as Hornsey. Sullivan draws attention to how "Dirt is our radically local, material environment,"[442] and it is within this "radically local" setting that Coleridge views as his future burial site, under the "Sod" (l.2) of an area he knew well. Although this location became his adopted home, he felt comfortable choosing it for his eternal resting place rather than seeking a relocation or procession elsewhere.[443] The hope is for a simple and fitting legacy that is intrinsically linked to the location where he had

[439] Paley. *Coleridge's Later Poetry*. 124.
[440] Swann. "Coleridge's Later Poetry," 231.
[441] Paley. *Coleridge's Later Poetry*. 125.
[442] Sullivan. "Dirt Theory and Material Ecocriticism," 529.
[443] Coleridge witnessed Lord Byron's funeral procession passing Highgate High Street in July 1824 on its way to Nottingham.
See, John Beer. *Coleridge's Play of Mind* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010) 227.

spent almost two decades of his life. This would indicate a sense of emotional and spiritual rootedness in a place that resembles his time in the West Country.

In addition to the strong emphasis on a burial site in some variations, the poem also clearly specifies that the final resting place should be a Christian place. The repeated insistences in the poem, and possibly the inscription on the gravestone, is directly towards a Christian individual who has encountered the plot- 'Epitaph on Poor Col' includes the line "Stop, Christian Visitor!" (l.1) whilst 'S.T.C.' addresses a "Christian Passer-by" (l.1). The adamant depiction of Coleridge's resting place being found or chanced upon by a Christian emphasises his wishes for a Christian burial and the continued presence of Christianity not just in his life but also in his legacy. The reader is told that it was not an easy life, for it was filled with "many a year with toil of breath" (l.5), suggesting a long and audacious struggle to reach the status of a poet.

The hope is that having previously found "death in life" (l.6), as evidenced by his numerous troubles and failed ambitions, he may now find "life in death" (l.6). The spectre-woman in later editions of the 'Ancient Mariner' is described as "The Night-mare Life-in-Death" (l.193) who declares "the game is done" (l.197) and her victory is rewarded with the death of all the crew, except the Mariner. This "Life-in-Death" is a horrific monstrosity that claims dominance over the suffering of others, with the Mariner being the only life amongst the dead. In 'S.T.C.', "life in death" (l.6) is not about a game of life but the legacy that exists after death itself. Coleridge aspires to be a person who continues to live symbolically as a figure and poet of note, where he is spoken about, read, and studied long after his mortal body has been buried. This "life in death" does not view death as the end or as the final chapter of Coleridge's existence, when there is still a physical collection of works that continue to tell his story and prevent his fading from memory. The security of his legacy, primarily as "a Poet [who] lies" in the graveyard (l.3), is essential for making the "toil of Breath" (l.5) worth the labour and energy. Although the poem expresses the need "to be forgiven for Fame" (l.7), suggesting that fame is but vanity, it also stresses the value of being recognised for hard work and the importance of status which Coleridge had "ask'd, and hoped thro' Christ." (l.8) To be remembered and known by the initials "S. T. C." (l.4) would be an indication that the struggle of Coleridge as man and poet was, in his eyes, worthwhile.

Coleridge's previously conflicting and paradoxical beliefs are shown to become more stable and grounded in certainty later in his life. The prevailing orthodoxy that he adopts during this time becomes one of the key motivations in both his poetic and theological writing. His poetry has been shown to become more reflective of his achievements and

legacy whilst also dwelling on some of the pertinent issues of the age. Coleridge's consistency of faith drives his critique of social and political issues, especially in his advocation for a universal "Catholic" faith to hold power. The cultivation of the mind and culture of society through a spiritual and intellectual elite has been shown to have far-reaching consequences in the Long Nineteenth Century. The influence of this practise on High Church Anglicanism, specifically the Oxford Movement, will be explored in the following chapter as we move into the Victorian age and the writing of Christina Rossetti.

# Chapter 3: Christina Rossetti and the Liturgy of the City

*Why one day in the country*
*Is worth a month in town;*
*Is worth a day and a year*
*Of the dusty, musty, lag-last fashion*
*That days drone elsewhere*.

'Summer'
(*CP* 137, ll.22-6)

In an entry for *Time Flies: A Reading Diary* (1885), Christina Rossetti discusses the value of an object when its surroundings and contexts are considered. She writes, "Dirt has been hopefully defined as 'something out of place.' This admirable definition applies no less encouragingly to some faults. Where actually placed, they are faults: placed elsewhere they might develop into virtues." (*TF* 49) Rossetti[444] addresses the value, or "virtues", as she refers to it, of all objects, thereby forcing a re-examination of the relationship between human and non-human entities. Dirt is regarded as "something out of place", and in Rossetti's mostly urban existence, the presence of dirt had negative connotations of pollution as well as the imagery of staining of innocence and purity. Concerning purity and danger, Mary Douglas argues that "there is no such thing as absolute dirt: it exists in the eye of the beholder […] Dirt offends against order."[445] The prominence of dirt and its derivatives becomes a recurring feature in Victorian industrial cities, where dirt no longer represents the quaintness of a rural setting but embodies the harsher realities of urban living. It seemingly has no redeeming qualities outside of the countryside and closely aligns with the transgression, immorality, and poverty that permeated the city. Rossetti's linking of dirt to faults and virtues demonstrates the shifting attitudes towards dirt and contamination, particularly within a High Anglican orthodox framework.

The poet and priest John Keble, a key figure of the High Church Oxford Movement, spoke out against the rise of the industrial cities, stating that rural residents "show keener solicitude […] they may find secure and inviolate repose in their native place, side by side with their forefathers, and in the familiar plot of dedicated ground."[446] According to Keble, by living closer to nature, these country residents also lived closer to God, maintaining the

[444] For clarity, the use of "Rossetti" in this chapter refers to Christina Rossetti. Other members of the Rossetti family will be referenced by their forenames: Gabriele (Father), Frances (Mother), Maria (Sister), Gabriel (Brother), and William (Brother).
[445] Douglas. *Purity and Danger*. 2.
[446] John Keble. *Keble's Lectures on Poetry: 1832-1841*. Volume 1. trans. Edward Kershaw Francis (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1912) 32.

traditional values and rural hierarchies that seemingly maintained Christian virtue and morality. Although a devout follower of the High Church movement, which Keble and his contemporaries had endorsed, Rossetti's beliefs are much more complex when accounting for her experiences in the city, forcing a reassessment of her Christian orthodoxy. While the city would become noted for many troubling qualities, I want to present Rossetti as a High Anglican follower who disproves Keble's comments by showing how faith can work harmoniously with the city. The seemingly absent nature and rural hierarchies in the urban environment do not contribute to God's disappearance, as I will show with Rossetti.[447] Instead, it informs the need for a radical adjustment of beliefs that pushes against the secularisation narrative and demonstrates an adaptation of the High Church beliefs in urban environments. For Rossetti, the belief in God enhances the world and her surroundings within a High Church framework, providing spiritual and poetic nourishment.

Through a close reading of her poems and correspondence, I demonstrate how Rossetti's writing reflects her perspective as a woman of High Church orthodox beliefs who lived in a rapidly changing urban environment. I begin by charting the growth of cities such as London in the early nineteenth century and the concerns Keble expressed about it. I will, however, contrast this by examining and viewing Rossetti as a poet of the city who voiced great positivity about urban life. The influence of such an environment is essential to understanding and reconceptualising the development of her poetry and theological views within an urban setting. I will show how Rossetti's correspondence and selected poems reveal her affinity for city life and how it responds to the challenges of living there. By focusing on her High Church beliefs, I will study the vibrancy of Rossetti's city and how faith transforms her experience of space and place in such a way that the urban environment is imbued with qualities that spur poetic invention—qualities that are usually imagined to be confined to rural settings. Her writing brings together an understanding of rural ecologies and urban sensibilities about place.

**Rossetti in the City**

In "The city mouse lives in a house" from *Sing-Song: A Nursery Rhyme Book* (1872), a distinction is drawn by Rossetti between the city mouse "who lives in a house" (*CP* 241,

[447] In urban and metropolitan centres, elements of nature certainly existed but these differed from rural environments and more conventionally understood ecologies. The royal parks such as Hyde Park, Green Park, and Regent's Park, along with the inclusion of garden squares in the fashionable Georgian developments in places such as Bloomsbury and Fitzrovia, provided pockets of nature in the city.

l.1) and the garden mouse who "lives in a bower." (l.2)[448] The city mouse is shown to have a studier home and an abundance of food where they can eat "bread and cheese" (l.5), whilst the garden mouse "eats what he can." (l.6) There is less certainty of how the garden mouse survives, the food seemingly sparser and more unregulated compared to the opulence of bread and cheese. The city mouse is, therefore, shown to live in a more comfortable setting, with processed food readily available. He, however, lacks the connection and empathy with raw nature that is enjoyed by the garden mouse who "sees the pretty plants in flower" and eats "seeds and stalks." (l.4 and l.7) Another poem from the same collection, 'A City Plum', argues that "A city plum is not a plum" (*CP* 229, l.1), a possible reference to a "plum" as a now rare slang term, as Betty S. Flowers explains, for "someone who possesses £100,000." (*CP* 948)[449] The city plum is not a plum in the usual sense of the word but could be seen as having a greater materialistic, monetary value.

The poem draws on the distinctions between epithets and the nouns to which they are commonly added, such as "party rat" (l.3) and "captain's log" (l.6), which also appear in the poem. This educational tool emphasises the need to avoid confusion and to argue that language can be misleading - in this instance, the distinction between a plum and the city plum as two entirely different entities. In doing so, it highlights the experiential disparity underlying urban and rural food, where one is bought from a market or shop, and the other is harvested directly from a tree or natural source. A plum can be grown in the city, but its connection with the country and orchards poses the question of whether a plum grown in the city can indeed call itself a true plum. Where fruits and vegetables are sourced from the ground, trees, or shrubbery, there is a clear connection to them growing in the goodness of the open countryside in fine, nourished soil rather than the confines of a city garden or allotment surrounded by dust and pollution. The city plum, as Rossetti demonstrates in the poem, cannot be like a country-grown plum because it lacks the fundamental goodness of rural life, nutrition, and cultivation.

Rossetti draws attention to the contrasting perception of the urban and rural environments, performing what Douglas refers to as the "re-ordering [of] our environment, making it conform to an idea."[450] The countryside becomes a distant entity made unfamiliar

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[448] A bower being a shelter in a garden made from boughs or vines, the same structure appears in Coleridge's poem 'The Lime Tree Bower My Prison.' As a shelter, it provides some protection but is not fully enclosed from the outside world, in the way that a house is built.

[449] "It is possible to trace the slang term *plum* for £100,000 to *pluma*, a feather, the idea being that a man who had accumulated this sum had feathered his nest." Albert Barrere and Charles G. Leland. *A Dictionary of Slang, Jargon and Cant*. Volume 2. (London: Ballantyne Press, 1890) 140.

[450] Douglas. *Purity and Danger*. 3.

in the city because "dirty nature is something far away and disconnected from themselves and their bodies."[451] Dinah Roe refers to the Rossetti siblings as "the urban Rossettis,"[452] which establishes the city's significant presence on the family. This chapter will expand the term "the urban Rossettis" by emphasising its importance on Christina Rossetti, in particular. To do this, I will explore Rossetti's writing to demonstrate how the city is an essential and influencing factor that shapes her poetry and her religious beliefs. This, in turn, will be shown to profoundly impact Rossetti's perception of the world and the paradoxes of urban living.

The poet Sara Teasdale has argued that Rossetti's life, "to a greater extent than that of any other English poet of first rank, was a London life" (*Letters 1*, 294 fn.2), and this is essential to reassessing Rossetti as a poet of the city, whose works are shaped by the urban landscape. Rural-loving poets such as Wordsworth and Coleridge filled their poetry with depictions of the natural world. Gerard Manley Hopkins despised the city, as explored in the next chapter, and sought solace and comfort in the countryside. Rossetti, however, is not traditionally considered a city poet due to the prominence of nature and rural scenes in her writing. Contextually, London was where she spent most of her life, having been born and died there in 1830 and 1894, respectively.[453] She was at home in the urban environment, remarking, "I am not only as confirmed a Londoner as was Charles Lamb, but really doubt if it would be good for me, now, to sojourn often or long in the country."[454] It was a contented existence in the city and would be an environment she would defend in the face of negative criticism.

The places where Rossetti lived, in the vicinity of Bloomsbury, Fitzrovia, and Marylebone, saw significant socio-economic change in the early nineteenth-century. As Rosemary Ashton outlines:

> Bloomsbury was the location for educational innovation, from nursery to university, for the middle class and the working class, for men and for women; scientific advance in an age of rapid progress; medical research and teaching in the very large number of hospitals in the region; religious movements outside the Anglican mainstream; experiments in art, crafts, and architecture.[455]

Ashton, therefore, highlights the area's value in terms of culture, education, wealth, religion, and innovation, which may be regarded as some of the core themes of Rossetti's writing. The

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[451] Sullivan. "Dirt Theory and Material Ecocriticism," 526.
[452] Roe. *The Rossettis in Wonderland.* 35.
[453] There would be brief stays outside the capital for health reasons or to visit friends and relatives, plus a short period from 1853-54 when the family lived in Frome, Somerset running a school.
[454] William Sharp, "Some Reminiscences of Christina Rossetti," in *The Atlantic* (June 1895): 737.
[455] Rosemary Ashton. *Victorian Bloomsbury* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2012) ix.

population growth and residential developments drastically altered the local appearance from a semi-rural location to a fashionable district bordered by large pockets of poverty.[456] The Rossetti family home, initially at No. 38 Charlotte Street (now Hallam Street) in Bloomsbury,[457] is described by Kathleen Jones as "a rather run-down neighbourhood"; however, "the street was cheap, and the Rossettis had very little money."[458] The shortage of money meant that "the family lived hand-to-mouth, but within their means,"[459] emphasising the necessity of hard work to ensure an income. The household was a busy one with all four of the Rossetti children born between 1827 and 1830, following the marriage of the Italian Gabriele Rossetti (a political refugee who came to England in 1824) and the half-Italian, half-English Frances Rossetti (nee Polidori—from another Italian family also living in exile).[460]

In addition to the Rossetti children being of similar ages, the family also regularly entertained guests, as Virginia Woolf noted: "Italian exiles, among them organ grinders and other distressed compatriots."[461] Roe notes how "visitors ranged from the obscure (the gossipy bookseller Pietro Rolandi and a plaster-cast vendor named Sardi) to the famous, such as the composer Paganini […] sculptor Benedetto Sangiovanni, Count Carlo Pepoli and Filippo Pistrucci."[462] These regular visitors were a reminder of Rossetti's Italian heritage and the high esteem many felt towards Gabriele. In his biography of Rossetti, written a few years after her death, Mackenzie Bell argues that she was on the border of being both noticeably foreign and English such that no one "can fully understand Christina's many-sided personality without taking into account that foreign origin."[463] The visitors seemingly demonstrate a non-English influence in which "venerable expatriates discussed the latest political developments and reminisced about the old country."[464] Crucially, the household represented a haven for exiled individuals, who "could lose their foreigners' self-

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[456] Christopher and John Greenwood's map of London, published in 1827, the year after Gabriele and Frances Rossetti were married, shows the land north of Euston Road as a largely undeveloped and rural landscape, whilst the land south was the newest of the urban sprawl of the city. See: Richard Tames. *London: A Cultural History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006) 87; and Jeremy Black et al. *Great City Maps: A Historical Journey Through Maps, Plans, and Paintings*. (London: Dorling Kindersley Limited, 2016) 76-78

[457] Jane Marsh. *Christina Rossetti: A Literary Biography.* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1994) 4; and Kathleen Jones. *Learning Not to be First: The Life of Christina Rossetti.* (Gloucestershire: The Windrush Press, 1991) 2-3.

[458] Jones. *Learning Not to be First.* 2-3.

[459] Roe. *The Rossettis in Wonderland*. 24.

[460] For a thorough background of Gabriele and Frances, including their family history, early relationship, and time at No. 38 Charlotte Street, see: Roe. *The Rossettis in Wonderland*. 1-40.

[461] Virginia Woolf. "I am Christina Rossetti," in *The Essays of Virginia Woolf.*, Volume 5. ed. Stuart N. Clarke (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin, and Harcourt, 2010) 209.

[462] Roe. *The Rossettis in Wonderland*. 28.

[463] Mackenzie Bell. *Christina Rossetti: A Biographical and Critical Study* [1898] (New York: Haskell House, 1971) 136-37.

[464] Roe. *The Rossettis in Wonderland*. 28.

consciousness and be themselves once again."[465] Rossetti's education by her mother through the sights and sounds of the city was arguably thoroughly English, which Roe refers to as a "passionate pedagogy, with all its Romantic and Victorian contradictions."[466] This education was thoroughly modern, combining old and new practices in which Italian heritage and classical literature blended with art, culture, and contemporary British city life.

This unconventional household fostered creativity and served as an outlet for the children, with Jan Marsh noting that "No. 38 Charlotte Street had no garden, so the children played indoors."[467] Instead of facing the green spaces of Regent's Park, the view was dominated by buildings, which meant the Rossetti children were very much "born and reared in London."[468] The enclosed space of the house does not seem to have produced the effect of a prison or feelings of being trapped, with Roe demonstrating how "instead of feeling deprived in their cramped, urban environment, they took advantage of it, loftily referring to Regent's Park as 'the garden'."[469] Given the remarkable abrogation of boundaries separating private from public property, it becomes clear that the urban space is of great importance and comfort to Rossetti. The city presents endless potential and opportunities for curious and creative minds in a controlled and safe environment. The family enjoyed their lives in the city because, as Roe points out, "London was a place of transformation, excitement and infinite possibility."[470] The growing cosmopolitan landscape offered the Rossetti family the best of both worlds with natural and cultural excursions to places such as the British Museum, Regents Park and its Botanical Gardens, the Zoological Gardens, and Madame Tussauds Waxworks Museum nearby. The opportunities that the city offered Rossetti are crucial from the contextual perspective I am proposing in this chapter, which presents this vibrant and exciting environment as an influential factor in her poetry and religious beliefs.

**Romanticism and Rossetti**

Rossetti's writing shares many similarities with Romantic poetry, particularly in its use of nature as a symbol of divine presence and moral goodness. Whilst I am making the case that the city is a defining influence of Rossetti's life and poetry, I do not mean to suggest that she rejects nature and the countryside entirely. As Serena Trowbridge states, Rossetti

[465] Roe. *The Rossettis in Wonderland*. 28.
[466] Ibid. 346.
[467] Marsh. *Christina Rossetti: A Literary Biography*. 4.
[468] Ibid. 1.
[469] Roe. *The Rossettis in Wonderland*. 29.
[470] Ibid. xiii.

was "an urbanite whose love of nature, while genuine, was not rooted in a specific place; for her, a love of living things grew from her love for God."[471] As a result, I want to establish Rossetti's connection to Romanticism and her continuation of Romantic sentiments as significant to the development of her writing and beliefs. As Roe argues, "Rossetti's flowers and plants are all testimony to God's love,"[472] thereby highlighting a view of spirituality in nature with parallels to pantheism. Indeed, this is embodied in Rossetti's declaration that "all the earth is holy ground." (*CP* 350, l.1) The broader implications of Rossetti's understanding and appreciation of nature are related to two significant influences: Romantic art and literature, as examined in this section, and the High Church Oxford Movement, as explored later, which expounded the importance of God and nature.

Antony Harrison discusses how Rossetti's "quest for conciseness often compels her to generate meaning by manipulating allusions to Plato, the Bible, Saint Augustine, Dante, Petrarch, Herbert, Crashaw, Maturin, Coleridge, Keats, [and] Tennyson."[473] Marsh argues that the supernatural poem 'The Hour and the Ghost', featuring a bride and bridegroom whom the bride's deceased first lover haunts, was unique and that "only Coleridge and Tennyson had approached this flexibility in versification."[474] Betty Flowers refers to it as being "influenced by the traditional ballad of the demon lover" and highlights similarities with the version included in Sir Walter Scott's *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border* (1802-3) (*CP* 894). Gothic and natural imagery permeate Rossetti's poetry, forming a tangible link to the Romantics and the older poets and artists whom the Pre-Raphaelites championed.[475] Marsh further explains that the Pre-Raphaelite emphasis on drawing directly "from nature" was part of the process of "conveying a spiritual or moral message. History, religion and literature were their sources…"[476] Within this context, Rossetti's writing was inspired by observations made in her immediate surroundings. Therefore, all works based on these

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[471] Serena Trowbridge. "'Truth to nature': The Pleasures and dangers of the environment in Christina Rossetti's poetry," in *Victorian Writers and the Environment: Ecocritical Perspectives*. eds. Laurence W. Mazzeno and Ronald D. Morrison (Abingdon, Oxfordshire: Routledge, 2011) 65-66.
[472] Dinah Roe. *Christina Rossetti's Faithful Imagination: The Devotional Poetry and Prose* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006) 23.
[473] Antony H. Harrison. *Christina Rossetti in Context* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1988) 10.
[474] Marsh. *Christina Rossetti: A Literary Biography*. 190.
[475] The Pre-Raphaelites, initially known as the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, were founded in London in 1848 by a group of painters, poets, and critics, including Gabriel and William Rossetti. They sought to return to a style of art that involved significant observed detail, vibrancy of colour, and multiple layers of images and symbolism. Their principles and observations were also adopted by others, with Marsh including thirty-nine figures who became part of the wider circle, of which eleven were women, such as Christina. See: Jan Marsh. *The Pre-Raphaelite Circle* (Great Britain: National Gallery Publications, 2013) 3.
[476] Marsh. *The Pre-Raphaelite Circle*. 5.

observations are grounded in a truth, a likeness drawn from tangible and relatable experiences that are considered to have spiritual value.

Harrison observes that Rossetti "deliberately parodies"[477] the Romantics, noting that there is "almost no ideological debt to Romantic precursors."[478] A case has already been presented about how Rossetti perceived the city as an important location, which appears to go against the Romantic notion of the rural environment as the prime example of poetic beauty, as celebrated by Wordsworth and Coleridge.[479] I do not, however, perceive this as without Romantic influence; instead, the significance arises in how Rossetti reconceptualises Romantic thought by modifying it to fit with her surroundings and beliefs. In doing so, as Harrison explains, readers are witness to "her ability to rework a variety of Romantic styles and *topoi* in order to empower orthodox Christian values in a world where dangerously secular ideologies were increasingly parading themselves in attractive poetic garments."[480] The adaptation of Romantic ideology allows Rossetti to reconsider the value of the world from the perspective of a High Anglican orthodoxy that was evolving in the growing cities.

As a result, she is not wholly the product of Romanticism but instead finds natural elements that she emphasises with a recast of Christian meaning. Roe determines that "Wordsworth and Coleridge inhabited the countryside which inspired their poetry,"[481] an immersion that influences their interpretation of poetic feeling and emotion. This has been attested to and demonstrated specifically concerning Coleridge in the previous chapters. By contrast, Roe further explains that the Rossetti children "were content to conjure a vivid natural landscape from their memory."[482] Rossetti's experiences and observations of the countryside and the natural world could be "recollected in tranquillity," to borrow Wordsworth's phrase, with Rossetti's version of tranquillity being predominant in the city. In *Time Flies*, Rossetti recalls her "first vivid experience of death" occurring after the discovery of a dead mouse in the "orchard" near a "little cottage" (*TF*, 45). This morbid encounter causes concern over the "ghastly" experiences that could occur in the most seemingly idyllic rural settings (*TF*, 45). Recalling the events, Rossetti believes that she understands it "from a

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[477] Antony H. Harrison. "Christina Rossetti and the Romantics: Influences and Ideology," in *Influence and Resistance in Nineteenth-Century English Poetry.* eds. G. Kim Blank and Margot K. Louis (Great Britain: Macmillan, 1993) 131.
[478] Ibid. 131.
[479] There were, of course, a significant fraction of Romanticism focused on city life, but while there were poets within that group, it was mostly the province of essayists including Charles Lamb, William Hazlitt, and Thomas De Quincey.
[480] Harrison. "Christina Rossetti and the Romantics," 131.
[481] Roe. *The Rossettis in Wonderland*. 36.
[482] Ibid. 36.

wider and wiser view-point," suggesting a wider influence later in life of a religious and Romantic education (*TF,* 45). As a result, the event is summarised by accepting the country as a place of "rest and safety" and "the perfect peace of death" rather than of horror and fear. (*TF,* 45) In a poem from the collection *Sing-Song: A Nursery Rhyme Book*, Rossetti stresses that mankind must "Hurt no living thing" (*CP* 251, l.1). The litany of insects and bugs that follow attribute a value on all things from the "moth with dusty wings" (l.3) to the "dancing gnat" (l.6) and the "harmless worms" (l.7). Serena Trowbridge remarks that:

> Rossetti was always uncommonly fond of insects such as spiders, beetles, and worms; here it becomes clear that rather than associating them with death and decay, she instead places them in the spectrum of God's creation, to be loved along with the rest of the natural world.[483]

Rossetti is, therefore, shown to have a deep appreciation of the natural world and all the creatures that reside there. She does not cast judgment over the grotesqueness of the creatures but captures the beauty that exists in all creation, with everything having a value beyond superficial means. Rossetti's nature can be seen as a well-rounded and non-discriminatory environment, inclusive of every element and embodying the sentiment that "all the earth is holy ground" (l.1) because it is filled with God's creation, a "spot" that is "paradise" (l.3).[484]

William Sharp recalls how Rossetti pointed out that "there are more Lambs than Wordsworths among us townsfolk."[485] Rossetti was right to note the shift towards living in urban areas by equating it as the most obvious example of where artists, writers, and thinkers could now be found. Charles Lamb had moved from Islington to the Middlesex town of Enfield in 1827 and later to nearby Edmonton in 1833. Both were coaching stops between London and Hertfordshire but were becoming part of the urban sprawl as the land around the city was diminished. This growth had not deterred Lamb, who in 1828 wrote: "I shall do very well […] Enfield is beautiful."[486] Later, Lamb found some elements of the area dull, noting in a letter to Mary Shelley of 1830, "Don't run to a country village, which has been a market town but is no longer" and where "clowns stand about what was the market place and spit minutely to relieve ennui."[487] Enfield offered a semi-rural retreat but lacked the activity and vibrancy of the city. The character of places like Enfield and Edmonton changed as they

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[483] Trowbridge. "Truth to nature," 69.
[484] Later in this chapter, my discussion shows that the Mariner's spontaneous blessing of the sea snakes is the turning point of that poem, representing the transformational moment when he feels involuntary love for all life, whatever its physical form or position in biological taxonomic hierarchies. See page 147.
[485] Sharp, "Some Reminiscences of Christina Rossetti," 737.
[486] Charles Lamb in a letter to Charles Cowden Clarke as published in William Carew Hazlitt. "Unpublished Letters of Charles and Mary Lamb," in *The Atlantic* (February 1891): 153.
[487] Charles Lamb. *Selected Prose*. ed. Adam Phillips. (London: Penguin, 1985) 380.

became suburban and no longer offered the prospect of their former rural self-sufficiency. As Lamb said, there was an element of decline, and now the larger towns and cities offered the required interest. By Rossetti's time, places like Enfield were becoming an extension of London rather than a rural stopping point on a stagecoach service. As the cities and the towns grew, it was more likely that one would find art and artists exploring and living in this changing environment.

Rossetti would further use Lamb as an example of urban creativity in a comment when she stated, "I am not only as confirmed a Londoner as was Charles Lamb, but really doubt if it would be good for me, now, to sojourn often or long in the country."[488] Rossetti was somewhat dismissive about her ability as a writer and her understanding of the natural world when she stated:

> My knowledge of what is called nature is that of the town sparrow, or, at most, that of the pigeon which makes an excursion occasionally from its home in Regent's Park or Kensington Gardens. And, what is more, I am fairly sure that I am in the place that suits me best.[489]

Rossetti's understated and modest comment fails to consider the reality of extensive knowledge about nature and observations from Regent's Park and her grandparents' home in the Buckinghamshire village of Holmer Green. Her suggestion that she rarely ventured away from her proximity to the park may be valid in that most of her residences were within less than a kilometre or so from the park itself. She would, however, become a frequent visitor to friends and family and seek the health benefits prescribed to her in Hastings Old Town, Pevensey, Folkestone, Torquay, and Hampstead.[490]

Rossetti's time outside of London at Holmer Green provided an alternative location to the urban environment. The predominately city-dwelling Rossetti children seemingly struggled to adapt to a rural setting, with Jan Marsh drawing attention to when Gabriel was "scared by the mooing of a real-life cow."[491] Holmer Green offered a respite from the city, being around twenty-five miles from the family home in Bloomsbury and "a six-hour journey westwards beyond Uxbridge"[492] on the edge of the Chilterns and far from the busy world of the city. There was a vital religious significance to Holmer Green, as Marsh notes, because: "it was an area of historic Protestantism, not far from John Hampden's village and Milton's

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[488] Sharp, "Some Reminiscences of Christina Rossetti," 737.
[489] William Sharp. *Papers Critical & Reminiscent* (London: Heinemann, 1912) 70.
[490] Hampstead is a short distance from Coleridge's residence in nearby Highgate, close to where the Hopkins family had moved in the 1850s.
[491] Marsh. *Christina Rossetti: A Literary Biography.* 1.
[492] Ibid. 8.

cottage at Chalfont St Giles, with William Penn's ancestral home a mile or two away."[493] Even in the countryside, religion would remain a dominant and lingering entity that would complement the High Anglican beliefs and teachings instilled in the Rossetti children, particularly Maria and Christina, by their mother. Whilst this chapter pays particular attention to the city's influence in Rossetti's work, as Dinah Roe points out: "These visits to Buckinghamshire would prove that childhood impressions could be lasting ones."[494] It would provide a practical education on the natural world and a rural way of life that would not have been possible in the city. The observations and experiences in this environment emphasise a part of the country that may well have appeared to be a distant relic of a bygone age, more in keeping with the world of Coleridge and Wordsworth than of the new urban space that Rossetti was more familiar with.

In 'Summer', Rossetti proposes that:

> …one day in the country
> Is worth a month in town;
> Is worth a day and a year
> Of the dusty, musty, lag-last fashion
> That days drone elsewhere.
>
> (ll.22-26)

She comments here on the country's way of life regarding value, repeating the motif "is worth." The poem remarks on the lush colours and vibrant plant and animal life, which can only be experienced in such a rural location where the "larks hang singing, singing, singing" (l.9), "furry caterpillars hasten" (l.16), and "green apples blush." (l.20) The city cannot compare because it is "dusty, [and] musty", yet this is ambiguous as such dust and dirt is also true of the countryside, with both settings embodying their own form of grime and filth. Heather Sullivan emphasises that "dirt, soil, earth, and dust, surround us at all scales," and in the countryside, it is associated with goodness and "sustenance" as the provider of life.[495] In the city, there is the "rendering [of] nature [as] a far-away" entity.[496] The appearance of a "dusty, musty" urban environment draws a direct connection to pollution and filth rather than a rural idyll. As mentioned earlier, the plum and the city plum were presented as two largely separate things; dirt and dust are also perceived differently when experienced in the countryside or the city.

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[493] Marsh. *Christina Rossetti: A Literary Biography*. 8.
[494] Roe. *The Rossettis in Wonderland.* 36.
[495] Sullivan. "Dirt Theory and Material Ecocriticism," 515.
[496] Ibid. 515.

Rossetti continues to draw on such contrasts, where she notes the value of what the country offers over the town, which is deemed to be "worth" more (l.23). The optimism of country life relates to the vibrancy of summer "when every leaf is on its tree." (l.6) Summer replaces the "cold-hearted" winter (l.1), the ambivalence of "yea and nay" spring (l.2), and autumn, which is "a weathercock/ Blown every way." (ll.3-4) Other poems examine the short-lived joy of summer, including 'Bitter for Sweet' (1862), when "the last buds cease blowing" (*CP* 53, l.8), and 'Summer is Ended' (1881), where everything is left "scentless, colourless." (*CP* 324, l.2) What Rossetti demonstrates about the country is that the beauty and vibrancy can be fleeting, its temporary bloom and decline being offset by the hope that renewal will appear the following year. After the "death" of each year, marked by the "scentless, colourless" environment, there is always the beauty of the resurrection in each seasonal cycle when the world returns to its fullness and vibrancy. Therefore, Rossetti portrays both sides of country life through her experiences of visiting places such as Holmer Green, where the life and beauty of such locations are abundant in spring and summer but are followed by periods of decay and lifelessness.

In the north-eastern corner of Regent's Park, close to the Rossetti family home, the London Zoological Gardens offered an alternative way to view nature and exotic animals within an urban setting.[497] Takashi Ito argues that the "zoo's visitor profile reflects contemporary society, divided along class lines, but with all its fluidity and flexibility."[498] The zoo offered entertainment and curiosity across the different classes, eventually becoming "accessible, legitimately or illegitimately, to a range of social groups, from the landed gentlemen to urban professionals, and from middle-class country residents to working-class city dwellers."[499] It provided a respite from city life and was part of the "growing number of London residents and visitors [who] came to share opportunities to visit museums, galleries, menageries, parks, theatres and so forth."[500] These leisure pursuits' cultural and poetic value connects Rossetti with the Romantics, albeit in an urban setting.

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[497] Takashi Ito's *London Zoo and the Victorians, 1828-1859*, provides a comprehensive account of the foundations of the zoo; in particular, the chapter "The Question of Access" (pp.81-106) documents the opening of the zoo to the public. Takashi Ito. *London Zoo and the Victorians, 1828-1859* (Suffolk: Boydell Press, 2014). For more on the Royal Menagerie, see: Hannah Velten. *Beastly London: A History of Animals in the City* (London: Reaktion Books LTD, 2013) 145-53.
[498] Ito. *London Zoo and the Victorians, 1828-1859.* 3.
[499] Ibid. 5.
[500] Ibid. 6.

Rossetti was a frequent visitor to both the park and the zoo,[501] and regularly refers to it in her letters, even going as far as to call it "our beloved zoo" (*Letters 1*, 415) to her brother William. The zoo profoundly influenced her, with her letters providing insight into her thoughts and understanding of it and the animals she saw there. In one such example, she gives a highly descriptive rendering of her experience:

> …we have revisited the z. gardens. Lizards are in strong force, tortoises active, alligators are looking up. The weasel-headed armadillo as usual evaded us. A tree-frog came to light, the exact image of a tin toy to follow a magnet in a slop-basin. The blind wombat and neighbouring porcupine broke forth in short-lived hostilities, but apparently without permanent results. The young puma begins to bite. Your glorious sea-anemones:- I well know the strawberry specimen, but do not remember the green and purple.
>
> (*Letters 1*, 120)

The influence of these visits can be seen in Rossetti's early artistic sketches, including an 1862 series of pencil sketches called *Three Animal Studies: A Fennec Fox, Squirrels and a Wombat*.[502] Australian marsupials such as Wombats are not native to Britain, nor is the African and Arabian Fennec Fox. As such, it is not surprising that Rossetti would be fascinated by their exotic, otherworldly nature at the Zoo. Regent's Park and London Zoo offered a natural respite from the urban environment but within safely contained and confined parameters.

The wombat would have been a most unusual sight to Rossetti and would have certainly opened her eyes to the prospect of new places, lands, and realms beyond the limits of London and, indeed, beyond the Great British and Irish Isles. Wombats would feature in Rossetti's 'Goblin Market' where the merchant goblins are described like animals: "One had a cat's face,/ One whisk'd a tail." (*CP* 7, ll.71-72) The sight of the wombat at London Zoo can be seen in a later line where the merchant is described "like a wombat prowl'd obtuse and furry." (l.75) It was one of many references to wombats that occurred in the works of the Pre-Raphaelites that resulted in Angus Trumble declaring that "the very idea of the wombat, not so much the creature himself, that consistently captured the imagination of visitors."[503] The

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[501] An Ordnance Survey map produced in 1870 notes that the zoo had a Giraffe and Hippopotamus House, an Elephant and Rhinoceros House, a Monkey House, a Great Carnivore House, and a Zebra and Antelope House- *Ordnance Survey Map*. "OS Six-inch England and Wales, 1841-1952: London (First Editions c1850s) XXV. Surveyed: 1870, Published: 1876." from *National Library of Scotland.* <https://maps.nls.uk/view/103312994> *(*Accessed September 28, 2021)

[502] Dinah Roe "'Come and See': Christina Rossetti's Illustrations for The Christian Year," in *Christina Rossetti: Poetry in Art.* eds. Susan Owens and Nicholas Tromans (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2018) 104.

[503] Angus Trumble. "Rossetti's Wombat: A Pre-Raphaelite Obsession in Victorian England," *Lecture to the National Library of Australia, Canberra*, April 16, 2003 <https://www.nla.gov.au/angus-trumble/rossettis-wombat-a-pre-raphaelite-obsession-in-victorian-england> (Accessed September 23, 2021).

Pre-Raphaelite sculptor Thomas Woolner had described Australia as barren and unattractive, noting it was: "an unpoetic country: a land where the birds cannot sing, nor flowers give perfume, scarcely: a land without fruit or vegetable."[504] The allure of the wombats at London Zoo and in Gabriel's personal life[505] demonstrates the mass appeal of a strange and curious creature that could be observed so close to the Rossetti family home.

Unlike their brothers, who went to boarding school, Christina and Maria were educated at home by their mother. The Rossetti women were part of an education that involved the passing down of knowledge from Frances to her two daughters. The surrounding parks, zoos, wildlife, and museums would indeed have been part of the formative education and lessons on life. Dinah Roe states that the family considered the zoo "their 'garden'; the Rossettis thought of their city as a home to craning giraffes and trumpeting elephants as well as bustling cab-stands and Rookeries teeming with thieves."[506] Indeed the noise of animals features throughout Rossetti's works, including in *Sing-Song: A Nursery Rhyme Book*, where the onomatopoeic sound "Kookoorookoo! kookoorookoo!" is the title of one poem (*CP* 228, l.1 and l.5), it and "Kikirikee! kikirikee!" (l.3 and l.7) being attributed as the calls of the "cock" (l.2) and the "early birds." (l.6) The blurring of the lines between the animals and human in this urban environment is evident too as Rossetti's "earliest memory was of her father crowing like a cock to wake up his children." (*CP* 948) For all its urban setting, the Rossettis' world abounded with wildlife, despite many of those animals living in their natural habitat or indeed their country of origin. It is, therefore, an odd mix of the wild and the artificially created environment that the Rossetti family experienced. It offered an education and understanding, unlike anything an inhabitant of the country would experience or understand.

Wordsworth and Coleridge may have had the rolling hills and countryside with its overt ecological system at their disposal; Rossetti, however, witnessed a natural world that was not her own at a closer distance where it provided inspiration and respite from

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[504] Thomas Woolner and Amy Woolner. *Thomas Woolner, R.A., Sculptor and Poet: His Life in Letters Written by His Daughter Amy Woolner* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1917) 22.

[505] The surviving letters from Woolner do not reference wombats, but they were likely to be one of the exotic creatures he spoke of on his return to England. Gabriel Rossetti would purchase the first of two wombats in 1869, which Trumble suggests was the "culmination of well over 12 years of enthusiasm for the exotic marsupial."- Trumble. "Rossetti's Wombat."
Valentine Cameron Prinsep, one of the artists involved in painting the Oxford Union with Gabriel and Edward Burne-Jones, stated that "[Gabriel] Rossetti was the planet around which we revolved […] we copied his very way of speaking. All beautiful women were 'stunners' with us." Wombats were the most beautiful of God's creatures."- Valentine Cameron Prinsep. *An Anthology of Pre-Raphaelite Writings* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997) 43.

[506] Roe. *The Rossettis in Wonderland*. xiii.

ordinariness. For instance, Roe refers to Rossetti accompanying William Stillman and his son, noting how "she understood that a magical glimpse of a giraffe elegantly making its way through the urban park could be better medicine than the invasive proddings and pokings of the capital's finest surgeons."[507] The Zoological Gardens provided the perfect location to observe and understand the natural world in a controlled environment rather than the wild and untamed countryside. Here, Rossetti could gather her knowledge of the natural world and the animal kingdom, which she could later recollect through her art and poetry.

**The Oxford Movement in London**

G. B. Tennyson describes Rossetti as "the true inheritor of the Tractarian devotional mode in poetry. Most of what the Tractarians advocated in theory and sought to put into practice came to fruition in the poetry of Christina Rossetti."[508] In the previous section, I laid out the foundations for understanding Rossetti's Romantic influences, but as I have previously referenced, her religious beliefs are essential in demonstrating how she ascribes value and significance to the world she inhabits. Her beliefs as a follower of the Oxford Movement, or Tractarianism,[509] living in the city provides a significant understanding and perception of Victorian urban society. It becomes clear that the Oxford Movement, and therefore Rossetti herself, shows a progression of thought related to Coleridge and the Romantic poets. They represent an evolution of Romantic ideals coupled with orthodox Christianity, something that would be particularly important in the growing industrial cities of the nineteenth-century.

The poet and priest John Keble believed that "rural character" was related to "special subtlety and grace – whether associated with reverent regard for particular places, for the departed, or for a Higher Power."[510] Keble's vision of Christianity was "one intrinsically rustic and English,"[511] with the urban environment seemingly being the antipathy of this rural

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[507] Roe. *The Rossettis in Wonderlan*d. 306.
[508] G. B. Tennyson. *Victorian Devotional Poetry: The Tractarian Mode* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1981) 198.
[509] For clarity, this thesis employs the name "Oxford Movement" due to the emphasis on location, which forms a crucial part of this research- the term itself appears to date back to around 1841. See: Owen Chadwick. *The Spirit of the Oxford Movement* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990) 136.
There are several additional names that are also attributed to the Movement: the Tractarians, due to their theological publication entitled *Tracts for the Times* (1833-1841); Newmanites, due to the leadership of its most charismatic member, John Henry Newman, until his conversion to Roman Catholicism in 1845; and Puseyites, after Edward Bouverie Pusey who was the spiritual successor to Newman after 1845. The terms "Tractarians" or "Tractarianism" will only be employed or quoted if the source material refers to it in this manner.
[510] Keble. *Keble's Lectures on Poetry.* 35.
[511] Sheridan Gilley. "John Keble and the Victorian Churching of Romanticism," in *An Infinite Complexity: Essays in Romanticism*. ed. J. R. Watson (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1983) 226.

idyll. As one of the principal figures of the Oxford Movement, Keble had been part of the High Church's ambition to restore what Kenneth Inglis calls: "an imagined past in which the church helped to keep society firm, seamless and serene."[512] This romanticised notion of a historically pious population is arguably fanciful, but believing in this gave "many clergyman a heightened sense of pastoral responsibility; and among these men some came to believe that they had a special mission to the multitude."[513] Keble's comment that Christianity is inherently linked to a rural way of life represents an anti-urban stance, particularly in his declaration that townsmen "are more habituated to daily avocations in the full light of publicity: and so waste no time in search for expedients and indirect methods, but give full vent to their feelings."[514] His view was that the towns and cities were corrupting places filled with dissatisfied risk-takers who were unappreciative of religious morals and disrespected simple truths.

Owen Chadwick draws attention to Keble's notion that "in the industrial city [there] was no squire, no person, no tradition, no community…"[515] The lack of rural hierarchies and certainty troubles Keble, yet Rossetti's strong High Anglican beliefs demonstrate how this view was misguided and that a Christian orthodoxy could thrive in the urban environment. The Movement's spread outside Oxford would see its influence extend to a much wider audience than the clergy and university members. Emma Mason draws attention to the fact that "the spread of ritualism, born into the Victorian consciousness by the Oxford Movement" had a long-lasting effect throughout the rest of the nineteenth-century.[516] Mason describes the "ritualistic scene especially prominent in London,"[517] an influence significant to conceptualising Rossetti's religious motivations and the material and spiritual worlds she encounters. The spread of the High Church in industrial cities, such as London, opposes Keble's claims that English Christianity required the countryside to function. These cities would become important centres for worship that fed into "the Victorian consciousness," as Mason refers to it, built on a Christian tradition and orthodoxy in the face of significant urban change.

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[512] Kenneth Inglis. *Churches and the Working Classes in Victorian England* (London: Routledge, 1963) 5.
[513] Ibid. 8.
[514] Keble. *Keble's Lectures on Poetry*. 36.
[515] Chadwick. *The Victorian Church, Part One*. 325.
[516] Emma Mason. "'A Sort of Aesthetico-Catholic Revival': Christina Rossetti and the London Ritualist Scene," in *Outsiders Looking in: The Rossettis Then and Now*. eds. David Clifford and Laurence Roussillon (London: Anthem, 2004) 115.
[517] Ibid. 116.

Several churches claim to be the first Oxford Movement influenced church in London, including St. Barnabas' Church, Pimlico, and St. Paul's Church, Knightsbridge.[518] These churches make their assertion based on claims relating to the 1850s and 1860s, which is considerably later than when the Rossetti women left St Katherine's Chapel for Christ Church, Albany Street, in 1843.[519] Diane D'Amico and David A. Kent describe Christ Church as "the leading London church of the Oxford Movement,"[520] suggesting that the Oxford Movement's influence was felt much earlier in London than previously thought. Jan Marsh notes that Christ Church "had been established on a rising tide of High Anglican ardour. Located between the stuccoed terraces of Regents Park and the slum terraces of Cumberland Market."[521] The parish included wealthy and working-class communities, with the church playing a vital role in connecting these two worlds, serving as a religious middle ground. The blending of these socially and economically opposing aspects of the area will become crucial in understanding its later impact on Rossetti.

Marsh decribes William Dodsworth, who led Christ Church from 1837 until his resignation and conversion to Roman Catholicism in the 1850s, as an "intense, passionate and persuasive disciple" of Edward Pusey and the Oxford Movement.[522] Through Dodsworth, there was a meaningful connection to the first generation of Oxford Movement clergy and the traditional, orthodox emphasis that it had on Christian teaching. Under Dodsworth, there were "daily services and saints' days, employed curates and built up an atmosphere of pioneering piety,"[523] which helped establish Christ Church as a crucial base for the thinking and followers of Anglo-Catholicism, as it became known.[524]

The Rossetti women attended Christ Church after disappointing experiences at Holy Trinity Church in Marylebone and St Katherine's Chapel, which Georgina Battiscombe

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[518] The Diocese of London refers to St. Barnabas as "the first purpose-built church to embody the principles of the Oxford Movement." in "Church Guide" <https://www.stbarnabaspimlico.com/church-guide.html> (accessed August 10, 2023). St Paul's makes a similar claim of being "the first church in London to champion the ideals of the 'Oxford Movement'" in "History" <https://www.stpaulsknightsbridge.org/who-we-are/history/> (accessed August 10, 2023).

[519] Marsh. *Christina Rossetti: A Literary Biography*. 55; and Georgina Battiscombe. *Christina Rossetti: A Divided Life.* (Great Britain: Constable and Company, 1981) 30.

[520] Diane D'Amico and David A. Kent. "Rossetti and the Tractarians," *Victorian Poetry*, Volume 44, no. 1 (2006): 93.

[521] Marsh. *Christina Rossetti: A Literary Biography*. 55.

[522] Ibid. 56.

[523] Ibid. 57.

[524] One such parishioner was Coleridge's daughter Sara, who provides an account of Pusey preaching at Christ Church in 1845. See: *Sara Coleridge. Memoir and Letters of Sara Coleridge*. ed. Edith Coleridge (London: Henry S. King, 1873) 332-33.
For more on Sara Coleridge's links to the Oxford Movement, see: Robin Schofield. *Sara Coleridge and the Oxford Movement: Selected Religious Writings* (London: Anthem Press, 2020).

describes as "two respectable but not particularly inspiring places of worship."[525] In Christ Church and Dodsworth, they found a different style that was "alive" compared to the feeling of the "safely moribund" churches in other locations.[526] This High Church traditionalism was embraced with enthusiasm by the Rossetti women and became one of the most critical aspects of their lives. Her brother William suggests that "Christina's proper place was in the Roman Catholic Church […] Her satisfaction in remaining a member of the English Church may have been partly due to her deep affection for her mother." (*PW* lv) This is conjecture on William's part, as such sentiments of wanting to join the Roman Catholic Church are not expressed in the letters of Rossetti, and she appears contented primarily with the style of worship at Christ Church. Other Christians' suspicion of the High Church prompted individuals such as the Rossetti women to refute claims that it was aligned with Roman Catholicism.[527]

Dinah Roe draws attention to how Christ Church emphasised the importance of women's work in the church, where it was "both a literary and a religious movement. It was defined by a particularly Victorian blend of romance and realism, where the mystery of the Eucharist and the power of literature were as central to worship as parish visiting and setting up soup kitchens."[528] In Christ Church and the Oxford Movement, the Rossetti women found that their interests in faith and the arts were catered for while feeling valued in the community. It appears paradoxical that "within the confines of the conservative, traditional and authoritarian Anglo-Catholic church" the Rossetti women experienced their freedoms and "express[ed] their most egalitarian and reform-minded ideals."[529] G. K. Chesterton would later reflect on how a Christian orthodoxy offered freedom for some, noting how it was "the very doctrine which is called the most old-fashioned [and] was found to be the only safeguard of the new democracies of the earth. The doctrine seemingly most unpopular was found to be the only strength of the people."[530] Rossetti exhibits a high degree of complexity by expressing orthodox, conservative beliefs while demonstrating socialist and liberal tendencies. As with Coleridge, Rossetti's orthodoxy is founded on High Church principles of

[525] Battiscombe. *Christina Rossetti*. 30.
[526] Ibid. 30.
[527] Roe notes how Frances wrote an "anti-Roman Catholic poem" to voice her concerns- Roe. *The Rossettis in Wonderlan*d. 62.
[528] Roe. *The Rossettis in Wonderlan*d. 61.
[529] Mary Arseneau. "Pews, Periodicals and Politics: The Rossetti Women as High Church Controversialists," in *Outsiders Looking in: The Rossetti's Then and Now*. eds. David Clifford and Laurence Roussillon (London: Anthem Press, 2004) 97.
[530] Chesterton. *Orthodoxy*. 214-15.

tradition and conviction, but it is also malleable to account for the greater Christian sympathy required to comprehend and support reform and better social practices.

The persuasiveness of Dodsworth and other priests at Christ Church profoundly impacted the Rossetti women. The sisters frequented the British Museum, leading Emma Mason to refer to a "British Museum religion,"[531] where it represented a further regular location of solace outside of church attendance. The museum's library "provided sources of religious reading material alongside the books she found in family libraries or borrowed from her bibliophile brothers."[532] Rossetti registered as a reader at the British Museum in 1860, "where she pursued scholarly research, especially from 1876 to the early 1890s."[533] The museum was not, however, simply a place of research but one of intrigue and sometimes terror, with Rossetti recalling how Maria was unnerved by the mummy room and "shrank from entering […] under a vivid realisation of how the general resurrection might occur even as one stood among those solemn corpses turned into a sight for sightseers." (*TF* 128) Maria's reaction to an apocalyptic resurrection of the mummies does not appear to be shared by her sister, although it does demonstrate a similar intense religious response to the world around them.

There is a childlike naivety in this portrayal of Maria; as Lona Mosk Packer highlights, Maria may have given "the general impression of her dismal priggishness", but she was also noted for "her good sense and independence of thought."[534] Mason argues that Dodsworth's sermons at Christ Church greatly influenced Maria's thinking about the apocalypse and the resurrection of the dead.[535] Although Rossetti did not have the same reaction as her sister, she did meditate on the apocalypse and the end of things in collections such as *The Face of the Deep: A Devotional Commentary on the Apocalypse* (1893).[536] Maria's fear of the resurrection of the dead draws similarities to the post-crucifixion scenes, which state: "the earth did quake, and the rocks rent, and the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints which slept arose, and came out of the graves after his resurrection, and

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[531] Emma Mason. *Christina Rossetti: Poetry, Ecology, Faith* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018) 43.
[532] Ibid. 43.
[533] Susan David Bernstein. "Radical Readers at the British Museum: Eleanor Marx, Clementina Black, Amy Levy," *Nineteenth-Century Gender Studies*. Issue 3.2 (Summer 2007) No page number provided <https://www.ncgsjournal.com/issue32/bernstein.html> (accessed May 27, 2023).
[534] Lona Mosk Packer. "Maria Francesca to Dante Gabriel Rossetti: Some Unpublished Letters," *PMLA*, Volume 79, No. 5 (December 1964): 613.
[535] Mason. *Christina Rossetti: Poetry, Ecology, Faith*. 46.
[536] For more on Rossetti and the Apocalypse, see: Lucy Sixsmith. "Christina Rossetti's Apocalypse: Rhythm and Deferral in The Face of the Deep," *The Cambridge Quarterly*, Volume 49, Issue 4, (December 2020): 357–71; and Joshua King. "Revelatory Beasts: Christina Rossetti on the Apocalypse and Creation's Worship," *Christianity & Literature* 70, no. 4 (2021): 382-403.

went into the holy city, and appeared unto many." (*Matthew* 27:51-53) The saints and the faithful are described as sleeping rather than dead. When Rossetti writes to "Tread softly" because "all the earth is holy ground" (*CP* 350, l.1), it also declares that this world is "where Faith has triumphed" (l.5) and where "the dust of saints may rise…" (l.7) The land is holy because of the victory of faith, and the "dead" will "come [back] to life," resulting in all that is "lost [having] been found." (l.4) The distinction is that death will not be the end but is instead the start of a journey through which the strength of faith continues to perpetuate life.

Virginia Woolf recognised the importance of faith in Rossetti's work by noting that Rossetti's "sixty-four years seem outwardly spent in Hallam Street and Endsleigh Gardens and Torrington Square, but in reality, she dwelt in some curious region where the spirit strives towards an unseen God."[537] Woolf is critical of what she calls: "a dark God, a harsh God – a God who decreed that all the pleasures of the world were hateful to Him. The theatre was hateful, the opera was hateful, nakedness was hateful."[538] She argues that Rossetti's faith was a barrier to love and enjoyment, stating that "her belief regulated her life in the smallest particulars."[539] Woolf is specifically interested in the agony and tortured aspect of Rossetti's character, noting the "pressure of a tremendous faith circling and clamping together these little songs."[540] Poems such as 'Good Friday' highlight the "exceeding grief" (*CP* 181, l.6) of faith and the struggle to feel connected to Christ and his sacrifice at the crucifixion. The speaker is concerned that upon witnessing Christ's execution, they find themselves observing the scene but "yet [do] not weep" (l.4); their lack of emotional connection is a troubling thought. All those around them are "weeping bitterly" (l.7), including the thief executed beside Christ, who is also "moved" (l.8). The speaker's inadequacy in feeling the same as others leads them to conclude that they are cold, hard, and unfeeling like a "stone" (l.1) and reinforces the negativity and anguish of self-loathing. The final line extends the stone simile and metaphor by pleading with God to look again at Earth and confirm the physical connection between heaven and Earth by smiting a rock. (ll.14-16)

'Good Friday' demonstrates Woolf's argument that Rossetti's faith was a defining factor in how she thought and felt, particularly in comparing her life and beliefs to those around her. In doing so, feelings of inadequacy arise, leading to moments such as those in 'Good Friday', where there is a chastisement for not conforming and experiencing the same

[537] Woolf. "I am Christina Rossetti," 210.
[538] Ibid. 210.
[539] Ibid. 210.
[540] Ibid. 212-13.

faith as others who appear to exert a greater religiosity than her own. For Woolf, this is the great sadness surrounding Rossetti's life and work, in which her faith seemingly holds her back and prevents her from finding true happiness. Woolf argued, "If I were bringing a case against God, she [Rossetti] is one of the first witnesses I should call,"[541] concluding that God is punishable and guilty for the anguish and torment felt by Rossetti.

C. Brad Faught argues that Rossetti's emotional breakdown at age fifteen was the result of "spiritual and psychological strain brought on by the Tractarian demands for purity and holiness in advance of confirmation."[542] Roe further draws attention to the fact that the "Tractarians also recognised and validated the importance of female work,"[543] and this value on the importance of women acts as a critical prompt for the dedication and labour of all sexes. Arguably, it created a form of liberation as "the Tractarians capitalised on this neglected demographic, mobilising this undervalued workforce by sending women out into the community to teach, nurse and spread the Word of God."[544] This sense of purpose and duty is vital to understanding Rossetti's motivations, but it also provides insight into her struggles to serve the church in this manner. As such, this counters Woolf's statement that Rossetti was bound and constrained by her faith. In contrast, as Roe highlights, High Anglicanism gave Rossetti and other women a great sense of connection and duty. Even though the motivations of the Oxford Movement could be seen as exploitative in its utilisation of free labour, it gave the Rossetti women a sense of purpose by instilling the notion that they were helping the community and helping in God's work. Rossetti recognised that "Faith and Hope shall merge together/ In Charity" (*CP* 633, ll.11-12) and that this approach was necessary because to "save Love alone, shall die…" (l.10) The love of God is not enough on its own; instead a combination of faith and hope is deemed essential for Christian charity.

Faught highlights the "spiritual and psychological strain"[545] of religious devotion and commitment to achieve apparent pious perfection. In 1845, Pusey and Dodsworth established the Park Village Sisterhood, a new religious community in the Christ Church parish. The Sisterhood were to "devote their lives to God and to the poor"[546] and represented the revival

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[541] Virginia Woolf. *The Diary of Virginia Woolf, Volume I: 1915-1918*. ed. Anne Olivier Bell (London: Hogarth Press, 1977) 178.
[542] C. Brad Faught. *The Oxford Movement: A Thematic History of the Tractarians and their Times* (Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2003) 110.
[543] Roe. *The Rossettis in Wonderland*. 60.
[544] Ibid. 61.
[545] Faught. *The Oxford Movement.* 110.
[546] Susan Mumm. *All Saints Sisters of the Poor: An Anglican Sisterhood in the Nineteenth Century* (Suffolk: The Boydell Press, 2001) xi.

of female religious communities in the Church of England, which had been disbanded in the sixteenth century. This sisterhood provided "authority and autonomy for women with anglo-catholic [sic] theology", which in the early days offered "little glamour" but instilled a sense of hard work and dedication to maintain and operate.[547] Jan Marsh argues that High Church places of worship, such as Christ Church, "urged worshippers to consecrate their lives to God, using rediscovered hagiography and saints' stories as models of Christian sacrifice."[548] That emphasis on charity and piety, particularly the struggle to maintain both, as I will show, shaped Rossetti's life and writing.

In 'The Convent Threshold' (1858), the narrator struggles between her Christian faith and her guilt with her lover. She pleads with her beloved to repent, believing that they have brought dishonour to their families through their "pleasant sin." (*CP* 57, l.51) She believes that she must "unlearn" the "lore" that he has taught her (l.53), as she has chosen "the stairs that mount above" (l.4), which means to choose a life of Christian morality and devotion. The speaker believes that her purity, as she ascends skyward to a city set in a "sea of glass" (l.6), has been "soiled with mud" (l.7) of guilt that clings to her "lily feet." (l.11) This environmental imagery of dirt as a lack of purity returns later in the poem in the form of the narrator's heart of "dust" (l.115) and clay-matted, dew-soaked hair, reflecting the imagery of night sweats. (ll.112-13) The speaker hopes that leading a life dedicated to God will "wash the spot" and "burn the snare." (l.14) This infusion of the body with mud and grime accords with Heather Sullivan's point about dirt's essential clinginess where "we are enmeshed with dirt in its many forms" and Timothy Morton's "mesh" argument concerning the human body as living in an ambient relationship with everything else.[549] Rossetti abhors these realisations, regarding them as signs of uncleanliness and ungodliness.

The speaker's sense of duty derives from the same motivations for the Park Village Sisterhood, in which service and devotion and the removal of distractions were necessary sacrifices. Crucially, the speaker aspires to climb the stairway to get close to God in a "far-off city grand." (l.18) The heavenly city is portrayed as the home of the faithful, located just out of reach: "Beyond the hills a watered land,/ Beyond the gulf a gleaming strand." (l.19-20) To ascend the "golden skyward stair" (l.5) does not lead to a rural paradise; for Rossetti, the faithful population gather in a setting like her beloved London. The city presented as the "sea of glass" (l.6) is significant, as the speaker desires to be pure and unblemished like the glass

[547] Mumm. *All Saints Sisters of the Poor*. xi-xii.
[548] Marsh. *Christina Rossetti: A Literary Biography*. 57.
[549] Sullivan. "Dirt Theory and Material Ecocriticism," 515; and Morton. *The Ecological Thought*. 28-38.

itself. The state of cleanliness, purity, and freedom from corruption is essential for a good existence. This notion is predicated on the belief that the presence of dirt and vice serves as a direct antithesis to a fulfilling, pious life.

The establishment of the Sisterhood in the parish coincided with Christina Rossetti's deepening faith. Marsh notes that the creation of the devout sisterhood came a month before "she suffered the breakdown that her doctor diagnosed as religious mania. The time and place were conducive to an adolescent crisis taking a religious cast."[550] The creation of the Sisterhood increased pressure to conform to church values. Merely attending services was no longer enough; instead, the genuinely faithful must lead a life of absolute servitude and devotion. Rossetti seemingly struggled with the demands and expectations that her faith involved, emerging, as Faught summarises, from the "religious mania […] with a changed mental character and compromised physical health. Her natural youthful exuberance had been quelled by the stringent demands of the Tractarians for reverence and reserve."[551] Her brother William recalled that it was "an awful sense of unworthiness, shadowed by an awful certainty of hell." (*PW* lxvi) Marsh goes on to state, "At the time of her breakdown, Christina was being prepared for confirmation, by Dodsworth or one of his curates,"[552] demonstrating that from a religious perspective, she was under intense instruction and self-reflection during this period.

The emotions and concerns of leading a life according to the values of the Oxford Movement can be seen in the poems written during this time. The foundations of the teachings at Christ Church could be regarded as having "masochistic undercurrents of a religion which emphasised the importance of pain and suffering, often in sexualised language."[553] 'The Time of Waiting' (1846) remarks that "Life is fleeting, joy is fleeting,/ Coldness follows love and greeting,/ Parting still succeeds to meeting." (*CP* 630, ll.1-3) It goes on to express a sense of hopelessness when even though the "grief shall cease" (l.7) it creates a reaction that sees "cares instantly increase." (l.9) Hope is seemingly a complex thing to experience, where even in the natural world "the flowers that should have birth" and bring joy (l.14). The result is a feeling of emptiness where there is nothing but "dreariness and dearth." (l.15) Another poem 'Vanity of Vanities' sees the speaker chastising themself "for pleasure that is vain" (*CP* 147, l.1) and for believing misguided notions of "Glory that at

[550] Marsh. *Christina Rossetti: A Literary Biography*. 58.
[551] Faught. *The Oxford Movement*. 110.
[552] Marsh. *Christina Rossetti: A Literary Biography*. 61.
[553] Roe. *The Rossettis in Wonderland*. 65.

the last bringeth no gain!" (l.4) These examples, among others, represent the contrasting emotions that Rossetti's faith caused, where on the one hand it offered comfort and on the other instilled a strict self-awareness of failings and desires.

The narrative that Rossetti's religious devotion contributed towards a breakdown is one-sided and misleading. Although it was a guiding moral compass that sometimes resulted in doubt and self-critical thoughts, as was the case for Gerard Manley Hopkins, which is examined in the next chapter, it was Christianity that she repeatedly turned to as a provider of certainty, comfort, and consolation. As G. B. Tennyson concludes, the "problem of emphasis and interpretation concerning the religious element in pre-Raphaelitism" has muddled the understanding of Rossetti as a descendant of the Oxford Movement.[554]

**The London markets and 'Goblin Market'**

Clayton Carlyle Tarr proposes that Covent Garden provides a model for Rossetti's 'Goblin Market', arguing that "given the popularity of Covent Garden Market as a place of both practical commercial function and imaginative wonder, it is likely that Rossetti would have visited more than the two times she records."[555] I want to take that theory further by adding a sensory ecocritical interpretation. Tarr makes a case for Covent Garden as a "cornucopia of sights, smells, sounds- and most certainly its prospect of danger- [which] would have been familiar to Rossetti […] and may have provided impetus for her poetic guidebook, *Goblin Market*."[556] Tarr's argument is significant as it follows the critical approach of Herbert Tucker and others to consider the poem's materiality and to put the "*market* back in 'Goblin Market'."[557] I argue that the poem is a component in the genre of Victorian social-problem literature, ultimately contributing to the broader discussion of societal issues of the time.[558] Josephine Guy defines this form of literature as texts, which are canonically novels by tradition, that address the "subject-matter [of] large scale problems in contemporary British society, problems which in turn were the product of changing demographic patterns and changes in works practises associated with the accelerating industrialisation of the British economy."[559] Deborah Epstein Nord describes this as "the

[554] Tennyson. *Victorian Devotional Poetry*. 199.
[555] Clayton Carlyle Tarr. "Covent Goblin Market," *Victorian Poetry*, Volume 50, No. 3 (Fall 2012): 299.
[556] Ibid. 297.
[557] Herbert F. Tucker. "Rossetti's Goblin Marketing: Sweet to Tongue and Sound to Eye," *Representations*. Volume 82 (Spring 2003): 117.
[558] Josephine M. Guy uses the common term "Victorian Social-Problem Novel", although I would argue that a broader scope of literature, including poetry, explores those themes too. See: Josephine M. Guy. *The Victorian Social-Problem Novel: The Market, the Individual and Communal Life* (Hampshire: Macmillan, 1996).
[559] Guy. *The Victorian Social-Problem Novel*. 3.

exhilarating and distressing new phenomenon of urban life,"[560] a form of literature that describes a situation where conflicting emotions are present due to the vibrancy and terror of such an environment.

Although Guy and Nord do not reference Rossetti directly, their definitions of the Victorian social-problem easily lend themselves to the experiences that are represented in Rossetti's poem 'Goblin Market'. The condemnation of impulsive decisions is a warning of the exploitation that defined the marketplace as an economic forum driven by desire and exchange. The tangible social fear in the poem, as well as in other Victorian cautionary texts, demonstrate how the city's noise, smells, and sights can overwhelm, resulting in a lapse of judgment. As Rossetti shows, the overload of the senses in the urban environment can hinder how individuals morally navigate such a setting. To regard 'Goblin Market' as a social problem poem brings into focus Rossetti's contrasting portrayals of the city: on the one hand, it is a vibrant setting that delights the eyes, ears, and heart, but it is fraught with hidden dangers and mesmerising melodies that entice and corrupt people.

The influence of the marketplace is evident from the outset with the Goblin merchants' cries of "Come buy our orchard fruits,/ Come buy, come buy" (*CP* 5, ll.3-4), replicating the cacophony of the market sellers.[561] The cries urge a rapid response from buyers to purchase before the "Morns that pass by" and the "Fair eves that fly." (ll.17-18) They state that the items are "All ripe together/ In summer weather" (ll.14-15) and peddle produce from a broad spectrum of locations, including those from the "orchard" (l.3), or "fresh from the vine" (l.20), or "from the south" (l.29). The varies sources of these items remains vague and ambiguous, especially when it is noted that they do not all naturally ripen or come into season at the same time. The importance is placed on the freshness and sensual fullness of the items, which are ready at that very moment for consumption. The produce is "Plump unpeck'd" (l.7), "Wild free-born" (l.11) and "fresh from the vine" (l.20) and, as such, are presented as untainted and unspoiled. Indeed, many of the items would have been rare in Victorian markets because they were seldom grown locally and would have been imported, making them exotic, expensive and, therefore, unsuitable for many buyers.

There is a significance, as Megan A. Norcia notes, to Rossetti's "selecting a perishable foodstuff, for many seen as a luxury, characterized by sweetness and even

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[560] Deborah Epstein Nord. *Walking the Victorian Streets: Women, Representation, and the City* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995) 1.

[561] Megan A. Norcia is interested in Rossetti's use of the term "cry" as "as opposed to 'shout' or 'song' or 'chant'." See "'Come Buy, Come Buy': Christina Rossetti's 'Goblin Market' and the Cries of London," *Journal of Victorian Culture*. Volume 17, No. 1, (March 2012): 25.

exoticism."[562] The items offered may well be regarded as merely food, yet their indulgent and luxurious qualities make them appear almost as valuable as gold. The items are seemingly natural products, meaning they will not remain fresh after being harvested. Their ripeness is set to decay the longer they stay uneaten, which adds an element of urgency to any buyer who wants to experience them whilst still "full and fine." (l.21) The poem may well reflect how urban dwellers had lost the ability to fully understand the process of produce farming and harvesting. Norcia observes that "in a rapidly industrializing economy, they had lost contact with rural knowledge about where their food came from and how to tell when it was ripe."[563] It represents a growing disharmony between the urban and rural as a generational comprehension of the natural world became lost, a fear of John Keble, as previously mentioned. The poem's central figures of Lizzie and Laura, like many Londoners at the time, were at the mercy of the merchants and vendors to provide such insight. This demonstrates a shift from a practical understanding of nature to a reliance on other people to educate and inform. The unusually enchanted nature of the items as being "all ripe together/ In summer weather" (ll.15-16) is not met with any response from the sisters, who are unfamiliar with the means of production and seasonal differences. Although food items could be imported, their freshness would not have been guaranteed. Therefore, food at the time would have been eaten according to what was available in the season. Indeed, certain items would have been seen as decadent or luxuries and would not have been widely available to the public due to small quantities and higher prices. The fact that the produce is "all ripe together/ In summer weather" (ll.15-16) heightens the fantastical qualities of the poem by bringing together the very things that should not be connected. The scene is set with superabundance, heat, and humidity, primed to encourage sensory saturation.

The merchants' hypnotic representation of their produce results in an overload of the senses through sight, smell, taste and, because of the chanting, sound. Rossetti presents an aspect of the marketplace that would have been familiar to London readers, as well as the noise associated with it, where the cries are designed to attract customers. The nearby presence of street sellers and market stalls meant that Rossetti would have recognised such

[562] Norcia. "Come Buy, Come Buy," 29.
[563] Ibid. 36.

sights and sounds of the market and its seasonal produce.[564] Such locations included Oxford Market, a short distance from what would develop into London's Oxford Street, which was a site for selling vegetables and meat. Slightly further afield were the large-scale markets at Smithfield (meat) and Spitalfields (fruit and vegetables) and the numerous other local markets and street sellers that are now lost. Serena Dyer draws attention to how the marketplace was far from a "seductive idyll of consumer sensuality" when the reality was "tired feet and weary workers, rotting fish, and overpowering and unpleasant scents."[565] Jerry White emphasises the difficulties of the marketplace, including how Smithfield market was "the most controversial, a foul stain on the metropolis," which on market days saw the live animals leave the area in "mud and filth."[566] The markets, therefore, reinforce Heather Sullivan's notion of "dirty nature" in an urban environment where residents were "disconnected" from the rural mess.[567] The presence of agricultural dirt is a reminder of "bodily filth, waste, and the sweaty labor of agricultural processes", which many would prefer to forget.[568] As a result, the influence of the marketplaces can be seen to be wide-reaching, permeating the economy, human consumption, and even questions surrounding spiritual morality, as I will later demonstrate.

The market is further shown to be strange because the sisters are represented as residing in a pastoral state of milkmaids and kitchen work, a vision of domestic self-sufficiency. They are described as rising early "when the first cock crowed" (l.200) and begin the duties of the day:

> …Fetched in honey, milked the cows,
> Aired and set to rights the house,
> Kneaded cakes of whitest wheat,
> Cakes for dainty mouths to eat,
> Next churned butter, whipped up cream,
> Fed their poultry, sat and sewed;
> Talked as modest maidens should…
>
> (ll.203-9)

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[564] Cumberland and Oxford Markets were close to the various homes that the Rossetti family resided in, as were the street markets in Camden Town on King Street (now Plender Street) and Wellington Street (now Inverness Street), and Leather Lane in Hatton Garden. Covent Garden Market was relatively nearby, and the same could be said of Farringdon and Smithfield Markets.
For a more comprehensive history of some of these now-lost markets, see: J. Thomson and Adolphe Smith. *Street Life of London* (London: Sampson Low, Marston, Searle & Rivington, 1877).
[565] Serena Dyer. "Introduction" in *Shopping and the Senses, 1800-1970: A Sensory History of Retail and Consumption*. ed. Serena Dyer (Great Britain: Palgrave Macmillan, 2022) 2.
[566] White. *London in the Nineteenth Century*. 188-89.
[567] Sullivan. "Dirt Theory and Material Ecocriticism," 526.
[568] Ibid. 526.

Their way of life is similar to what Coleridge had envisaged in the West Country, which promoted a simple and uncomplicated rural existence. Scott Rogers emphasises the importance of home in the poem, "a place of peaceful and bucolic refuge,"[569] which is the opposite of the chaos and assaulting qualities of the market. In theory, the sisters should have little need to access the market, with their duties indicating independence, albeit within traditional domestic roles for women. The market leads to a noisy, vibrant, dangerous environment that subverts the rural household bliss. As Laura becomes ill, the chores are neglected:

> She no more swept the house,
> Tended the fowls or cows,
> Fetch'd honey, kneaded cakes of wheat,
> Brought water from the brook…
>
> (ll.293-96)

The market and the exchanges are shown to disrupt the natural order and rhythms of life, where they encroach on the innocence and simplicity of these traditional values.

Clayton Carlyle Tarr concludes that Covent Garden, with its "cornucopia of sights, smells, sounds- and most certainly its prospect of danger,"[570] is the most likely source for the poem's market. Jan Marsh comments on how the Rossetti children received "mouthwatering delights brought home by Papa,"[571] which Tarr argues must have come from Covent Garden due to its proximity to his place of work and the family's known visits there.[572] This provides a further context for understanding the poem, where I want to emphasise Rossetti's connection and understanding of the marketplace. The association of her father visiting and experiencing the market feeds into the exotic nature of her own home, which, as Virginia Woolf noted, was filled with "Italian exiles, among them organ grinders and other distressed compatriots."[573] Therefore, Rossetti's home was also filled with exoticism and outsider influences.

This "cornucopia of sights, smells, [and] sounds"[574] is crucial to understanding the urban influences. Rogers emphasises home as "a place of peaceful and bucolic refuge," whilst the market is "chaotic, [and] noisy,"[575] representing the disorder and vibrancy of the city. Norcia highlights how the poem privileges "the famous sounds of London cries by

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[569] Scott T. Rogers. "'Goblin Market', Sisterhood and the Church Penitentiary Association," *Journal of Victorian Culture*, Volume 27, No. 1 (2022): 67.
[570] Tarr. "Covent Goblin Market," 297.
[571] Marsh. *Christina Rossetti: A Literary Biography.* 231.
[572] Tarr. "Covent Goblin Market," 298.
[573] Woolf. "I am Christina Rossetti," 209.
[574] Tarr. "Covent Goblin Market," 297.
[575] Rogers. "'Goblin Market', Sisterhood and the Church Penitentiary Association," 67.

sellers of goods such as hot cross buns, cherries, or milk"[576] and reflects the noises Rossetti would have heard regularly on the street and within her own home. 'Goblin Market' is, therefore, a rare occurrence of the city, or at least the influences of the city, in Rossetti's poetry. The urban landscape, however, is still missing- even the illustrations and drawings that traditionally accompany the poem depict a rural environment. Georgina Battiscombe describes how when the family moved to the other end of Charlotte Street, it was still far from a respectable neighbourhood with it being "drab […] the front windows of Number Fifty looked out on to a cab-rank and a noisy public-house."[577] When the family moved to Upper Albany Street in 1854, shortly before 'Goblin Market' was written, they would have experienced further noise, including the nearby Albany Street Barracks, Cumberland Market, and the railway line into Euston Station. Rossetti's final residence at Torrington Square was surrounded by a cacophony of noise, described by Mackenzie Bell on a visit: "the noise was considerable […] the discordant noises from no fewer than three piano organs."[578] Noise, therefore, rings out all around her, the city's soundtrack being an ever-present and necessary aspect of her urban life.

Norcia demonstrates the importance of urban sounds by presenting Rossetti as an active participant in city life and how this influences many of her poems, especially 'Goblin Market'. The noises provide "the aural context of Rossetti's metropolitan experience with its sounds and cries."[579] Whereas much Romantic poetry suggests that rural sounds are uniquely conducive to art,[580] Norcia argues that the sounds of the urban environment appear to serve Rossetti's art exceptionally well. This demonstrates the significance of the city's sound in Rossetti's work, which I am presenting as one component of the wider urban influence. The seller's chants in the poem mimic the sounds associated with the marketplace, with melodic and hypnotic charm like the sirens of Greek mythology who lured sailors to their doom with their song. There is a seemingly endless list ranging from domestic to exotic produce:

> Apples and quinces,
> Lemons and oranges,
> Plump unpeck'd cherries,
> Melons and raspberries,
> Bloom-down-cheek'd peaches,

[576] Norcia. "Come Buy, Come Buy," 25.
[577] Battiscombe. *Christina Rossetti: A Divided Life*. 18.
[578] Bell. *Christina Rossetti: A Biographical and Critical Study*. 169-70.
[579] Norcia. "Come Buy, Come Buy," 38.
[580] One of the speakers in Wordsworth's The Prelude refers to "the bleak music from that old stone wall, /The noise of wood and water" as the appropriate context for composition, thus rooting art with rural sounds- Book 11, ll.379-80. William Wordsworth. "The Prelude" in *The Major Works*. ed. Stephen Gill (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000) 568.

> Swart-headed mulberries,
> Wild free-born cranberries,
> Crab-apples, dewberries,
> Pine-apples, blackberries,
> Apricots, strawberries…
> (*CP* 5, ll.5-13)

The overwhelming array of domestic and exotic fruits assault the senses and vividly conjures up a dazzling selection of flavours and colours that enchant and entice.

Norcia argues that the poem "privileges sound,"[581] but it also provides an unusual discourse concerning bodily sensations, of which sound is one component. The poem declares that the produce is "sweet to tongue and sound to eye" (l.30), contributing to the overload of the senses. Norcia further notes how Rossetti follows the aural tradition of other notable works from the period, such as *Aunt Busy-Bee's New London Cries* (1852) and *Aunt Louisa's London Alphabet* (1872).[582] These works position themselves as wise words from kindly figures in a way that uses "the cries of the city to urge child readers to be wise consumers."[583] The privileging of sound is not a completely wholesome occurrence, as readers are warned about the temptations of the street vendors and market traders using their enchanting sounds and exciting produce. Rossetti demonstrates the dangers of the city by highlighting the threats posed to the senses and the spirit. 'Goblin Market' is a cautionary tale—the poem's final stanza has the story similarly told to the next generation as with Coleridge's Ancient Mariner:

> Laura would call the little ones
> And tell them of her early prime
> […]
> In deadly peril to do her good,
> And win the fiery antidote.
> (ll.548-49, ll.558-59)

The poem celebrates the city's vibrancy but criticises its dangers and the failure to act cautiously.

**The Unnatural City: Rossetti and Excess, Waste, and Commodification**

An opposing portrayal of the city occurs in an early Rossetti poem, 'The Dead City', where the speaker enters what appears to be an abandoned city "as in a dream;/ A strange dream of hope and fear." (*CP* 587, ll.78-79) Lona Mosk Packer suggests that the poem was

[581] Norcia. "Come Buy, Come Buy," 24.
[582] Ibid. 26.
[583] Ibid. 26.

partially inspired by visits to the nearby Madam Tussaud's waxwork museum and its examples of still life[584]—another instance of city life influencing Rossetti's poetry. This is evident when the speaker enters a tent laid out for a feast, and the people inside are described as:

> ...statue-cold,
> Men and women, young and old;
> With the life-like look and smile
> And the flush; and all the while
> The hard fingers kept their hold.
> (ll.226-30)

They resemble waxwork figures, appearing human but lacking movement or motion and, therefore, lack life. The opulence of such a feast and its luxury seems to be at odds with the "statue-cold,/ Men and women" (ll.226-27) in attendance who cannot appreciate it fully. The speaker is the only person who can genuinely cherish and admire what has been laid out, but the eeriness and unnatural state forces the speaker to flee in terror. Crucially, the city of the poem lacks the vibrancy and life of London that Rossetti would regularly celebrate throughout her life. Therefore, something is particularly peculiar about the city that she uses in the poem; it is noticeably apocalyptic, filled with "desert drear and cold" (*CP* 597, l.83) and "a heap of old ruins." (l.84) The unnamed city is the antithesis of vibrancy, where everything falls into decay, and it is entered through the "labyrinths" (l.4) of a wood, the rural scene giving way to "a fair city of white stone;/ and a lovely light to see." (ll.87-88) The speaker cannot help but notice the feeling of seclusion in the woods described as "a happy solitude" (l.35 and l.36) and a "blessed solitude." (l.41) It is a place of "quiet without strife,/ And imperishable life,/ Nothing marred, and all things good" (ll.43-45) where the calmness and the quietness are things which only heighten its beauty. In the woods, the quiet of the natural landscape is an unspoiled and undisturbed location, and as such, it is a tranquil moment of happiness and contentment.

In contrast, the quietness of the unnamed city is presented as something eerie and unnatural, considering that a city should be filled with noise: "I heard no human sound;/ All was still and silent round." (ll.93-94) The scene is filled with relics of life, such as the food on the table and the city's inhabitants remaining in situ, but there is "no life-breath struggling up." (l.245) The speaker is "the sole living one" (l.257), presenting an apocalyptic and dystopian vision of a city without humans. There is "much hidden mystery" (l.274) in the

[584] Lona Mosk Packer. *Christina Rossetti*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1963) 15.

poem, but no explanation is given for the events that led to the city being frozen in time and the apparent deaths of its inhabitants. The speaker cannot flee, instead being "full of fear" and attempting to shut "out each stony guest" by bowing their head. (ll.263-64) Despite this, much like Coleridge's Ancient Mariner, the experience lingers with the speaker, and just like the Mariner, Rossetti's speaker "straightaway knelt and prayed." (l.275) The power of prayer offers comfort from the shocking scenes and emphasises the reassuring connection with God that faith can have.

Rossetti herself would later suggest that a decline in morals leads to a "spiritual petrifaction,"[585] and in 'The Dead City' all the human figures, except the speaker, are fossilised and frozen in time. The poem highlights that place is crucial for determining the tone or quality of a phenomenon. In this instance, the silence and "the stillness" (l.256) have two different connotations depending on where it is experienced. It is relaxing when experienced in nature but is distressing and unnerving when encountered in the city. This illustrates how place, especially the difference between the urban and rural, leads to differences in sensibility and perception. Although writing about American cities of the twentieth century, Jane Jacobs writes that parks, and arguably by extension cities themselves, "need the boon of life and appreciation conferred on *them*."[586] The absence of life strips away the very essence and vibrancy of the city, its stillness and decay being just as disturbing as Rossetti's encounter with the dead mouse in the countryside. (*TF* 45)

To further contribute and expand upon Herbert F. Tucker's argument of putting the "*market* back in 'Goblin Market'"[587], it is essential to consider how this "public realm of commerce and exchange"[588] contributes to Rossetti's understanding and presentation of value and material worth. Despite her protests that the poem "did not mean anything profound,"[589] clear concerns about consumption and commodification are evident in both the poem and the broader context. The fear of Laura potentially wasting away to death creates a critical moment of terror and crisis; another chilling element is the apparent ease with which the sisters have crossed the boundary between good and evil. The poem enters the realms of fairy tales and Biblical fables in which good overcomes evil, and love is shown to be one of the most potent weapons available.

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[585] Christina Rossetti. *Poems and Prose*. ed. Jan Marsh (London: Everyman, 1994) 441.
[586] Jane Jacobs. *The Death of Great American Cities* (New York: Vintage Books, 1992) 89.
[587] Tucker. "Rossetti's Goblin Marketing," 117.
[588] Nord. *Walking the Victorian Streets.* 1.
[589] William Michael Rossetti. "Notes" in *The Poetical Works of Christina Georgina Rossetti, with memoir and notes by William Michael Rossetti* (London: Macmillan and Co., Limited, 1904) 459.

The devotional sonnet 'The World' similarly shares how "by day she wooes me to the outer air,/ Ripe fruits, sweet flowers, and full satiety" (*CP* 70, ll.5-6). The temptation occurs with a figure who is an obvious threat with serpent hair (l.3), cloven feet (l.14), and the inability to experience "love and prayer" (l.8). The beauty and vibrancy of the natural fruits and flowers are contrasted with the aggressive ugliness and evil of temptation. As Serena Trowbridge demonstrates, "though the beauty of nature might bring us closer to God, the poem implies, it may also seduce us from the path of righteousness, because beauty cannot be trusted, a concept she also relates to human beauty."[590] The "active role of nonhuman materials in public life"[591] is shown to have a great sense of duality: one that is compelling because of its beauty and vibrancy, and the other which is deadly or morally damaging. Even the natural world is sometimes shown to be a threat and a danger alongside the many instances of magnificence and beauty commonly attributed to it.

Despite succumbing to dangerous temptation, the sisters in 'Goblin Market' are not condemned for eternity but are given the possibility of restoration through Lizzie's fortitude. They are saved similarly to Coleridge's Ancient Mariner, and both end their stories anticipating an equally cautionary tale to the next generation. The Ancient Mariner is, however, forced to relive his traumatic experience repeatedly and is never truly absolved or free from his crime. In contrast, Lizzie and Laura appear entirely free to live and tell their tale with a greater sense of absolution. In Coleridge's poem, the moral is declared to be that:

> He prayeth best, who loveth best
> All things both great and small;
> For the dear God who loveth us,
> He made and loveth all.
>
> (ll.614-17)

Whilst in Rossetti's poem, it is stated that "For there is no friend like a sister" (l.562), and in the face of danger, great bravery is shown as the "sister stood/ In deadly peril to do her good,/ And win the fiery antidote" (ll.557-59). Although "humanity is weak" and the world is filled with "implicit binary: good/evil, heaven/hell, God/Satan",[592] the poem offers hope through a Christian framework.

The poem contains a warning of what is to come in the form of the cautionary tale about Jeanie, "who for joys brides hope to have/ Fell sick and died/ In her gay prime." (ll.314-6) Jeanie represents the only other specified female character in the poem apart from

[590] Trowbridge. "Truth to nature," 65.
[591] Bennett. *Vibrant Matter*. 2.
[592] Trowbridge. "Truth to nature," 65.

Lizzie and Laura, and although she is no longer living to tell her story, it is her memory and her death which keep her in the thoughts of others. Jeanie is described as "in her gay prime," (l.316) and, therefore, should have been living a happy life filled with possibilities and "who should have been a bride." (l.313) She does not achieve this ideal result, nor does she experience the pleasure and joy of parenthood; instead, she "fell sick and dead." (l.315) Her life and aspirations are stolen from her, emphasising the fear that the same may happen to other innocent women who also have "brides hope" like Jeanie. (l.314) This is one of many examples of waste in the poems of Rossetti, in what Ashley Miller calls the "Botanical Women", in which there is the presentation of "ripeness and decay" in the natural world and within the human female body.[593]

Trowbridge notes how the teachings of the Oxford Movement emphasised the "importance of the natural world as a manifestation of God's work,"[594] in keeping with High Anglican orthodoxy. Theresa M. Kelley concludes that there was a Victorian "tradition that rendered women as passive flowers in need of care."[595] Miller highlights how blending natural, theological, and bodily imagery presents an "intriguing concern with what it means to waste: to waste time, to waste space, and to waste resources."[596] The frenzied consumption of the fruit by Jeanie and others transcends the poem into a different realm by putting them on the path of death rather than expulsion from paradise. The gorging of copious quantities of food and the decay of the human body and soul represent a negative portrayal of decadence in the city. The natural and urban excess and its association with temptation emphasise the dangers that exist within.[597]

**Sex Work and the Marketplace**

The connection between Rossetti and her volunteer work at the Highgate Penitentiary for fallen women is well-researched. Diane D'Amico, for example, emphasises how "the literature of the Church Penitentiary Movement" should be included in "the list of sources for

[593] Ashley Miller. "Ripeness and Waste: Christina Rossetti's Botanical Women," *Victorian Studies*, Volume 61, number 2 (Winter 2019): 195.
[594] Trowbridge. "Truth to nature," 63.
[595] Theresa M. Kelley. *Clandestine Marriage: Botany and Romantic Culture* (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 2012) 93.
[596] Miller. "Ripeness and Waste," 195.
[597] The imagery of excess and indulgence in luxury works in opposition to the High Church principles of self-sacrifice and piety. See my earlier discussion on the formation of the Park Village Sisterhood and its emphasis on charity, piety, and simplicity on page 130.

'Goblin Market'…"[598] The Penitentiary were primarily Christian institutions, sometimes called Magdalene Homes, that catered for 'fallen women'. This vague term related to sex workers, young women pregnant outside of wedlock, and young girls without family support, where the home was an attempt "to relinquish a life of shame."[599] Whilst "penitentiary" is traditionally a term associated with prisons, it contradicts the message of refuge by emphasising punishment for misdemeanours. The "moral panic" of Victorian society exasperated the claims that the streets, especially those of the city, were "unsafe for respectable women."[600] Scott Rogers draws attention to how the 1851 census saw a "sharp rise in the number of prostitutes in major urban areas - especially in London."[601] Designed to help the vulnerable of the city, these institutions of apparent Christian charity also raise questions on how prejudice impacted those who used the services or volunteered there.[602] Indeed, Rogers attends to how Rossetti saw the institution's "value and its shortcomings,"[603] suggesting that she, too, recognised the benefits and the inadequacies of the service. The impact of such help and limitation influences my interpretation of Rossetti as a figure of orthodox High Anglicanism who is faced with the harsh realities of the city.

Lynn Nead highlights how "the working-class was perceived as the social other, and reports of the Parliamentary Commissions of the 1840s and 1850s show an obsessive concern with the immorality of the working-class."[604] This concern about the immorality of the public is crucial to the reading of 'Goblin Market' as a poem about the city. Rossetti volunteered at Highgate between 1859 and 1870, during which time she wrote several poems on sexual promiscuity, desire, and prohibited love, such as 'Maude Claire', 'Goblin Market', and 'An Apple-Gathering'. As Jan Marsh emphasises, the venue is significant because Rossetti "was spending relatively long periods on duty,"[605] therefore, the influence of this location and

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[598] Diane D'Amico. "'Equal Before God': Christina Rossetti and the Fallen Women of High Penitentiary," in *Gender and Discourse in Victorian Literature and Art*. ed. Antony H. Harrison (Illinois: Northern Illinois Press, 1992) 78.
[599] Marsh. *Christina Rossetti: A Literary Biography.* 219.
[600] Ibid. 219.
[601] Rogers. "'Goblin Market', Sisterhood and the Church Penitentiary Association," 63-64.
[602] The Pre-Raphaelites had a significant interest in the ideas of fallen women, including paintings such as William Holman Hunt's *The Awakening Conscience* (1853) and Dante Gabriel's *Found* (1853), and literary works such as William Bell Scott's 1838 poem 'Rosabell' the narrative of a country girl who is led into a fake marriage and selling sex, and Dante Gabriel's 'Jenny' (1870) narrated by the male customer of a sex worker. For further information on pre-Raphaelitism and Sex Work, see: Julia Grella O'Connell. *Sound, Sin, and Conversion in Victorian England* (London: Routledge, 2018), and Nicola J. Smith. *Capitalism's Sexual History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020) 61-80.
[603] Rogers. "'Goblin Market', Sisterhood and the Church Penitentiary Association," 65.
[604] Lynn Nead. "The Magdalen in Modern Times: The Mythology of the Fallen Woman in Pre-Raphaelite Painting," *Oxford Art Journal*, Volume 7, No. 1 (1984): 29.
[605] Marsh. *Christina Rossetti: A Literary Biography.* 221.

experience is essential to Rossetti's poetry. This is particularly pertinent when considering the portrayal of marginalised figures, the role of women, and the brutality of oppressive individuals.

As I mentioned earlier (p.133), Clayton Carlyle Tarr convincingly identified Covent Garden as the likely source for the poem's setting. This provides an apparent urban reference for a place of commerce and trading in the city's heart, but the article does not include another factor that would further support the case for Covent Garden. The market and its surroundings had been a notable red-light district with an eighteenth-century guidebook, *Harris's List of Covent Garden Ladies* (published between 1757 and 1795), providing an insight into known sex workers and where to find them. *Harris's List* addressed the bawdy nature of the district filled with brothels and prostitution, emphasising the apparent sex trade that had formed there. [606] If the fruit and vegetable market had been frequented by Rossetti and those she knew, then it would also be essential to note the alternative side of Covent Garden, which would feed into Rossetti's work with 'fallen women'. The Highgate Penitentiary experience gave Rossetti access to women whose backgrounds and experiences differed notably from hers. Her time at the penitentiary can be seen as contributing to Christian charity and serving the marginalised of society, as promoted by Dodsworth and Christ Church. The prospect of a specific marketplace setting, a known spot for sex workers, adds significant weight to Tarr's proposal for the source of inspiration.

Covent Garden can, therefore, be seen as having two economies: the first: food, primarily fruit and vegetables, and the second: prostitution. Victor Roman Mendoza also argues that the poem displays "the overlapping spheres of Victorian economics and sexual politics."[607] The transactions are portrayed as two opposing aspects: one consumer and the other sexual, with both seemingly demonstrating elements of fragility, capitalism, and loss. The market is where these areas overlap in one urban location, but the danger of such an environment becomes a physical and morally troubling factor. In 'Goblin Market', Lizzie knows that "Twilight is not good for maidens" (l.144) and that they "should not loiter" (l.145) for fear of some incident or encounter in the dark. She later insists they "get home before the night grows dark" (l.248) because the coming darkness provides further

[606] See: E. H. Burford. *Wits, Wenchers and Wantons: London's Low Life: Covent Garden in the Eighteenth Century* (USA: R. Hale, 1986); Hallie Rubenhold. *The Covent Garden Ladies: Pimp General Jack and the Extraordinary Story of Harris' List* (London: Black Swan, 2020); and White. *London in the Nineteenth Century*. 366.

[607] Victor Roman Mendoza. ""Come Buy": The Crossing of Sexual and Consumer Desire in Christina Rossetti's 'Goblin Market'," *English Literary History (ELH)*, Volume 73. No. 4 (Winter 2006): 913.

opportunity for this environment to exert even more danger. The ill-fated story of Jeanie is revealed to have occurred "in the moonlight" (l.148), where she received "gifts" from the goblin men (l.149). The dangers of the night-time economy are evident to women on their own and those who are forced to accept the proffered gifts from admirers or potential clients. Laura's partaking of the "fruits which that unknown orchard bore" (l.135) occurs whilst she is separated from her sister. She returns "home alone" (l.140), disoriented by her encounter, yet knows that she will return to "Buy more" (l.168) under the cover of the following night.

The poem epitomises the Victorian concern of debauched activity, which can be seen as being driven by Rossetti's volunteer work. It also relates to a very particular form of High Anglican teaching that informs Rossetti's understanding and rationale. Religion is acted upon as the antidote for solving and galvanising support for dealing with impropriety. Robert Lee Wolf argues that the High Church movement was partly motivated to rectify "the discrimination of daily life."[608] Oxford Movement figures such as John Henry Newman and Edward Pusey encouraged the development of religious sisterhoods and single women undertaking charity work because, as Serena Trowbridge argues, "women might provide much-needed care within their communities […and] provide a devotional alternative to spinsterhood."[609] Marsh highlights that the 1850s "urged women to undertake more purposeful work, for the sake of themselves and society."[610] Therefore, Rossetti's attendance at Highgate was in keeping with the values of that High Church teaching and its concerns for society's morality. Owen Chadwick presents the case that the growth of the cities resulted in significant problems, noting that "municipal government, building, sanitation, health, cemeteries, hospitals, roads, paving, lighting, police, dentists, schools - all the organs of city life were strained till they were bursting."[611] The foundations of society become unstable as material reliance on such services exceeds their capacity to function correctly.

Crucially, Marsh draws attention to Rossetti's choice of volunteering in such an institution, which may be regarded as an unusual and somewhat controversial one because although religious duty was essential, it was apparent that "prostitutes were not universally seen as either needy or deserving."[612] Throughout her life, Rossetti had "much compassion for the poor, but had a particular horror of moral evil."[613] This presents her with a sense of

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[608] Robert Lee Woolf. *Gains and Losses: Novels of Faith and Doubt in Victorian England* (New York: John Murray, 1977) 116.
[609] Trowbridge. *Christina Rossetti's Gothic*. 55-56.
[610] Marsh. *Christina Rossetti: A Literary Biography.* 218.
[611] Chadwick. *The Victorian Church, Part One*. 325.
[612] Marsh. *Christina Rossetti: A Literary Biography.* 226.
[613] Ibid. 226.

duty and openness when working closely with those seen as the outcasts of society and regarded by some as unworthy of support. Mary Arseneau argues that Rossetti's work at Highgate was in keeping with her activism, including "anti-vivisection, protection of minors and aid to sexually exploited women."[614] Rossetti demonstrates a commitment to helping the marginalised and often voiceless of society. As Diane D'Amico emphasises, "since Rossetti was involved in a cause that sought to reform these women, even return them to family structure, she must have believed that fallen women need not forever be a social outcast."[615] D'Amico further argues that "fallen women might have been outcasts in society's eyes, but not in God's."[616] The actions of some should not place them in eternal damnation or ostracisation, especially when God is forgiving; as a result, mankind should be just as forgiving.

Dinah Roe's assessment that Rossetti "was uncomfortable with the way in which the bible portrayed women as harbingers of evil and temptation"[617] highlights a compassionate and non-judgemental belief, one in keeping with forgiveness. 'Goblin Market' deals with virtue, innocence, and morality, key concerns of the Victorian public, especially in the city, and connected with High Anglican teachings. The poem is not an outright critique of sex workers and fallen women, and many of these types of women in Rossetti's poetry are not condemned for their actions. Indeed, Jan Marsh draws attention to how "[Mary] Magdalene was a popular theme in Victorian pietism," and was, notably, "[William] Dodsworth's favourite saint."[618] In 'Divine and Human Pleading', the "blessed Mary Magdalene" (CP 620, l.3) is initially described as being in "lowly penitence" (l.5), yet her "deep humility" (l.32) is evidence of how she "forsook the evil" (l.83). Mary Magdalene is saved from "the great transgression/ [and] The sin of another time" (ll.79-80) and shown to be worthy of praise and God's love.

Coleridge's Mariner is saved when he spontaneously blesses ("unawares") the sea snakes - slimy creatures (l.238) he had considered just a few lines earlier to be vile. (l.285) They are seemingly shown to be the lowest form of life in contrast to the beautiful albatross he killed. The blessing of the snakes is a voluntary expression of love for life where all life is precious, marking the turning point when the wind begins to blow, and the ship moves on. (l.327) Rossetti worked with people who were perceived as the lowest form of life by society,

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[614] Arseneau. "Pews, Periodicals and Politics," 97.
[615] D'Amico. "'Equal Before God': Christina Rossetti and the Fallen Women of High Penitentiary," 69.
[616] Ibid. 78.
[617] Roe. *The Rossettis in Wonderland*. 351.
[618] Marsh. *Christina Rossetti: A Literary Biography*. 61.

the very people viewed as corrupting the city's morality with their trade. D'Amico stresses that not all the women Rossetti worked with were prostitutes, with some being "young women who willingly took a lover and then were later deserted, and others were likely to have been what we would now consider the victims of sexual abuse and exploitation…"[619] Despite this, they are often represented by society as moral dirt or a stain on the urban environment, seemingly sullying the respectability of the area. Their existence has been viewed as a threat to society's religious and civil integrity, and to which, as I have explained, many religious groups rallied to support. Rossetti's position is a traditionalist orthodox High Church point of view but is significantly liberal and open-minded in its approach. It is a standpoint that does not condemn what enrages others, but instead seeks to understand and humanise the harsh reality of the city.

**Poverty and the Ordeal of Women**

Coleridge and Wordsworth had seen poverty in both rural and urban areas, particularly in a rapidly industrialising countryside, in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, but it was now increasingly visible in the cities as they expanded. Eric Hopkins states: "historically speaking, the mass of the population had always lived in poverty,"[620] as a result, the growth of the cities exacerbated and escalated a problem that was already there. Subsequently, "social investigations were bringing the fact [of poverty] home to the middle classes,"[621] leading to a rise in 'slum tourism' or 'slumming', where the upper and middle classes spent time in areas of deprivation either through curiosity or charitable purposes. Scott Herring, albeit from a United States-centric focus, outlines that slumming exposed elements of an alternative lifestyle, which "present the city and its sights as a lurid local sensation that both inspires curiosity and demands revelation."[622] A "queer" and otherness reading of 'Goblin Market' is well-researched,[623] but what Herring touches upon is how

[619] D'Amico. "Equal Before God," 69.
[620] Eric Hopkins. *Industrialisation and Society: A Social History, 1830-1951* (London: Routledge, 2000) 115.
[621] Ibid. 115.
[622] Scott Herring. *Queering the Underworld: Slumming, Literature, and the Undoing of Lesbian and Gay History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007) 5.
[623] See: Richard R. Bozorth. "Naming the unnameable: lesbian and gay love poetry," in *The Cambridge Companion to Gay and Lesbian Writing*. ed. Hugh Stevens (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011) 202-17; and Jonathan Hay "Queer Victorian Identities in Goblin Market (1862) and In Memoriam (1850): Uncovering the Subversive Undercurrents of the Literary Canon," *Exclamat!on: An Interdisciplinary Journal*, Volume 2, (2018): 149-72.

"queerness" is also represented through the contrast and oddness of class difference and the subversion of Victorian societal expectations.[624]

The moral imperative of 'Goblin Market' becomes a pertinent issue where sexual promiscuity of any kind destabilises society's morality, especially in Rossetti's orthodox, High Anglican circle. Sean Shesgreen refers to a flower girl who at night turned to sex work, which "undermines the traditional fabrication of the flower girl […] by changing her from a symbol of innocence endangered to one of dangerous experience."[625] Whilst there have been explorations of 'Goblin Market' for its erotic and sometimes homoerotic elements, few have linked it specifically to concepts of slumming and charity, as suggested by Herring. It is not to say that these people and places were the embodiment of freakiness and the macabre, but such interactions would have brought Rossetti into contact with people from levels of society far from her own. A similar situation would also occur with Gerard Manley Hopkins as a Jesuit priest, which will be explored in more detail in the following chapter. In the city, Rossetti witnessed the seedier side of life, where even at Christ Church, as Mary Carpenter explains, brothels appeared in the area because of the Albany Street/ Cumberland Barracks, and as such, "women's bodies were vended in the streets surrounding the churches, and zealous churchwomen like Christina Rossetti went out to 'buy' them back."[626] Sex work could be seen as an essential part of Rossetti's "radically, local, material environment," as Heather Sullivan puts it,[627] and her experiences at Highgate meant that she became familiar with what these women had been through and the protection they needed.[628] It is the "awareness of the complicated web of dissonant connections between bodies"[629] that Rossetti experiences, a growing awareness which forces a realignment of her orthodox views. She does not critically judge or cast out these figures but instead seeks to understand and support them.

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[624] There is not sufficient space in this thesis to allow for further enquiry, but it offers the opportunity for future research in this area.

[625] Sean Shesgreen. *Images of the Outcast: The Urban Poor in the Cries of London* (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 2002) 127.

[626] Mary Carpenter. "'Eat Me, Drink Me, Love': The Consumable Female Body in Christina Rossetti's 'Goblin Market'," *Victorian Poetry*, Volume 29, No. 4 (Winter 1991): 417.

[627] Sullivan. "Dirt Theory and Material Ecocriticism," 529.

[628] The sexual undertone of the poem led to much attention in the mid-twentieth century, including a feature in a 1973 edition of *Playboy Magazine*, making it perhaps one of the only Victorian poems to be featured in such a publication. The article takes great delight in providing a Freudian interpretation of the poem, which it argues emphasises the "extreme depiction of repressed eroticism."- "Goblin Market: A Ribald Classic" in *Playboy Magazine* 20: 9, (September 1973): 115.
See also: Lorraine Janzen Kooistra. *Christina Rossetti and Illustration* (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 2002) 240-42.

[629] Bennett. *Vibrant Matter*. 4.

The struggles of these women cannot be solely attributed to their actions, and Rossetti's experiences and interactions at Highgate provide an insight into other factors which impact the marketplace and its portrayal. The goblins, for example, are the main antagonists of the poem, and the title makes it clear that it is their domain. They are specifically referred to as "goblin men" (*CP* 6, l.42 and l.49) and later as "brother with queer brother" (l.94), which makes them the only defined male figures in the poem, the children at the poem's end being notably genderless. As goblins, they are depicted as nonhuman or subhuman, hybrid creatures of mixed and unknown origin where: "One had a cat's face,/ One whisk'd a tail,/ One tramp'd at a rat's pace." (ll.71-73) Bestialised in appearance and intent they are neither men nor human, compared to the sisters' innocence and beauty where their "precious golden lock" (l.126) of hair suggests angelic purity. Kelly Sultzbach presents an eco-critical view that the poem blurs traditional boundaries "creating a dizzying array of human-like animals and animal-like humans and showing that humans and non-humans alike inhabit a single world in which all are dynamic players in life's tragedies and triumphs."[630] This presents a similar sense of "oneness" seen in many Coleridge poems, particularly the Ancient Mariner's eventual appreciation of all creatures. Dinah Roe emphasises how Rossetti creates "imaginative arenas" where opposite worlds come together and "gods meet mankind, muses face poets, and hopes does battle with despair."[631] There is a sense of Jane Bennett's "complicated web of dissonant connections,"[632] a form of oneness that links everything, nonetheless, the goblins are shown to have ulterior and damaging intentions.

Laura's warning is that "we must not by their fruits:/ Who knows upon what soil they fed/ Their hungry thirsty roots?" (ll.43-45) expresses concern about the produces and the sellers' unknown origins. Bennett argues that "deep within [everything] is an inexplicable vitality or energy, a moment of independence from and resistance to us and other bodies: a kind of thing-power."[633] The gorging roots are a seemingly alien entity, surrounded by dirt and its derivatives that appear to be "life-sustaining" but also pose the risk of "toxic agencies"[634] due to the many unanswered questions about their source. As Sultzbach argues, the Goblins' actions in a "physical activity that taints sacred consummation with consumerism" results in a "nature [that] is similarly sliding between holy and profane as it

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[630] Kelly Sultzbach. "The Contrary Natures of Christina Rossetti's Goblin Fruits," *Green Letters: Studies in Ecocriticism*, Volume 14:1 (2011): 49.
[631] Dinah Roe. "Introduction" in *Christina Rossetti: Selected Poems* (London: Penguin, 2008) xvii.
[632] Bennett. *Vibrant Matter*. 4.
[633] Ibid. 18.
[634] Sullivan. "Dirt Theory and Material Ecocriticism," 516.

becomes both a source of dubious temptation and an antidote of saving grace."[635] The poem's blurring of natural and spiritual elements emphasises the instability and threat of the marketplace and its exchanges.

The "they" of Laura's warning, as Clayton Carlyle Tarr suggests, could be read as not the fruits "but goblins", proposing that "Rossetti shows at least some xenophobia toward her merchant men."[636] As Tarr explains, this would link with the Victorian stereotyping of the working classes and foreigners as the "other", noting further examples from Dickens and *Punch* magazine who portrayed these groups as non-human entities.[637] Tarr is not the only one to raise such a point about the treatment of otherness in Victorian society[638], and Jerry White notes that "by 1850 nine out of ten ticketed porters at Covent Garden market were Irishmen, and Irishwomen found much casual portering work there too."[639] The marketplace appears to be a realm in which different corners of the population come together, making it a possible metaphor for globalism, international trade, and imperialism. Rossetti would have been familiar with her own difference and sense of otherness, having grown up in a bi-lingual home and being the child of Italian political refugees. Georgina Battiscombe, for example, refers to Rossetti as being: "by blood three-quarters Italian."[640] The multicultural aspect is evident in Rossetti's life, although she conforms to some of the Victorian stereotypes.

It is, however, important to consider the perspective of Rossetti's 'fallen women' when analysing the poem. As a result, there is a new observation in how the alternative trade of the marketplace is also fraught with concerns of unknown origins and a sense of otherness. Therefore, examining the themes of marginalisation and societal ostracism prevalent in the poem is essential. Through this lens, a deeper understanding of the complex issues presented in the poem can be gained. As I have said, three women are central to the poem: the sisters Lizzie and Laura and the now-deceased Jeanie, who "dwindled and grew grey" (l.156) from

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[635] Sultzbach. "The Contrary Natures of Christina Rossetti's Goblin Fruits," 48.
[636] Tarr. "Covent Goblin Market," 315.
[637] Tarr. "Covent Goblin Market," 305-6.
Tarr also notes further examples of the use of Goblins and otherness, noting examples from Ralph Waldo Emerson's *English Traits* (1856) and Rudyard Kipling's *From Sea to Sea* (1899) (p.315).
[638] Some critics have drawn on the fact that many market stalls were often run by immigrants or figures seen as outsiders to mainstream Victorian society. For example, Todd M. Endelman notes that some of the areas that contained high Jewish populations included "the eastern fringe of the City, Houndsditch, *Spitalfields*, Whitechapel, and Goodman's Fields…" in *The Jews of Georgian England: Tradition and Change in a Liberal Society* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1999) 72.
Cynthia Scheinberg also argues that the Goblins represent a portrayal of Jewish stereotypes who are a threat to Christian normalcy: "Christina Rossetti and the Hebraic goblins of the Jewish Scriptures" in *Women's Poetry and Religion in Victorian England: Jewish Identity and Christian Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002) 106-45.
[639] White. *London in the Nineteenth Century*. 133.
[640] Battiscombe. *Christina Rossetti: A Divided Life.* 33.

her encounter. The remaining figures are gendered male in their depictions, referred to repeatedly as "goblin men" (l.49), "tramp little men" (l.55), and later "fruit-merchant men" (l.553). This last compound epithet explicitly connects them with fruit marketers and with trade in exotic produce. They are loud and assertive, resorting to physical assault as they "trod and hustled her,/ Elbowed and jostled her." (ll.399-400) Rossetti presents here an animalistic and negative portrayal of men in general, who are seemingly involved in a joint effort to prey on the vulnerable and depicted as "Leering at each other;/ Brother with queer brother;/ Signalling each other,/ Brother with sly brother." (ll.93-96) Their deceptive and spiteful fraternity opposes the innocence and purity of the sisterhood, in this case of actual sisters. The girls become a commodity to be traded, consumed, or discarded with little thought given to their safety and well-being. Laura's declaration that "Who knows upon what soil they fed/ Their hungry thirsty roots" (ll.44-45) not only remarks on the unknown origin of the men and their produce but also expresses a form of danger from future actions from men that cannot yet be known.

Other poems express similar incidents of men taking advantage of and mistreating women through objectification. In 'Maude Clare', the titular character confronts the man who has left her to marry another woman. Maude Clare defiantly offers "my share of a fickle heart,/ Mine of a paltry love" (*CP* 40, ll.37-38), feeling foolish for believing that she was loved back. Whilst in 'An Apple-Gathering', the female speaker reflects on a short-lived romance with Willie, recalling, "once it was with me you stooped to talk/ Laughing and listening in this very lane" (*CP* 38, ll.21-22). Willie no longer pays her attention after her apple tree fails to yield fruit because she had "plucked pink blossoms […]/ And wore them all evening in my hair." (ll.1-2) The removal of the blossom to create a decorative feature on her person caught the attraction of Willie, yet his spurning of her after this results in no fruit leaves her feeling bereft. She contemplates, "was my love less worth/ Than apples with their green leaves piled above?" (ll.17-18) Heather Sullivan notes how "Human bodies and minds are fully ensconced in material environments, which shape us just as vividly as we shape them,"[641] with the speaker in 'An Apple-Gathering' equating her beauty with that of the natural world. The rejection she experiences is related to the value placed on the apple harvest, where she finds it difficult to disconnect herself from her environment, which holds great significance.

[641] Sullivan. "Dirt Theory and Material Ecocriticism," 528.

Willie's rejection of her once she has nothing else to offer is but one of many depictions of male emotional, and sometimes physical, abuse of women that appear frequently in Rossetti's work. Published in the same collection as 'Goblin Market', the speaker in 'Cousin Kate' describes herself as "a cottage maiden" (*CP* 25, l.1) who is "Contented with my cottage mates" (l.3). Her simple country way of life is upturned when a lord discovers her, and she is "lured" back "to his palace home" (l.9). His actions lead her to "shameful life" (l.11) and she becomes his "plaything", regarding herself as "an unclean thing" (l.15). The imbalance of power between the maiden and the lord, means that she feels dutybound to follow his wishes, but he casts her aside in favour of her cousin who "grew more fair[er]." (l.18) The lord is of a different social class when compared to the traders in 'Goblin Market', but he is equally dangerous and predatory. He has corrupted the speaker, yet she believes that her "love was true" (l.33), raising doubt about the true intentions of her cousin. In the final stanza, the speaker reveals that she has "a gift" (l.41) in the form of a "fair-haired son, my shame, my pride" (l.45) who is the product of her union with the lord. The rejection forever haunts her, with her child being a constant reminder of the innocence that she has lost and the submission she endured at the hands of the lord.

In Rossetti's unusual relationship with marginalised women, there is further scope to consider dirt from a spiritual and moral aesthetics perspective. In 'The Covent Threshold', the speaker refers negatively to her "lily feet [which] are soiled with mud" (*CP* 56, l.7) and to the "stain" on her heart. (l.12) The speaker associates the physical marking of her body with dirt, signs of impurity and illicit activities. Her longing "to wash the spot, to burn the snare" (l.14) brings hope to become clean both physically and spiritually from her sexual transgressions. The speaker in 'What Would I Give?' wishes for tears "to wash the black mark clean, and to thaw the frost of years,/ To wash the stain ingrain and to make clean again." (*CP* 136, ll.8-9) Dirt and staining, therefore, do not exist solely in contrasting the city and countryside; instead it also demonstrates a more profound sense of something that physically and emotionally tarnishes and blemishes an individual. Rossetti's experience with sex workers resonates because of Victorian sensibilities regarding morality and innocence. Society's view, however, of them as the "other" relates to "the allure of the dirty, cocky ambivalence associated with the working classes."[642] The dirt seemingly holds no value to these individuals and forces a re-evaluation that invites readers to reconsider how these women and dirt are treated. As Mary Douglas stresses, dirt creates a "reflection on the

[642] Peter K. Andersson. "How Civilized Were the Victorians?" *Journal of Victorian Culture*. Volume 20, No.4 (December 2015): 451.

relation of order to disorder, being to non-being, form to formlessness, life to death."[643] Douglas, too, draws on the similar idea that Rossetti herself presented, that dirt represents something "out of place,"[644] its spiritual and moral tarnishing being seen as something in the eye of the beholder.[645]

When Eve "saw that the tree was good for food and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise" (*Genesis* 3:6), the serpent tempts her with the abundance of food, leading to humanity's expulsion from the Garden of Eden. The phrase "to be desired" highlights the tree's fullness and the ripeness of its fruit as too tempting to ignore. As Elizabeth Ludlow emphasises, "Rossetti makes it clear that, in the lives of the Old Testament characters, there is a lesson for contemporary believers."[646] For Rossetti's sisters, an error of judgment has resulted in terrifying circumstances and hardship, but a more positive outcome is achieved through great struggle, faith, and commitment. There is no eternal despair or hopelessness; instead, selfless love drives Lizzie to protect and heal her sister, partly righting the wrong that has occurred.

Laura warns: "We must not look at goblin men,/ We must not buy their fruits:/ Who knows upon what soil they fed/ Their hungry thirsty roots?" (*CP* 6, ll.42-45) The unknown origin is a troubling moral concern because it suggests something that is being concealed: a hidden reality. Although they do not refer to the poem, Simon Szreter and Kevin Siena argue that in the decades before the composition of 'Goblin Market', "the sexual culture of the metropolis diverged considerably from that of rural Britain."[647] They relate their research to James Boswell (1740-95), whose documentation of venereal diseases focused on those "contracted through commercial sex transactions."[648] The spread of sexually transmitted diseases such as syphilis in the Victorian city saw an increased risk to physical health, representing "a destructively agentic influence."[649] The city's pollution can, therefore, be

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[643] Douglas. *Purity and Danger*. 7.
[644] Rossetti. *Time Flies: A Reading Diary*. 49; and Douglas. *Purity and Danger*. 44.
[645] There is also a link to the association of dirt, soil, and dust as punishment in the story of the fall from the Garden of Eden. God says to the serpent: "upon thy belly shalt go, and dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life." (*Genesis* 4:14) To Adam, God says, "In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return." (*Genesis* 4: 19) Dust is unwholesome dirt, desiccated and without water. It is to the state of dust that many Christians are reminded that they, too, will return once they die.
[646] Elizabeth Ludlow. "Christina Rossetti," in *The Blackwell Companion to the Bible in English Literature*. ed. Rebecca Lemon et al. (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009) 559.
[647] Simon Szreter and Kevin Siena. "The pox in Boswell's London: an estimate of the extent of syphilis infection in the metropolis in the 1770s," *The Economic History Review*. Volume 74, Issue 2 (May 2021): 389.
[648] Szreter and Siena. "The pox in Boswell's London," 372.
[649] Sullivan. "Dirt Theory and Material Ecocriticism," 516.

considered not only in terms of the air or visible dirt but also viewed as the moral and physical pollution of the body.

Although coming into force after the publication of 'Goblin Market', the *Contagious Diseases Act* (1864) was, as Deborah Epstein Nord explains, "an effort to contain the spread of venereal diseases, especially in port towns, by forcing prostitutes to undergo medical inspection."[650] The act was a judgemental piece of legislation because it "gave weight to the powerful notion that such women existed to ensnare men and to defile their bodies with disease."[651] The instance of the narrative of the female temptress is one that Rossetti frequently resists; as Dian Roe explains, Rossetti "was uncomfortable with the way in which the bible portrayed women as harbingers of evil and temptation."[652] In her work, Rossetti refrains from casting women in an unfavourable light, and while naivety may be a contributing factor, the primary focus of guilt is directed towards men. This approach indicates Rossetti's deliberate choice to avoid perpetuating negative stereotypes about women. By placing responsibility on men, she highlights the oppressive societal norms that have historically limited women's agency and reinforces the need for gender equality. The women scorned, the women romantically or sexually used, and the women cast aside are presented as victims rather than temptresses of evil, depicting a domestic realism which emphasises the plight of women in the nineteenth-century.

The succumbing to lust, or the desperation of circumstances, puts individuals at risk when unknown origins have the potential to corrupt both the soul and the body. A similar warning with environmental metaphors and agricultural analogies occurs in the Sermon on the Mount when Jesus states:

> Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither *can* a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them.
>
> (*Matthew* 7:17-20)

The emphasis is on evil arising in fruits and corrupting goodness, thereby removing any beneficial qualities. The suggestion that something natural is tainted with evil occurs when the source is openly questioned: "Who knows upon what soil they fed/ Their hungry thirsty roots." (ll.44-5) Adam and Eve knew the evils when they ate the apple in the Garden of Eden; the temptation is real but is not always known by a physical manifestation. 'Goblin Market'

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[650] Nord. *Walking the Victorian Streets*. 9-10.
[651] Nord. *Walking the Victorian Streets.* 10.
[652] Roe. *The Rossettis in Wonderland*. 351.

naturalises the consequences of sin and temptation through metaphors of over-ripeness and decay, finding a universal method to explain significant Christian teachings. The act of yielding to carnal desires and temptation can result in physical deterioration, a warning echoed by Christ's sermon.

**The Final Years in the City**

In 1876, Rossetti and her mother and maternal aunts moved to Torrington Square, her final residence in London until her death in December 1894.[653] Many have noted that the area and house were dark and eerie, with Georgina Battiscombe calling it a "place of shadows and silence,"[654] whilst Ford Madox Hueffer remarked on the "gloomy square" and the "boxlike rooms."[655] Lona Mosk Packer calls it "a house of death"[656] because, over eighteen years, three elderly relatives and Rossetti herself would die there. The garden in the central square worsened the house's darkness, whose trees, as Hueffer recalls, meant that rooms were "rendered dark by the shade."[657] Despite the house's central location, it is presented similarly to the silent space in 'The Dead City' where the vibrancy of the city life seemingly falls to penetrate Torrington Square in its "shady avenue" (*CP* 599, l.136). The "odour-laden air" (l.150) feeds into Kathleen Jones' description of the house's "smell of ageing flesh."[658] The house turns into a setting for silence, death, and decay, contrasting with the noise and activity of urban living that Rossetti had previously celebrated.

Rossetti was, however, satisfied with the living arrangements and location, writing to the Sutton family that the rain had come to Torrington Square, bringing an attractive appearance, with the "window sights" being precious despite her poor health (*Letters* 4, 380-81). The "window sights" highlight the importance of seeing the outside world as her strength and wellness declined. The glimpses of the communal square through the window provided a reminder of life and the presence of the natural world, with Jones also noting that Rossetti had "a large terrarium containing the fern garden which was Christina's hobby."[659] This can

[653] The house was a short distance from University College London and close to the British Museum. As with many of Rossetti's London homes, it was located in the Bloomsbury and Fitzrovia area of the city, close to Regent's Park.
[654] Battiscombe. *Christina Rossetti: A Divided Life*. 189.
[655] Ford Madox Hueffer. "Christina Rossetti," *Fortnightly Review*. Volume 89, Issue 531. (March 1911): 424. Hueffer adopted the name Ford Madox Ford after the First World War and became a notable novelist and critic. His grandfather was the Pre-Raphaelite artist Ford Madox Brown, and his mother's half-sister was Lucy Madox Brown, who married William Michael Rossetti in 1874.
[656] Packer. *Christina Rossetti*. 311.
[657] Heuffer. "Christina Rossetti," 424.
[658] Jones. *Learning Not to be First*. 175.
[659] Ibid. 176.

be seen as an attempt to keep the natural world nearby, where she could maintain and grow plants in a controlled and safe environment.

In the poem 'Mirrors of Life and Death', published the year after the move to Torrington Square, Rossetti appears to reflect on her time in this new location.[660] It references "a Morning Sky colourless" (*CP* 283, l.7), much like the blocked-out natural light that was experienced at the property, yet "its measure of light/ To a wet world or a dry" (ll.8-9) is still noticeable. Nature acts as an illustration that shows life and death in their cycles, through which one can witness "One new dead, and one opened anew,/ And all good." (ll.36-37) The constant presence of both life and death should offer a reassurance that "all good" things will come and that from the sadness of death, there will be the opportunity to experience new life and regrowth. Rossetti's 'A Christmas Carol' (1872) also demonstrates new life in the darkest of times through the birth of Christ in the middle of a "bleak mid-winter." (*CP* 210, l.1) It is a time of year known for its bitterness, where the natural landscape is robbed of its usual greenery and foliage: "Earth stood hard as iron,/ Water like a stone" (ll.3-4), showing how the landscape appears dark and barren.

'Mirrors of Life and Death' describes "Winter, with nought to show" (l.132) to demonstrate the harshness and bareness of the season. Nothing appears to survive, yet Christ's birth makes it evident that life goes on and will continue to find a way, bringing hope for the future seasons. The poem is hopeful with the prospect of life following death and includes moments that appear to be autobiographical, especially about life at Torrington Square. The Mole is described as "grubbing underground;/ When it comes to the light/ It grubs its way back again." (ll.68-70) Unfamiliar with the dazzling sunshine, it disappears to safety where it is "Scant of pleasure and pain." (l.73) The Mole's dark tunnel and Rossetti's dark Torrington Square represent a place of safety and comfort. Although seemingly dreary with its lack of "pleasure" and enjoyment, it is also absent of "pain" and embodies a refuge from the struggles of the day. While Rossetti did leave Torrington Square on occasion, she was not entirely at ease, and she wrote how she often felt "loath to come out of my hole" (*Letters* 4, 241)—inviting similarities between herself and the Mole in finding safety in her trusted urban setting. Despite Keble's pessimistic view of the city, Rossetti's life as an urban resident highlights the dynamism and flexibility of High Church beliefs in such an environment. The following chapter on Hopkins will demonstrate a contrasting view to Rossetti, where poetry, faith, and the city are not in harmonious unity.

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[660] The poem was well received by many, including Gerard Manley Hopkins, who called it a "lovely poem." (*LII*, 62).

# Chapter 4: Gerard Manley Hopkins: An Ecological Communion

*The world is charged with the grandeur of God.*
*It will flame out, like shining from shook foil;*
*It gathers to a greatness, like the ooze of oil*
*Crushed.*

'God's Grandeur'
(*Poems* 66, ll.1-4)

Gerard Manley Hopkins' writing demonstrates the significant value of spiritual and physical experiences, particularly when felt in a rural environment. This examination of Hopkins' poetic investment reveals a profound unity between his love for nature and his Catholic faith. The perfection, or in some cases the positive imperfections, of God's manifestation and creation are evident in the beauty of all things in the natural world. Although primarily writing on rural themes and imagery, this chapter reads Hopkins against the grain by considering him as a poet of the city, where he spent much of his working life. His experiences in industrial London, Oxford, Manchester, Liverpool, and Dublin are central to understanding his reaction to and comprehension of these locations. This interpretation sheds light on the challenges and obstacles that Hopkins encountered in these densely populated and industrial areas, showing how, like Rossetti, he was forced to understand and reconcile several societal concerns with his traditional, conservative Christian views.[661] By examining Hopkins' experiences in the harsh communal and economic conditions of the city, this chapter's analysis contributes to a deeper understanding of the impact of urbanisation on Hopkins' poetry, journals, and letters. These are critical for understanding his spiritual conversations and thought processes, especially when God's creation and nature seem absent. Concerning writing and the environment, John Parham states that despite "the diversity of places in which Hopkins lived […] Hopkins was not a poet of place in the way conventionally understood."[662] My research argues that location and the value of experiences are imperative in appreciating Hopkins' writing and his detachment and disenchantment with urban environments.

As Kirstie Blair emphasises, Hopkins "started from more or less the same position" as the "Anglo-Catholic ritualist" Christina Rossetti.[663] Their similar foundations in orthodox and

[661] Such issues of poverty and destruction are found on page of this chapter. For Rossetti's treatment of moral values, see page 148.
[662] John Parham. *Green Man Hopkins: Poetry and the Victorian Ecological Imagination* (New York: Rodopi, 2010) 103.
[663] Kirstie Blair. *Form and Faith in Victorian Poetry and Religion*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012) 198.

traditional teachings provide a vital connection; however, Hopkins renounced the Church of England to join the Roman Catholic Church in 1866, reflecting his commitment to following God's "Incomprehensible Certainty" (*LI* 187). This seemingly paradoxical phrase emphasises that certainty is not always evident or easily understood but exists if the element of doubt is removed. This borrows aspects of Coleridge's thoughts on "an absolute truth" that becomes doubtless because it is "a truth self-grounded, unconditional and known by its own light." (*CW* 7.I, 268)[664] Although the Oxford Movement had seen itself as the guardian of Christian orthodoxy, Hopkins would observe in Oxford in 1866 that "the Tractarian ground" was now "broken to pieces under my feet." (*LIII*, 92) Paul Mariani argues that the line: "The world is charged with the grandeur of God" (*Poems* 66, l.1) was part of Hopkins' journey towards a Catholic certainty and truth. As Mariani notes:

> [He] believed it so strongly that it led in large part to his conversion to the Roman Catholic Church. Believed it as a Jesuit, and called on both Ignatius's *Spiritual Exercises* and the insights of the philosopher Duns Scotus in Christ's Incarnation to formulate a theodicy and a poetics which would articulate and sing what his whole self–head and heart–felt. And the evidence of that grandeur came to be everywhere for him: in the sublime Alps as in violets and running streams and in the ten thousand faces which reflected the very face of God.[665]

Although controversial due to Victorian suspicion of Catholics,[666] Hopkins' conversion was a notable attempt to move from the apparent instability of High Anglicanism towards a solid foundation of Christian conviction in the Roman Catholic church. Although, as Mariani notes, Hopkins saw the grandeur of God in all things, I am interested in the moments when he was challenged over this vision in the industrial cities. In these environments, Hopkins was faced with poverty, pollution, and manmade destruction, and, therefore, I want to argue that "to formulate a theodicy,"[667] Hopkins was forced to negotiate prejudice, doubt, and isolation to maintain certainty and trust in God.

I do not mean to cast Hopkins as an outsider or lonely figure; however, as a priest, he worked with marginalised groups disconnected from Victorian society in industrial and

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[664] This is the opposite of John Keats's alternative Romantic concept of "negative capability," meaning the ability to accept intellectual uncertainty. Keats defined negative capability as "when a man is capable of being in uncertainties, mysteries, doubts, without any irritable reaching after fact and reason." Keats's letter to Tom and George Keats, December 21, 1817 in *The Letters of John Keats, 1814-1821*. Volume 1. 193-94.
[665] Paul Mariani. *Gerard Manley Hopkins: A Life* (New York: Viking Penguin, 2008) 3.
[666] Bernard Bergonzi argues that "Hopkins would have found fewer opportunities, given the still widespread prejudices against Catholics."- Bernard Bergonzi. *Gerard Manley Hopkins* (London: Macmillan Press, 1977) 59.
[667] Mariani. *Gerard Manley Hopkins: A Life*. 3.

working-class areas. His entrance into the Jesuit order[668] was provocative at a time when "many Victorian Protestants regarded the Jesuit order with a special distrust."[669] Jesuits were viewed as "scheming, prevaricating, disloyal and profoundly un-English in an Italianate or Spanish fashion,"[670] and as Kirstie Blair highlights, represented "one of the most definite of all religious traditions…"[671] Therefore, Hopkins' relationship with the city and the natural world is influenced by the difficult circumstances he experienced and encountered. William B. Thesing summarises, "Between the years 1879 and 1884, Hopkins was exposed to some of the worst features and abuses to be found in nineteenth-century industrial cities."[672] These abuses exist in a multitude of ways, and it is these that I will explore in turn in this chapter. I begin with Hopkins' representation and thoughts on the urban environment, particularly in its exploitation of the air, water, and soil, along with the presence of dirt and pollution. This is followed by an analysis of Hopkins' depiction of people in these environments, which are sympathetic yet distant. I then examine Hopkins' adoration of the natural world as the antithesis of urban life, in which nature is filled with a particular goodness and a noticeable omission of hardship or evil. Indeed, Hopkins' understanding of the world in his poems will highlight the purity of devout individuals, the outrage felt towards the destruction of the wilderness and God's creation, and the concern at the loss of an orthodox Catholic heritage.

**Hopkins and the City**

In 'The Alchemist in the City' (1865), Hopkins writes:

> No, I should love the city less
> Even than this my thankless lore;
> But I desire the wilderness

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[668] Jesuits had been involved in education and scientific discovery throughout their history, with William B. Ashworth Jr noting how they were 'the single most important contributor[s] to experimental physics.'- William B. Ashworth Jr. "Catholicism and Early Modern Science," in *God and Nature: Historical Essays on the Encounter Between Christianity and Science*. eds. David C. Lindberg and Ronald L. Numbers (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986) 154.
It was not until William Whewell coined the term 'scientist' in the 1830s to separate religion from the exploration of the world and its components, for further information on this see: David Cahan. ed. *From Natural Philosophy to the Sciences: Writing the History of Nineteenth-Century Science* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003).
For further information of Jesuits and their influence on science, innovation, and culture, see: John W. O'Malley. *The Jesuits: Cultures, Sciences, and the Arts, 1540-1773* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999); Mark A. Waddell. *Jesuit Science and the End of Nature's Secrets* (London: Taylor & Francis, 2016).
[669] Catherine Robson and Carol T. Christ, eds. "Gerard Manley Hopkins 1844-1889" in *The Norton Anthology of English Literature: The Victorian Age, Volume E.* 9th ed. (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2012) 1546.
[670] Bergonzi. *Gerard Manley Hopkins*. 60.
[671] Blair. *Form and Faith in Victorian Poetry and Religion*. 198.
[672] William Thesing. "Gerard Manley Hopkins's Responses to the City: The 'Composition of the Crowd'," *Victorian Studies*, Volume 30, No. 3 (Spring 1987): 394.

Or weeded landslips of the shore.

(*Poems* 25, ll.20-24)

The city is a place of fierce action where "men and masters plan and build" (l.6), and in doing so, "the melting crowds" merge as "the whole world passes" (ll.3-4). The "desire" for the speaker is a different landscape, one of "wilderness/ Or weeded landslips of the shore" (ll.23-24), far removed from the hustle of the city. The romanticised yearning for "the houseless shore" (l.35) and the "silence and a gulf of air" (l.40) indicate a need for solitude and peace, which are presented as the ideal and most valuable state when everything else "holds no promise of success." (l.34) The poem's conclusion remarks on "the sunset [where] I would lie,/ And pierce the yellow waxen light/ With free long looking, ere I die" (ll.42-44). Death in this environment is not seen as a negative because to be surrounded by the beauty of the natural world is equated with goodness and happiness. That desired location is where the speaker actively engages and interacts with the landscape. This contrasts the passive remark, "I stand by," whilst helplessly witnessing the fast pace of modernity in the city. (l.4) The natural world is shown to have a profound spiritual and physical value, offering something that cannot be experienced in the urban environment.

This section addresses environmental matters by providing a materialistic and historicist reading of Hopkins' poems and correspondence to examine his portrayal of urban experiences. In presenting Hopkins as a poet of a city, I want to stress that his experience there was a reluctant one, with 'The Alchemist in the City' demonstrating his continued adoration and yearning for the countryside. My reconceptualising of Rossetti as an urban poet and how this materialistic context provides an alternative understanding of her poetry also has many similarities with Hopkins; the critical difference is how Hopkins was a city resident not by choice but out of necessity. As a result, the urban environment's dirt, decay, and poverty have a more profound impact on his work, which forces a reconsideration of how Hopkins accounts for such occurrences. This yearning for the natural world results from an enforced urban existence, leading to the wilderness and the rural idyll being highly praised as the antidote to city living and the purest form of God's creation on Earth.[673]

Hopkins wrote: "I love country life and dislike any town and that especially for its bad and smokefoul air [sic] [...] my dream is a farm in the Western counties, glowworms, new milk." (*LIII* 292-93) For Hopkins, the urban landscape was a location of dirt, grime, and squalor, yet it would be this environment where he would spend most of his time due to the

[673] Raymond Williams writes there is an issue as to "whether such an idyll, the delightful Pastoral, should be referred always to the Golden Age…"- Williams. *The Country and the City*. 19.

nature of his priestly assignments. Unlike Rossetti, Hopkins had to reconcile his loathing for the town to remain empathetic to his Christian obligations to those who lived there. The outcome is a deep longing and powerful attachment to the rural areas where God's presence seems evident. This is in contrast to Hopkins' view of a noticeable suppression of creative energy in urban settings because God appeared to be absent due to the lack of nature.

Hopkins' works demonstrate a deep engagement with the tension between the urban and rural, where this strain had an impact on the human experience, as viewed within a theological context. This theme is a significant aspect of Hopkins' poetic vision, and his exploration of it offers valuable insights into the cultural and social dynamics of the time. His position as a Jesuit priest meant he was to administer to all communities, most of which were in poverty-filled working-class areas. These industrial locations challenged Hopkins' worldview, forcing him to confront such injustices in environments blighted and damaged by industry. My focus here is on the urban and industrial elements of Hopkins' world, which played a vital role in his early life and his duties as a Roman Catholic from the late 1860s onwards.

Hopkins expressed his distaste for urban life, writing to his friend Alexander William Mowbray Baillie:

> What I most dislike in towns and in London in particular is the misery of the poor; the dirt; squalor, and the illshapen, degraded physical (putting aside moral) type of so many of the people, with the deeply dejecting, unbearable thought that by degrees almost all our population will become a town population and a puny unhealthy and cowardly one.
>
> (*LIII* 293)

This view is similar to John Keble's belief that the rural environment offered a "secure and inviolate"[674] space closer to nature and, therefore, to God. Keble's comment, however, did not address the social and economic decline in rural Britain in the nineteenth-century, in which depopulation occurred due to urban migration and increased agricultural mechanisation. (See p.172) For Hopkins, the town was a corrupting and exploitative environment that impacted an individual's moral compass, physical health, and appearance. Subsequently, the urban environment held little value for Hopkins when the benefits and comfort of the rural landscape were considered. Heather Sullivan proposes that dirt theory is "an antidote to nostalgic views rendering nature a far-away "clean" site precisely to suggest that there is no ultimate boundary between us and nature."[675] Hopkins' perception of dirt

[674] Keble. *Keble's Lectures on Poetry.* 32.
[675] Sullivan. "Dirt Theory and Material Ecocriticism," 515.

relates to the harsh conditions of the urban environment, which presents, as Sullivan notes, "dirt and dust [that] can be highly toxic or [even] radioactive."[676] (See also p.183) These squalid conditions impacted the quality of life negatively and, as Hopkins observed, led to a "misery" that seemingly altered the physical and moral identity of the poor. Dirt shapes their existence, becoming an intrinsic part of their identity and a potentially deadly threat. Hopkins recognises the "unhealthy" presence of dirt and pollution, which troubles him because of the "unbearable thought" that "almost all our population will become a town population" (*LIII* 293). The genuine fear is that the population will be subjected to squalor and poverty as part of the normalised and unhealthy push towards progress and modernity.

Indeed, it is worth stressing how dirt and pollution were a constant throughout Hopkins' life, from his birthplace in Stratford, on the industrial borderland with London, to his death in Dublin, where "dilapidated college buildings were afflicted by a combination of dry rot, sanitation problems, poor drainage and rats rife with infectious disease."[677] Upon ordination, Hopkins' priestly duties would see him repeatedly placed in urban environments that often housed the locality's poorest inhabitants. The nation's population would shift dramatically from the rural to the metropolitan, as Great Britain's population almost doubled between 1801 and 1851, resulting in the consequence where "half the population was urban."[678] This contrasts significantly with the world Coleridge experienced and demonstrates significant challenges to religion and nature. The friction between the urban and rural is apparent in Hopkins' struggles to rationalise and justify the influence and power of God in accordance with his Catholic beliefs.

Hopkins' Stratford was the last frontier of Essex before crossing the River Lee[679] into the metropolitan authority of London. The river provided a natural barrier between the city to the west and the Essex countryside to the east, giving access to a north/ south trading and

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[676] Sullivan. "Dirt Theory and Material Ecocriticism," 516.
[677] Parham. *Green Man Hopkins*. 12.
[678] Inglis. *Churches and the Working Classes in Victorian England*. 3.
[679] The river's name is derived from the Celtic for "bright river" or "river dedicated to the god Lugus"- See: David Mills. *A Dictionary of British Place-Names* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011) 296. *Ordnance Survey* and maps, both past and present, list the river as "River Lea or River Lee". The 1771 act of parliament for making parts of the river canalised for ease of sailing from Hertford to the River Thames at Limehouse Basin refers to these straightened sections, which are often separate from the main river, as the "Lee Navigation". The spelling of Lea or Lee appears to be used interchangeably, and along the route, there is the Lee Valley and the Lee Navigation but also Lea Bridge, Leamouth, and the Lea Valley Railway Line (constructed from 1840 and where Stratford was a major junction). For consistency, this chapter will use the "Lee" variation of the spelling as used in the 1771 Act of Parliament to create the Lee Navigation.

transport route.[680] The friction between the rural and the city is apparent in the year of Hopkins' birth when the Metropolitan Building Act was passed. It attempted to regulate the construction and usage of buildings in London and improve living standards by providing greater consideration for public health.[681] East London had long been associated with the working classes and industry, as Peter Ackroyd notes: "the West End has the money, and the East End has the dirt; there is leisure to the West, and labour to the East."[682] The Act imposed strict legislation over the Metropolitan Authority of London; however, Stratford was outside the Act's mandate on the opposite side of the River Lee. The result was that many of the East End industries crossed the boundary marked by the river to evade the new legislation, leading to the banks near Stratford becoming dominated by manufacturing and chemical factories.

*The Times* reported that: "Factory after factory was erected on the marshy wastes of Stratford and Plaistow […] the once desolate parish of West Ham [became] a manufacturing and commercial centre of the first importance and to bring upon it a teeming and an industrious population."[683] Stratford changed from an Essex town into becoming part of London's urban and industrial sprawl, where the East End "labour", as Ackroyd refers to it, seemingly invaded from the city. Intensive expansion exacerbated industrial activities with "dye works and chemical works, manure factories and lamp-black factories, manufacturers of glue and of paraffin, producers of paint and bonemeal, all clustered in Bow and Old Ford and Stratford."[684] Significantly, Ackroyd refers to Stratford and the surrounding area being "exploited and degraded,"[685] where industry scarred the landscape and polluted the air, soil,

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[680] A study in *The Times Atlas of London* highlights how the acoustic reach of the bells of St Mary-le-Bow (traditionally defined as the area in which true cockneys are born) extended from the City of London to Stratford and Leyton in 1851-a distance of around four miles. The study states that the reach has since diminished from a few square miles to a few square yards by 2012. It highlights the city's closeness to Stratford, where the bells of a central London church could be heard in this semi-rural Essex fringe location.
See: "London noise 'mutes Bow Bells to endanger Cockneys'' *BBC News*. June 25, 2012, <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-london-18570802> (Accessed October 1, 2022); and Paul Wilkinson. "Cockneys' bells struggle to be heard," *Church Times*. June 29, 2012, <https://www.churchtimes.co.uk/articles/2012/29-june/news/uk/cockneys-bells-struggle-to-be-heard> (Accessed October 1, 2022).

[681] "The Metropolitan Buildings Office was established in 1844 under the Metropolitan Buildings Act and was the first statutory body with responsibility for building regulation for the whole of the Metropolitan area. Revision of building regulation was long overdue […] Building methods and uses had also changed in the period, and there was a pressing need to prevent building developments which were undesirable for social or sanitary reasons - even the most conservative were beginning to realise that accumulations of untreated sewage under and around dwellings in crowded streets and alleys were a menace to health."
See: 'Metropolitan Buildings Office' at *London Metropolitan Archives*. <https://search.lma.gov.uk/scripts/mwimain.dll/144/LMA_OPAC/web_detail?SESSIONSEARCH&exp=refd%20MBO> (Accessed Aug 23, 2023).

[682] Peter Ackroyd. *London: The Biography* (London: Chatto & Windus, 2000) 677.

[683] "The Incorporation of West Ham". *The Times.* (November 1, 1886): 12.

[684] Ackroyd. *London: The Biography*. 677.

[685] Ibid. 677.

and water. This demonstrates the "darker side"[686] of dirt, as Sullivan refers to it, and what Mary Douglas argues is the "reflection on the relation of order to disorder, being to non-being, form to formlessness, life to death."[687] Stratford and its surroundings emphasised the lack of harmony with the natural environment, where industry was valued at the expense of the exploitation and contamination of the air, soil, and water.

The preceding is significant because it provides a contextual footing to understand Hopkins' earliest experiences of the urban environment and pollution. Bernard Bergonzi notes that "the Hopkins family [were] comfortably off, cultivated and versatile…"[688] At the same time, Robert Bernard Martin described the Stratford home as "a pleasant three-storied semi-detached house with big rooms and high ceilings, sufficiently large," but the area would "lose its rural character."[689] The impact of the growing industrialisation on the banks of the River Lee mirrors 'The Alchemist in the City' where "men and master plan and build" (*Poems* 24, l.6), resulting in the countryside being lost and dominated by "melting crowds" (l.3), "towers" (l.7), and the "furnace" (l.16). The Hopkins family's relocation to Hampstead in 1852 marks a significant moment in demonstrating how they left behind the heavily industrial landscape to seek a happier, healthier, and greener existence.[690] As J. R. Watson comments, they left "the flat plain east of London to the rolling hills and wooded heaths of Hampstead"[691] echoing Hopkins' speaker in 'The Alchemist in the City' who declares, "I desire the wilderness" (l.23). These childhood experiences are noteworthy in their early affirmation of the inherent goodness and purity of the countryside.

After his ordination in September 1877, Hopkins served in mostly urban, working-class areas that contrasted with leafy Hampstead, instead more in keeping with the industrial nature of Stratford. Hopkins described Bedford Leigh, or Leigh, a parish west of Manchester, during his three-month there in 1879: "Leigh is a town smaller and with less dignity than Rochdale […] the houses red, mean, and two storied; there are a dozen mills or so, and coalpits also; the air is charged with smoke as well as damp" (*LI* 90). He would declare that "Leigh is a darksome place, with pits and mills and foundries" (*LI* 90); however, Norman

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[686] Sullivan. "Dirt Theory and Material Ecocriticism," 516.
[687] Douglas. *Purity and Danger*. 7.
[688] Bergonzi. *Gerard Manley Hopkins*. 1.
[689] Robert Bernard Martin. *Gerard Manley Hopkins: A Very Private Life*. (London: Harper Collins, 1992) 2.
[690] The artist Ford Madox Brown was a resident of Hampstead when the Hopkins family moved there. Some of Brown's paintings, often in a Hogarthian style and Pre-Raphaelite style, depict Hampstead as Hopkins would have seen it: *Work* (Produced in various forms between 1852 and 1865) shows The Mount off Heath Street in Hampstead being dug up whilst residents walk past and observe the scene; while *Hampstead from my Window-A Sketch from Nature* (1857) shows the countryside and rural qualities of Hampstead, similar to how Hopkins and his family would have seen it.
[691] J. R. Watson. *The Poetry of Gerard Manley Hopkins* (London: Penguin, 1989) 11.

White explains that: "as far as the Catholic Church was concerned Leigh was a shining example, in the most Catholic of English counties. Over half of the town's inhabitants were officially Catholic."[692] Leigh should have been an inspirational centre of Roman Catholicism, a thriving and pious community where their faith brought residents together. It should have been a success story of Catholic revival, but it demonstrates the divide that set apart the large Catholic communities in the industrial North.

As with many places where Hopkins served, this region had a significant Irish Catholic community, with figures provided by Friedrich Engels demonstrating that poor Irish communities existed "in Manchester, 40,000 [and] in Liverpool, 34,000."[693] This "most Catholic of English counties," as White noted, was arguably due to the large Irish communities that resided there. One article in the *Dublin Review* notes how the Irish "are congregated together in the poorest, the most squalid, the most neglected, and the most destitute corners of our cities."[694] This increased Irish Catholic population led to concerns that they carried "the famine-fever, dysentery, and smallpox,"[695] sentiments that Coleridge had shared in his poem 'Cholera Cured Beforehand'. Impoverishment led to diseases spreading "like wildfire amongst the settled population through the increased overcrowding in the Irish quarters of many towns."[696] These neglected but growing Irish Catholic communities were where Hopkins primarily served in some of the most industrial cities.[697] In many cases, these thriving religious communities in the industrial towns lived in what Sullivan calls "the dirty human sphere,"[698] surrounded by pollution, destruction, and disease.

The influence of industry cannot be understated, especially with its connection to poverty, environmental damage, and dirt. In 'The Escorial' an early, prize-winning poem, Hopkins writes of the "crack'd flesh" which "lay hissing on the grate" (*Poems* 3, l.20), a violent image of fire and scorched flesh resulting in bodily destruction and disfiguration. 'God's Grandeur' (1877) declares that "The world is charged with the grandeur of God" (*Poems* 66, l.1), where God's power and creation should be felt everywhere. The language, however, dwells heavily on industrial terms such as the "flame" (l.2) and "the ooze of oil"

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[692] Norman White. *Hopkins: A Literary Biography* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992) 315.
[693] Friedrich Engels. *The Condition of the Working Class in England*. ed. Victor Kiernan (London: Penguin, 1987) 123.
[694] "The Irish in England," *Dublin Review* (December 1856): 472-74.
[695] Arthur Redford. *Labour Migration in England, 1800-1850*. ed. W. H. Chaloner. 3rd ed. (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1976) 156.
[696] Ibid. 157.
[697] Engels includes Irish Immigration as one of his observation chapters in *The Condition of the Working Class in England* (pp.123-26).
[698] Sullivan. "Dirt Theory and Material Ecocriticism," 515.

(l.3), which are of great value in the manufacturing process. Hopkins' oil is most likely a reference to oil from olives (ll.3-4), yet the persistent reference to industrial methods introduces an alternative interpretation where the violent and functional language of mechanisation is employed. The use of "ooze" as a verb suggests a sluggish secretion rather than a holy anointing, which "gathers" (l.3) or collects in stagnant oily puddles, which are beautiful but reflect the impact of industry and pollution. The shining "foil" (l.2), as Hopkins later explained to his friend Robert Bridges, relates to "shaken goldleaf [which] gives off broad glares […] owing to its zigzag dints and creasings [sic] and network of small many cornered facets…" (*LI* 169) Even though God's grandeur shines out like the foil, the power of God is frequently likened to industrial processes and creations. In a sermon, Hopkins refers similarly to God, noting, "All things therefore are charged with love, are charged with God and if we know how to touch them give off sparks and take fire, yield drops and flow." (*SD* 195) The charged sparks, although evocative of a vibrant energy and power of the divine, also convey the language of a furnace or crucible emphasising industrialisation.

In 'God's Grandeur', Hopkins considers the "Generations [who] have trod, have trod, have trod" (l.5) seemingly doomed to repeat actions and processes in challenging conditions to maintain industrial growth. The landscape and people become "seared with trade; bleared, smeared with toil" (l.6), resulting in disfiguration and scarring. The land becomes stripped of goodness, and "the soil/ Is bare now" (ll.7-8), lacking any life-giving and nourishing qualities, thereby questioning how the landscape's industrial and economic degradation can be fully resolved. Hopkins writes that "there lives the dearest freshness deep down" (l.10) because "nature is never spent" (l.9). This offers hope through improvement and renewal, that nature can persist, which W. H. Gardner calls a "sensuous enjoyment of natural beauty [which] induces a doctrinal, dogmatic or quasi-mystical consummation- the spiritual exegesis of nature's parable."[699] Beyond all the industrialisation, material progress, and artificial creations, the purity of nature and God are lacking in the urban environment. As Timothy Morton stresses, "Industrial capitalism is philosophy incarnate in stocks, girders, and human sweat […] industrial capitalism has turned the Earth into a dangerous desert. It doesn't really care what comes through the factory door, just as long as it generates more capital."[700] The

[699] W. H Gardner. *Gerard Manley Hopkins (1844-1889): A Study of Poetic Idiosyncrasy in Relation to Poetic Tradition.* Volume 1 (London: Oxford University Press, 1961) 19.
[700] Timothy Morton. *Hyperobjects: Philosophy and Ecology after the End of the World* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2013) 112.

commodification of the Earth is a pertinent issue for Hopkins because it represents a degradation of God's creation.

Heather Sullivan refers to "the challenge of shaping dirt and negotiating with its mobile grit functions as a metaphor for the project of modernity" through the attempts "to remove or conceal bodily filth, waste, and the sweaty labor of agricultural processes."[701] Sullivan relates changes in perception surrounding dirt to modernity and progress, which is emphasised by Mary Douglas, who states that this progress causes a "re-ordering [of] our environment, making it conform to an idea."[702] Hopkins' poetry is steadfast in its depiction of nostalgia for a non-descript bygone age and an unspecified rural location that is the escape from modernity and change. The speaker in 'The Alchemist in the City' is not in step with the changes around them and can only watch the destruction and materialistic construction that appears. Hopkins associates the city with exploitation, exemplified by the dirt, grime, and dust that pollute and strip away the world's beauty.

Crucially, Hopkins' understanding of the natural world is not scrutinised as much as the urban landscape. Despite being described as a "free and kind wilderness" in 'The Alchemist in the City" (l.36) and the "wildness and wet" in 'Inversnaid' (*Poems* 89, l.15), it is never presented as a dirty environment. The country air 'In the Valley of the Elwy' (1877) is described as "cordial" (*Poems* 68, l.5), where the speaker expresses great joy in their surroundings: "Lovely the woods, waters, meadows, combes, vales,/ All the air things wear that build this world." (ll.9-10) While in 'Hurrahing in Harvest' (1877), the physical act of harvesting the land, something that should intrinsically involve dirt, dust and grime is instead portrayed as "lovely behaviour" (*Poems* 70, l.2) where the worker has a "world-wielding shoulder" contributing to the "majestic" scene that unfolds (ll.9-10). Sullivan refers to a "pure, clean nature,"[703] and it is this form of nature that Hopkins depicts, which is inherently good and always filled with beauty.

Hopkins continues to document his difficulties in urban spaces in contrast to the rural landscape, stating in 1880: "Liverpool is of all places the most museless. It is indeed a most unhappy and miserable spot. There is moreover no time for writing anything serious." (*LII* 41) For Hopkins, Liverpool seemingly appears to remove any form of creative energy, resulting in not only no time to write but also nothing to inspire his writing. The demands of his position and the polluted landscape resulted in a dry period of creativity in which "Every

[701] Sullivan. "Dirt Theory and Material Ecocriticism," 526.
[702] Douglas. *Purity and Danger*. 3.
[703] Sullivan. "Dirt Theory and Material Ecocriticism," 515.

impulse and spring of art seems to have died in me." (*LI* 124) His poetic inspiration is therefore expressed as being influenced by his surroundings; in Liverpool, he was bereft of the natural world and its goodness, the essence of God's creation and presence. The absence leaves him "museless" (*LII* 41), part of an ongoing decline in urban environments where he earlier remarked that his "muse turned utterly sullen in the Sheffield smoke-ridden air" (*LI* 48) before it seemingly abandoned him altogether in Liverpool. In a letter to Francis de Paravicini, he notes: "I used to say to myself […] 'I see the sun' […] now at Liverpool one can *not* see the sun" (*LIII* 63). This suggests the darkness is all-consuming and dominating when even the daylight cannot permeate the grime and dirt. For Hopkins, when the natural world and God's creation are seemingly removed or absent, then the artistic inspiration it provides is also lacking, suggesting a vicious cycle in which art, nature and God cannot work in harmony.

Robert Bernard Martin and Norman White connect Hopkins' death to poor sanitation and water contamination at the University College where he was living in the centre of Dublin.[704] Hopkins wrote of the squalid conditions: "the College is poor, all unprovided to a degree that outsiders would scarcely believe, and of course- I cannot go into details- it cannot be comfortable. It is, this comes nearest to it, like living at a temporary Junction and everybody knowing and shewing [sic] as much" (*LIII* 164). John Parham expands on Martin and White's argument by highlighting that Hopkins died because "of an urban environmental hazard."[705] The cityscape profoundly impacted Hopkins' physical and mental health, with bouts of illness and anguish appearing more frequently in his letters and journal entries when living in cities. For Hopkins, the cities represented environments that stifled creativity and good health while emphasising the problematic and poor conditions of the working classes. The rural landscape appears to be much more inspirational and homely to Hopkins and reveals the good and beauty of God's creation, in contrast to the manmade creation of the city.

**Hopkins and the Urban Poor**

In the *New York Review*, Denis Donoghue argues that Hopkins' comments on the urban environment were examples of elitism and privilege, claiming that they are

[704] Martin. *Gerard Manley Hopkins: A Very Private Life*. 370-71; and White. *Hopkins: A Literary Biography*. 454-55.
[705] Parham. *Green Man Hopkins*. 12.

"querulous", particularly in their representation of the working classes.[706] Writing for the *London Review of Books*, John Bayley suggests that Oxford University's "aristocratic set", with whom Hopkins associated, set him on the path to being a snob.[707] Margaret R. Ellsberg argues similarly, describing how: "his high-pitched voice conveyed the powerful stereotype of an affluent Englishman, and […] his arched eyebrows and long nose conferred on him the appearance of a cartoon snob."[708] These claims of Hopkins' snobbishness are primarily aimed at his physical appearance and education, which are insufficient to criticise his whole character.

When Hopkins wrote to Bridges: "Our whole civilisation is dirty, yea filthy, and especially in the north" (*LI* 299), he was not making a comment of privilege and snobbery but addresses his disgust and disapproval on the "whole [of] civilisation" because of its filth, destruction, and desecration of God's earth. As I see it, the repulsion is part of a culture shock due to the exposure to human existence that was far removed from his own. As Mariaconcetta Costantini rightly emphasises, "Hopkins' depiction of the city is in line with the dominating ethos of his age."[709] His aversion is aimed at the poor urban conditions rather than the parishioners who had to endure it. For them, it is a way of life that is seemingly inescapable, to which they have no influence or power to change. The "misery of the poor; the dirt; squalor, and the illshapen, degraded physical (putting aside moral) type of so many of the people" (*LII* 293) draws attention to the working classes living in harsh conditions. It demonstrates the plight of the poor at the expense of industrial and materialistic growth, with dirt and pollution as by-products of that exploitation. Hopkins believes, through personal interaction, that those who lived in these conditions were proof of "the misery of town life to the poor and more than to the poor, of the misery of the poor in general, of the degradation even of our race, of the hollowness of this century's civilisation." (*LII* 97) His view is that the abandonment and exploitation of the working classes exposed the horrors of modernity and economic progress. This relates to Andy Hamilton's comments on Coleridge's *Church and State*, which aimed "not to civilize, but to cultivate, counteracting the dehumanizing

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[706] Denis Donoghue. "The Flight of Gerard Manley Hopkins' (Review of *Gerard Manley Hopkins: A Very Private Life* by Robert Bernard Martin)," *The New York Review* (July 18, 1991) <https://www.nybooks.com/articles/1991/07/18/the-flight-of-gerard-manley-hopkins/?lp_txn_id=1374638> (Accessed Aug 31, 2022).
[707] John Bayley. "Pork Chops," *London Review of Books*. Volume 13, No. 8 (April 25, 1991) <https://www.lrb.co.uk/the-paper/v13/n08/john-bayley/pork-chops> (Accessed Aug 31, 2022).
[708] Margaret R. Ellsberg. *The Gospel in Gerard Manley Hopkins: Selections from His Poems, Letters, Journals, and Spiritual Writings* (England: Plough Publishing House, 2017) 5.
[709] Mariaconcetta Costantini. "'The city tires to death': Images of Urbanization and Natural Corruption in Hopkins' work," *The Hopkins Quarterly*, Volume 28, No. 3/ 4 (Summer- Fall 2001): 116.

materialism of political economy."[710] Therefore, Hopkins aligns with the Victorian age's urban critics by condemning the decline of living standards and the physical and environmental destruction caused by capitalist gain.

This leads to one of Hopkins' most strongly worded letters to his friend Robert Bridges, dubbed the 'red letter' by scholars,[711] where he declares: "In a manner I am a Communist." (*LI* 27) Although displaying some socialist ideals in stating that "some great revolution is not far off" (*LI* 27), Hopkins was primarily concerned about the well-being of the people he served. His letter continues:

> It is a dreadful thing for the greatest and most necessary part of a very rich nation to live a hard life without dignity, knowledge, comforts, delights, or hopes in the midst of plenty- which plenty they make. They profess that they do not care what they wreck and burn, the old civilisation and order must be destroyed […] As it at present stands in England it is itself in great measure founded on wrecking. But they get none of the spoils, they came in for nothing but harm from it then and thereafter. England has grown hugely wealthy but this wealth has not reached the working class; I expect it has made their condition worse.
>
> (*LI* 27-28)

Martin argues that Hopkins' statement was "ill-judged teasing and heartfelt sadness at the condition of the country."[712] Bernard Bergonzi suggests that Hopkins was writing from the viewpoint of "a Tory radical rather than a socialist,"[713] but this does not wholly describe Hopkins' actions. Any "radicalism" is difficult to judge because Hopkins is seemingly sympathetic to the people he portrays, but he does not advocate overthrowing the regime or political reform despite this critical stance. Indeed, in his comments, he is not expressing a hard-line conservative view but instead ventures towards a more central, somewhat socialist stance without radical implications. William Thesing rightly acknowledges that Hopkins was concerned with "the plight of urban workers in capitalist England" and that Hopkins' use of the term "communist" occurred before "any direct or violent attempt by a political group to impose the adoption of a political policy."[714] Hopkins had not abandoned his orthodox position for socialism in the modern sense; instead, he demonstrated compassion and understanding for the plight of the working class, although his use of "communist" is

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[710] Hamilton. "Coleridge and Conservatism," 155.
[711] Other critics who have referenced this include: Martin. *Gerard Manley Hopkins: A Very Private Life*. 217-21; Bergonzi. *Gerard Manley Hopkins*. 70-72; and Owen Holland. "'Lovescape crucified': Gerard Manley Hopkins's red letter and 'The Wreck of the Deutschland'," *Textual Practice*. Volume 37, Issue 11 (2023): 1756-77.
[712] Martin. *Gerard Manley Hopkins: A Very Private Life*. 218.
[713] Bergonzi. *Gerard Manley Hopkins*. 71.
[714] Thesing. "Gerard Manley Hopkins's Responses to the City," 389.

questionable. Bergonzi highlights how Bridges, "a young man of strong and conventionally Tory opinions", was outraged at Hopkins' Communist comments.[715]

In the same letter, Hopkins writes: "I am always thinking of the Communist future" (*LI* 27), thereby demonstrating a notable meditation on the struggle of the working classes. W. H. Gardner states that Hopkins' comments "anticipated by nine years the disturbing thesis of Henry George's *Progress and Poverty*."[716] Hopkins is at the forefront of Victorian social commentary, where his exposure to the poor conditions of the working classes echoes that of Rossetti's voluntary work with London's sex workers. He does not propose a radical overthrow of the system but instead advocates for something in keeping with his "English patriot and Orthodox Catholic" leanings.[717] He acknowledges the rightful place of the workers who "live a hard life without dignity, knowledge, comforts, delights, or hopes in the midst of plenty." (*LI* 28) Their struggle is exacerbated because the "wealth has not reached the working class", which leads Hopkins to deduce that the wealth divide "has made their condition worse." (*LI* 29) Industrialisation and increased production did little to benefit the working classes impacted by such conditions. Harold Perkin concluded that for "the majority of the people, the standard of life fluctuated between actual starvation and mere poverty."[718] The impact seemingly discriminates against the "unskilled urban labourers and their families […who] made up the vast majority of Catholic worshippers,"[719] demonstrating that Hopkins' parishioners were some of the most marginalised in society. Mary Douglas and Baron Isherwood highlight how consumerism and consumption resulted in a "moral judgement of the worth of people and things."[720] To this end, Hopkins attempts to avoid the commodification of people by demonstrating a great need to humanise and address the plight of the poor.

Friedrich Engels' study of Manchester for *The Condition of the Working Class in England* highlighted the same struggles that Hopkins would witness over twenty years later. Engels' Industrial North in the 1840s raised many crucial points, including his remarks on the "marvellously rapid growth of the great manufacturing towns [...] and so town and country are in constant competition."[721] Engels explains that, "Every great city has one or more

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[715] Bergonzi. *Gerard Manley Hopkins*. 71-72.
[716] Gardner. *Gerard Manley Hopkins.* Volume 2. 26.
[717] Ibid. 26.
[718] Harold Perkin. *The Origins of Modern English Society, 1780-1880* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1971) 4.
[719] Inglis. *Churches and the Working Classes in Victorian England*. 119.
[720] Mary Douglas and Baron Isherwood. *The World of Goods: Towards an anthropology of consumption* [1979] (London: Routledge, 2002) 38.
[721] Engels. *The Condition of the Working Class in England.* 66.

slums, where the working class is crowded together" and "poverty often dwells in hidden alleys close to the palaces of the rich…"[722] The result is "a separate territory" which is "removed from the sight of the happier classes" and represents "the worst houses in the worst quarters of the towns…"[723] As a priest, Hopkins crossed the thresholds into the working class "territory", as Engels puts it, which exposed the struggle more clearly. Hopkins would write to a friend that he was "far more at home with the Lancashire people" (*LIII* 243), suggesting that he finds a kinship with the people he served.

Wordsworth and Coleridge focused on the struggles of the rural poor, inspiring the collection *Lyrical Ballads*, while Hopkins observed the urban poor. Although the landscape differs between Wordsworth and Coleridge's poor and Hopkins' poor, there is a shared sense of concern. Alfred Thomas's research has established that the poem 'Felix Randal' was inspired by a visit to a farrier, Felix Spencer, who died of consumption in the Birchfield Street slum of Liverpool.[724] The poem contrasts the carefree days of childhood with those days when the illness took hold:

> How far from then forethought of, all thy more boisterous years,
> When thou at the random grim forge, powerful admits peers,
> Didst fettle for the great grey drayhorse his bright and battering sandal!
>
> (*Poems* 87, ll.12-14)

Hopkins highlights the energy and vitality of youth in which the body had not been worn down by repetitive labour, but this is replaced by the "sickness [that] broke him" (l.5). The death of the farrier marks the end of the spiritual and earthly connection of the speaker who sees his "duty all ended." (l.1) It demonstrates the bond between priest and parishioner, but also the specific connection formed in Roman Catholicism through "being anointed" (l.6). This act is a referred to as "our sweet reprieve and ransom" (l.7) forming part of the sacraments of life for the sick and dying connecting the priest with his parishioners.

William Thesing argues that Randal was "an idealized portrait of the Victorian Everyman in the role of a happy, productive worker."[725] He is presented as an important local figure, full of strength and vigour, who is "powerful amidst peers" (l.13), but this becomes superficial and irrelevant in death. Despite being explicitly named, he is associated with his job; he is forever "the farrier" (l.1) who works "the random grim forge" (l.13), and his trade remains central to his definition as a person. He is, however, considered a "mould of man,

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[722] Engels. *The Condition of the Working Class in England.* 70.
[723] Ibid. 70.
[724] Alfred Thomas. "Hopkins's 'Felix Randal': The Man and the Poem," *Times Literary Supplement* (March 19, 1971): 331-32.
[725] Thesing. "Gerard Manley Hopkins's Responses to the City," 395.

big-bonded and hardy-handsome" (l.2), but the coming of the "fatal four disorders" (l.4) breaks him physically. His legacy is that of a "true craftsman [who] wears himself in the service of others."[726] The speaker notes on having "tendered to him" (l.8), during which time "seeing the sick endears them to us, us too it endears" (l.9). The sickness brings them together, highlighting the vulnerability of the body and the dependence on others. The speaker does not "tend" to Randal but rather "tendered" to him, as in offering his teaching, a play on the words "tendered" and "tending", in addition to the double sense of "tender" in meaning "loving" and "gentle."[727] They believe that they have "taught thee comfort" (l.10), but the situation has caused so much grief and distress that this comfort appears to have had little impact as the "tears touched my heart." (l.11) The insistence is that Randal must find "a heavenlier heart" (l.6) rather than be "pining" for "reasons" (l.3) about his impending death, where the union with God is the outcome. This is in keeping with Hopkins' frequent depictions of death as something heroic, with Randal in particular following St Augustine's observation that "Christians know that the death of a poor religious man, licked by the tongues of dogs, is far better than the death of a godless rich man…"[728] The declaration that "God rest him all road ever he offended" (l.8) offers hope that Randal's perfection and fulfilment through his "heavenlier hear" (l.6) can be achieved in the eyes of God.

The poem portrays a humanisation of the working classes, in which a seemingly insignificant death is shown to have far-reaching consequences in the Catholic communities of the industrial cities. The opening remark of "O is he dead then?" (l.1) suggests an element of shock or distance from the death itself before gradually building into a soaring homily where there is, as Martin Dubois notes, "the crossing of the workaday and the classical [which] hauls the man into myth."[729] Much as the wedding guest in the 'Rime of the Ancient Mariner' ends the poem "a sadder and a wiser man" (l.624), the experience of being with the farrier sees the speaker, and by extension Hopkins, become more aware and connected with the plight and struggles of the working classes. Martin additionally argues that Hopkins' sadness for the death of Felix Spencer is extreme "because of his own growing sense of loneliness."[730] It is an emotionally personal account; although the exact nature of Spencer's/

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[726] Thomas. "Hopkins's 'Felix Randal': The Man and the Poem," 331.
[727] Peter Whiteford offers an interpretation which challenges the perception of the priestly duty undertaken by Hopkins and dwells on the line "Fatal Four Disorders" and its implications for understanding the poem. Peter Whiteford. "What Were Felix Randal's 'Fatal Four Disorders'?" *The Review of English Studies,* Volume 56, no. 225 (2005): 438-46.
[728] St. Augustine. *Concerning the City of God*. 20.
[729] Martin Dubois. *Gerard Manley Hopkins and the Poetry of Religious Experience* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017) 149.
[730] Martin. *Gerard Manley Hopkins: A Very Private Life*. 329.

Randal's death is never made explicit, it is likely to have been "pulmonary consumption" caused by his work and the poor living conditions.[731] Pat Jalland highlights how consumption "was a product of poverty, overcrowding, and unsanitary conditions" yet was idealised by many, including Hopkins, because "consumptives usually fitted the romantic stereotype by virtue only of their youth."[732] As Thesing notes, Hopkins found himself "deeply moved by individual cases of poverty or hardship,"[733] and 'Felix Randal' highlights not only the "duty" (l.1) of Hopkins but also the "comfort" and "tears" (l.10) given in these difficult and deeply personal moments.

Eleanor Ruggles presents this period of his ministry as part of a broader sociological commentary in which the often marginalised and forgotten poor residents are humanised and given a voice. Ruggles emphasises that the section of Liverpool was "crowded with immigrants, where in 1879 a vicious poverty reigned."[734] Similarly, whilst working in Oxford, Martin explains how Hopkins worked hard:

> Hearing the confessions of the illiterate, visiting the sick, sitting for long hours at the bedsides of the dying, helping to teach in the school at St Ignatius's, organizing the clubs and guilds and sodalities connected with the Church, walking several miles a day back and forth across Magdalen Bridge between St Aloysius's and St Ignatius's or on to the Barracks or the Infirmary.[735]

Although poverty undoubtedly shocked Hopkins, he was humbled, if somewhat perturbed, by their strength of faith and averageness, noting in Oxford that:

> Neither voices nor choice of music was very good, still the effect is humanizing, as they say. There was some recitation also. It was given by our Young Men's Association: they are shopkeepers and so on […] these young men rally to us, frequent and take part in our ceremonies, meet a good deal in the parishroom.
> (*LIII* 151-52)

The use of the word "humanising" demonstrates that Hopkins is beginning to understand some of the intricacies of such a community, with the same letter seeing Hopkins pondering the disparity of the Town and Gown in Oxford and how it has led to an instilled "stiff respectful stand-off air." (*LIII* 152) Not all have angelic voices and impeccable education, but their dedication, enthusiasm, and faith are perhaps their most remarkable and vital assets with which Hopkins can empathise.

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[731] Martin. *Gerard Manley Hopkins: A Very Private Life*. 328.
[732] Pat Jalland. *Death in the Victorian Family* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996) 39-40.
[733] Thesing. "Gerard Manley Hopkins's Responses to the City," 389.
[734] Eleanor Ruggles. *Gerard Manley Hopkins: A Life*. (London: John Lane The Bodley Head, 1947) 146.
[735] Martin. *Gerard Manley Hopkins: A Very Private Life*. 301-2 [Brackets my own insertion].

Hopkins' optimism about the duties and challenges of working in this new area is highlighted when he writes: "I am far more at home with the Lancashire people." (*LIII* 243) This comment suggests that despite the happy memories and connection with the city of Oxford, it did not offer the fulfilling experience that Hopkins may have expected. He regularly administered at Oxford's Cowley Barracks, the "headquarters of the Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire Light Infantry."[736] It was here that he witnessed the "boys being commonly used to play the drum or fife or bugle,"[737] which in turn inspired 'The Bugler's First Communion', whose titular boy, Hopkins explains, "came into Oxford to our Church in quest of (or to get) a blessing." (*LI* 97) Dubois notes that this poem was "written a few months into Hopkins's curacy […] a mostly unhappy return to a city he continued to love."[738] The visitation of the "Bugler boy" (*Poems* 82, l.1) is a cause for uplift in an otherwise bleak experience in Oxford. Through the "boy bugler" (l.2), a youth not yet into adulthood begins a spiritual journey by taking his First Communion. The bugler is born to an "Irish/ Mother [and] to an English sire." (ll.2-3), and is described as the "sweetest sendings" (l.13). It is here that Hopkins imagines what overwhelming emotions the boy must have felt as "Christ's darling" through the taking of communion. (l.14) There is a great delight in this boy entering a more serious aspect of his faith, with the speaker declaring that he has become a "kind comrade" (l.19) and that the two are not dissimilar in their youth, faith, and "chastity" (l.16) of their respective occupations. Both figures follow orders from up high, yet they seemingly "march" together as "slips of soldiery Christ's royal ration" (l.28). The scene is intimate and, at times, sexual and homoerotic, depicting the sacrament witnessed only by the bugler, priest, and God.

Martin observes that Hopkins was "moved by the innocence in the young,"[739] with the poem's two figures portrayed as Christian comrades marching for the Catholic cause. The ultimate fear is the "inevitable corruption of innocence,"[740] and Hopkins is weary of "hell-rook ranks" who will "molest" (l.18) the boy by taking away his innocence through exposure to death and destruction. There is a concern about the "doom chánnelled" (l.41) and whether the boy will return "bound home" (l.43) if war comes. The boy is described as "both strapping and vulnerable"[741], a figure who is seemingly on the cusp of independence yet at

[736] White. *Hopkins: A Literary Biography*. 313.
[737] Ibid. 313.
[738] Dubois. *Gerard Manley Hopkins and the Poetry of Religious Experience*. 96.
[739] Martin. *Gerard Manley Hopkins: A Very Private Life*. 297.
[740] Ibid. 297.
[741] Dubois. *Gerard Manley Hopkins and the Poetry of Religious Experience*. 99.

the mercy of a higher power through both God and the military commanders. In a letter to Bridges, Hopkins notes how the boy in question was later sent abroad, and Hopkins expects that the soldier "may be killed in Afghanistan." (*LI* 92) It is an example of innocence and purity being taken, in this instance, in the most violent circumstances and far from home.

In 'Tom's Garland: Upon the Unemployed' (1887), written during his final years in Dublin, Hopkins is unusually political in contrasting the delight of Queen Victoria's Golden Jubilee with the riots, republicanism, and Irish campaigns for independence. It dwells on the unemployed, who are the "low lot" (*Poems* 103, l.5), without work or sense of duty, and are therefore likely to experience a significant "Rage" (l.19). The "lordly head" (l.10) of the queen and the establishment are challenged when the unemployed labourers are driven "by Despair" (l.19) They are described in animalistic terms: "Hangdog" (l.19) and "Manwolf" (l.20) who are frustrated with their "low lot" (l.5), which leads Hopkins to consider the harsh reality, that such disenchantment is bound to "infest the age." (l.20) Hopkins concludes that "if all had bread" (l.9) then a true sense of satisfaction in a "Commonweal[th]" (l.8) would create unity. The failure of all to be welcomed and valued reflects the broader societal issues that Hopkins experienced in many industrial cities.

It is doubtful whether Hopkins sympathised with Irish nationalism, with John Sutherland suggesting that he "had become more conservative in the following sixteen years" since declaring himself a Communist,[742] in keeping with his predominantly orthodox views. Indeed, Sutherland concluded that the poem "diagnoses the current troubles as a failure of loyalty or […] allegiance."[743] The titular Tom is "seldom sick" (l.6), but the lack of opportunity hinders his ability to connect with a "mother-ground" (l.11). The unrest that "infest[s] the age" (l.20) emphasises the disillusionment with the old-fashioned regime and the going impact of the labourer living and working in poor conditions. The poem can be seen as an alternative to another Irish set poem, 'Harry Ploughman', in which Harry is "a celebration of the kinetic strength and grace of the labouring man" and, therefore, a celebration of the rural idyll.[744] On the other hand, Tom is the "product of the depressed urban classes" in opposition to Harry as "the lyrical embodiment of the harmony of beautiful countrymen and the earth of which he is part."[745] The conclusion in 'Tom's Garland' is the savagery of society when driven by desperation; the poem ends not with an idealised version

[742] John Sutherland. Footnote 3 in "'Tom's Garland': Hopkins' Political Poem," *Victorian Poetry*, Volume 10, No. 2 (Summer, 1972): 112.
[743] Ibid. 111.
[744] Martin. *Gerard Manley Hopkins: A Very Private Life*. 332.
[745] Ibid. 332.

of man but with a furious, feral plague of revolutionary sentiments. The volatile circumstances are something that Hopkins cannot resolve, and "earth's glory" (l.16) stands in the balance against the savagery of humankind.

**Elementary Poetry: Hopkins and the value of creation**

The previous sections have demonstrated Hopkins' disenchantment with the urban environment and highlight the value he placed on the redeeming qualities of the countryside. When Hopkins wrote, "I love country life and dislike any town" and drew attention to what he calls a dream of "a farm in the Western counties, glowworms, new milk" (*LIII* 292-93), he was embodying some of the romantic tendencies seen in Coleridge during the West Country years. Hopkins, like Coleridge, saw the countryside as an uncomplicated and beneficial form of living filled with the beauty of God's creation, love, and power. In appreciating this love of the natural world, Hopkins drew on his interests in literature, art, and architecture to document and measure what he saw around him. His diaries and correspondence show an astute understanding and gratitude for beauty and creation. He noted that he regularly attended art galleries, museums, and exhibitions from around 1862 until his move to Ireland.[746]

As Catherine Phillips explains, his early life was filled with religion, art, and culture, which originated, as with Rossetti, in his upbringing where many "artistic things [were] within the grasp of his family."[747] Many family members, including Hopkins' father,[748] practised different literary and artistic forms, with religion remaining constant.[749] J. Hillis Miller also highlights how "Hopkins' own beautiful landscape drawings are very Pre-Raphaelite in their ornate realism", which embodied "the minute particulars of nature…"[750]

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[746] Catherine Phillips. *Gerard Manley Hopkins and the Victorian Visual World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007) 111.
[747] Ibid. v.
[748] Alfred Thomas argues that after serving as Consul-General for Hawaii in London, Manley Hopkins wrote a history of Hawaii that "presented the Roman Catholic in a very favourable light…"- Alfred Thomas. *Hopkins the Jesuit: The Years of Training*. (London: Oxford University Press, 1969) 211-13.
[749] Phillips notes in the *Gerard Manley Hopkins and the Victorian Visual World* how "Manley [Gerard's father] was also interested in becoming a competent artist" (p.3) with wide-reaching interests in his writing and art on themes of "archaeology, religion, and architecture." (p.3) Additionally, Hopkins "received his first training in drawing and music from his Aunt Annie, his father's unmarried sister…" (p.17), whilst his godmother "had three uncles who were noted artists." (p.21)
Furthermore, as Martin notes, it is unsurprising that the running themes of art and religion would play such a vital role in the Hopkins siblings, where "Arthur and Everard (youngest of the family) both became illustrators and commercial artists […] Millicent [his sister], with whom Gerard seems often to have been on uneasy terms, became an Anglican nun…"- Martin, *Gerard Manley Hopkins: A Very Private Life*. 9.
[750] J. Hillis Miller. "The Creation of the self in Gerard Manley Hopkins," *ELH*, Volume 22, No.4 (December 1955): 299.

Hopkins' visit to the Royal Academy's summer exhibition in 1863 saw him drawn to works by John Everett Millais. [751] He would recall:

> About Millais' Eve of S. Agnes, you ought to have known me well enough to be sure I should like it. Of course, I do intensely- not wholly perhaps as Keats' Madeline but as the conception of her by a genius. I think over this picture, which I could only unhappily see once, and it, or the memory of it, grows upon me. Those three pictures by Millais in this year's Academy have opened my eyes. I see that he is the greatest English painter, one of the greatest in the world.
>
> (*LIII* 201)

For Hopkins, Millais' paintings represent something astonishing and mesmerising, which he singles out as the highlight of that show.

This attention to detail would result in Hopkins' efforts to build an artistic and theological theory of beauty and the power of God in the natural world. In an 1868 notebook, Hopkins observes having "felt the depth of an instress or how fast the inscape holds a thing…" (*J* 127) The entry on the ancient Greek philosopher Parmenides summaries: "all things are upheld by instress and are meaningless without." (*J* 127) Dubois defines "inscape" as the "unique inner essence of a thing or scene, that which constitutes the governing law or pattern of individual forms…"[752] This is essentially the complexities and quintessence which make an object or scene different and distinct from anything around it. As Timothy Morton highlights, Hopkins likely derived this concept from the work of Duns Scotus, noting that "Duns Scotus speaks of the *haecceity* of a thing, its *thisness,* and Hopkins translates this into verse. Yet the thisness is not imposed from without, objectively. It wells up from within."[753] The second element, "instress", relates to "the force of being which upholds the inscape and the effect of observing the inscape on the beholder…"[754] This emphasises the force or energy that sustains an inscape and allows it to be retained or maintained in memory. I argue that inscape is helpfully illuminated by Jane Bennett's theory of the agency of assemblages of things in *Vibrant Matter,* which emphasises the "active role of nonhuman materials in public life…"[755] This affirms that "so-called in-animate things have a life, that deep within is an inexplicable vitality or energy, a moment of independence from and resistance to us and other bodies: a kind of thing-power."[756] In doing so, Hopkins addresses how the natural world

[751] Phillips. *Gerard Manley Hopkins and the Victorian Visual World*. 118.
[752] Dubois. *Gerard Manley Hopkins and the Poetry of Religious Experience*. 11.
[753] Morton. *Realist Magic.* 26.
[754] Dubois. *Gerard Manley Hopkins and the Poetry of Religious Experience*. 12.
[755] Bennett. *Vibrant Matter*. 2.
[756] Ibid. 18.

affects humans, where the vibrancy and energy of the world draw attention to the beauty and brilliance of God.

Dennis Sobolev comments on the importance of these terms, noting the "energetic impact of the world upon the mind [… which] requires the description of both the functioning of the mind and the energetic depths of the world."[757] Hopkins used this theory to explore human knowledge, emotion, and perception as a catalyst for understanding his surroundings. The emphasis on the natural qualities of Hopkins' observations draws many parallels with Romanticism, with Michael D. Hurley noting that "Hopkins inherited a Romantic culture in which poetic authenticity and power was associated with the free outpouring of creativity."[758] A journal entry on bluebells notes:

> I do not think I have ever seen anything more beautiful than the bluebell I have been looking at. I know the beauty of our Lord by it. It[s inscape] is [mixed of] strength and grace, like an ash [tree]. The head is strongly drawn over [backwards] and arched down like a cutwater [drawing itself back from the line of the keel]. The lines of the bells strike and overlie this, rayed but not symmetrically, some lie parallel. They look steely against [the] paper, the shades lying between the bells and behind the cocked petal-ends and nursing up the precision of their distinctness, the petal-ends themselves being delicately lit.
>
> (*J* 199)[759]

The beauty of creation is stressed repeatedly; its vibrant energy results in the declaration that "I know the beauty of our Lord" because of the encapsulating attractiveness of the bluebell. Hopkins is presented with a brilliance or "thing-power,"[760] as Bennett refers to it, which lingers in memory. Hopkins uses these terms to cover a broad spectrum of everyday life, from literature to the natural world to artworks, embodying and encapsulating that independent energy. This energy is enchanting and reflective of the broader good in all things that are touched and made by God.

Patricia M. Ball emphasises, "All the intensity which the Romantics brought to the study of personal identity, Hopkins inherits, and it goes into his concept of inscape."[761] This perception of the world draws on Romantic concepts and experiences, demonstrating a continued lineage from Coleridge through to Hopkins. The theory, however, raises questions about whether beauty and God can exist in a damaged or destroyed natural world, as Hopkins

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[757] Dennis Sobolev. *The Split World of Gerard Manley Hopkins: An Essay in Semiotic Phenomenology* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2011) 43.
[758] Michael D. Hurley. "Wrestling with Gerard Manley Hopkins," *Textual Practice*. Volume 35, Issue 6 (2021): 923-24.
[759] Square brackets are as they appear in Humphrey House and Graham Storey's transcriptions.
[760] Bennett. *Vibrant Matter*. 18.
[761] Patricia M. Ball. *The Science of Aspects: The Changing Role of Fact in the Work of Coleridge, Ruskin and Hopkins* (London: Athlone Press, University of London, 1971) 107.

observed in urban environments. Mariaconcetta Constantini highlights that "the notion of inscape and the identification of God's imprint in the outer world" is an attempt by Hopkins "to reconnect the loosened bonds between divinity, nature and man, which both scientific and rationalism and urbanization have contributed to untie."[762] In the natural world, Hopkins can bring together what he holds as truth, on which his entire life and career are centred through the celebration of God and his influence. Hopkins' use of "inscape" and "instress" provides what Martin Dubois calls a "unified and consistent" [763] perception of the world. I would stress that this unified value relates to Hopkins' quest for an "Incomprehensible Certainty" (*LI* 187). Saint Augustine stated: "God is present everywhere, and wholly present everywhere. No limits confine him. He can present without showing himself…"[764] Hopkins' perception that "The world is charged with the grandeur of God" (*Poems* 66, l.1) demonstrates God's certainty in all things.

In exploring God in nature, Hopkins celebrated the world to its fullest extent, believing that all elements, including weeds, are worthy of praise and adoration. As Morton emphasises, "What Hopkins gives us then is not a brightly colored diorama of animated plastic, but a weird stage set from which things stage their unique version."[765] There is nothing artificial or industrial about Hopkins' nature; instead, it is inherently good and vibrant because it sings of the beauty of God. In this depiction, Hopkins finds no negativity about the natural world and does not criticise as he does with the urban environment. In 'Spring' (1877), it is declared that "Nothing is so beautiful as Spring" (*Poems* 67, l.1) because it is a time "when weeds, in wheels, shoot long and lovely and lush" (l.2). This same adoration is continued in 'Inversnaid' (1881), where Hopkins' expresses that the world would not be same "once bereft/ of wet and of wildness." (*Poems* 89, ll.13-14) The solution is, therefore, a simple one in Hopkins' view, as he states, "O let them be left, wildness and wet" (l.15). The decree of "Long live the weeds and the wilderness yet" (l.16) is the affirmation that the uncultivated wilderness and weeds are desirable entities that should be allowed to flourish. I have already made references in this chapter to Hopkins' fascination with the notion of wilderness, which is associated with a sense of freedom and connection to the beauty of God, but his dwelling on weeds highlights something more profound.

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[762] Costantini. "The city tires to death," 115.
[763] Dubois. *Gerard Manley Hopkins and the Poetry of Religious Experience.* 11.
[764] St. Augustine. *Concerning the City of God*. 41.
[765] Morton. *Realist Magic.* 26.

A weed appears, at first, to be something undesirable that is "weeded out" to remove it from view, with Samuel Johnson defining it as an "herb, noxious or useless."[766] Hopkins' view of weeds, however, would be more in keeping with Edward Sprague Rand, who draws attention to the belief that a "weed is a flower out of place."[767] Hopkins gives weeds a significant value because rather than being "useless", they are the epitome of the wilderness at its fullest extent. The weeds demonstrate the strength and continuity of nature to thrive without human interference or destruction. Robert Bernard Martin defines the final lines of the poem as being reflective "of a manifesto for the forces of conservation,"[768] and this is central to Hopkins' nature. It advocates the protection of these spaces and the appreciation of rough, uncultivated landscapes, which are also worthy of praise. 'Pied Beauty' (1877) finds beauty in the imperfections of "dappled things" (*Poems* 69, l.1), those marked with spots or patches, as well as "skies of couple-colour" (l.2) and the "Landscape plotted and pieced." (l.5) It represents joy in the "swift, slow; sweet, sour; adazzle, dim" (l.9), by showing the beauty of variety and that difference should be celebrated as part of the creativity of God.

Furthermore, 'The Windhover' (1877) refers to a "Brute beauty" (*Poems* 69, l.9) to demonstrate power and intensity, but "brute" also draws comparison to a "brutal" form of nature that is savage and raw and, therefore, is wild and uncultivated. This demonstrates what Bennett calls the "awareness of the complicated web of dissonant connection between bodies,"[769] an understanding by Hopkins that there is a wider ecology at play which is not openly beautiful at first sight. He draws on his orthodox views to emphasise the existence of God in all things and that the "radically, local, material environment," as Heather Sullivan refers to it,[770] is the gift of God's creation. Beauty is there for all to see should they be open to witnessing the weeds and wilderness as an example of the world's splendour. Hopkins celebrates this wild and natural landscape because it lacks human interference and demonstrates God's creation in its purest expression. When Hopkins wrote, "I love country life and dislike any town" (*LIII* 292), he was making clear that the rural environment was inherently better because it removed people from the "bad and smokefoul air" of the city (*LIII* 292). Hopkins views what Sullivan refers to as the "dividing [of] our material

[766] Samuel Johnson. *A Dictionary of the English Language*. Volume 2. 4th ed (London: J. Mifflin, 1777) There is no page number in the text.
[767] Edward Sprague Rand. *Seventy-Five Popular Flowers and How to Cultivate Them* (Boston: J. E. Titon and Company, 1870) 76.
[768] Martin. *Gerard Manley Hopkins: A Very Private Life*. 335.
[769] Bennett. *Vibrant Matter*. 4.
[770] Sullivan. "Dirt Theory and Material Ecocriticism," 529.

surroundings into a place of "pure, clean nature" and the dirty human sphere."[771] The countryside is inherently good because it is cleaner and far removed from the staining and pollution of urban dirt. Hopkins' natural world is pure, without dirt and mess, or at least lacking the "destructively agentic influence"[772] that he associates with urban dirt.

**Hopkins' 'The Wreck of the Deutschland' and the Value of Life**

Whilst at St. Beuno's College in North Wales, Hopkins enjoyed a productive and sustained writing period, with Graham Storey referring to the Hopkins of this time as reaching the stage of "a mature poet".[773] Storey suggests that it was there that Hopkins reached poetic maturity, and as a result, this rural location represented a turning point in his creative journey. The most dramatic and the first of the poems to be written during this poetic resurgence in Wales was 'The Wreck of the Deutschland' (1875), commemorating the wrecking of the *SS Deutschland* off the English coast. Julia F. Saville affirms that 'The Wreck of the Deutschland' marked the moment of "the young poet's anxieties [left] behind, safely contained […]a new story of enlightened poetic pilgrimage unencumbered by sexual guilt or serious religious doubts."[774] Despite the comfort and security of rural North Wales, the events that inspired 'The Wreck of the Deutschland' challenged his orthodox Jesuit framework to understand and see the beauty and reason behind the incident.

In a letter to Richard Watson Dixon, Hopkins explains: "What I had written I burnt before I became a Jesuit and resolved to write no more," however, he also highlights:

> …when in the winter of '75 the Deutschland was wrecked in the mouth of the Thames and five Franciscan nuns, exiles from Germany by the Falck Laws, [sic] aboard of her were drowned, I was affected by the account, and, happening to say so to my rector, he said that he wished someone would write a poem on the subject.
>
> (*LII* 14)

Hopkins broke his self-imposed seven-year abstinence from poetry but was critical of what he had written, declaring to Robert Bridges that: "The Deutschland would be more generally interesting if there were more wreck and less discourse, I know, but still it is an ode and not primarily a narrative […] the principal business is lyrical." (*LI* 49) Although the wreck appears to be a secondary aspect of the poem, it foregrounds the key theological and political points that Hopkins aimed to make. The result is what Thomas Berenato refers to as a poem

[771] Sullivan. "Dirt Theory and Material Ecocriticism," 515.
[772] Ibid. 516.
[773] Graham Storey. *A Preface to Hopkins*. (London: Longman, 1992) 98.
[774] Julia F. Saville. *A Queer Chivalry: The Homoerotic Asceticism of Gerard Manley Hopkins* (London: University Press of Virginia, 2000) 58- brackets my own insertion.

composed "from the perspective of forgiveness, which sets up a correspondence with divine violence."[775] Martin Dubois argues similarly "that the poem's object is to declare God's truth and goodness, and only secondarily to provide an account of the shipwreck."[776] While actual events inspired the poem, the artistic licence taken is essential for understanding what Hopkins aims to achieve. The wreck is merely a device through which Hopkins explores God and forgiveness whilst critiquing human intolerance. I am particularly interested in what Jill Muller calls "*The Wreck of the Deutschland* as a cultural product of Victorian Catholicism."[777] In exploring a few sections of the poem, I want to bring together the elements of nature, humans, and destruction, as examined earlier in this chapter, to demonstrate the poem's Catholic orthodox insight and comprehension of resilience and human life in the face of tragedy.

The *SS Deutschland* was one of the flagships of the Norddeutscher Lloyd Line's (NDL) Atlantic fleet,[778] which ran aground on the notorious Kentish Knock sandbank off the southeast coast of England during a storm.[779] It is estimated that around two hundred and nineteen crew and passengers were on board, of which over sixty are believed to have died.[780] The wrecking of the *SS Deutschland* was a cause for national embarrassment in Britain and resulted in a media frenzy which reported the horrific events with great interest.[781] Concerns were raised about the disorganised and significantly delayed rescue operations the English

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[775] Thomas Berenato. "'The Wreck of the Deutschland' as Critique of Violence," *The Hopkins Quarterly*. Volume 46, No. 1 (Winter-Fall 2019): 4.
[776] Dubois. *Gerard Manley Hopkins and the Poetry of Religious Experience*. 64.
[777] Jill Muller. "Gertrude of Helfta and Hopkins's 'The Wreck of the Deutschland': A Victorian Catholic Context," *Religion and Literature*. Volume 31, No. 2 (Summer 1999): 1.
[778] NDL had become one of the largest shipping companies in the German Empire and one of the largest in the world. See: DSM researches the colonial history of North German Lloyds" *German Maritime Museum/ Leibniz Institute for Maritime History (DSM)* <https://www.dsm.museum/en/press-area/dsm-researches-the-colonial-history-of-north-german-lloyd> (Accessed October 4, 2022).
[779] The Kentish Knock is a sandbank in the Thames Estuary and is recognised as a significant shipping hazard, with the *Archaeology Data Service* stating that it contains the remains of at least eighteen wrecks. See: "England's Historic Seascapes: Southwold to Clacton: Kentish Knock and Knock Deep," *Archaeology Data Service*.
<https://archaeologydataservice.ac.uk/archives/view/ehsclacton_eh_2007/kkdeep.cfm?CFID=7ed78f35-6fba-4335-9f15-33262c237769&CFTOKEN=0> (Accessed October 3, 2022).
[780] Rev. Philip Martin's research notes show how several newspapers reported different passenger and survivor numbers. This is likely due to poor record keeping and miscounts of the figures, which only added to the confusion and misrepresentation of events. As a result, the actual number cannot be fully known and can only be estimated to provide a rough idea of what the figures might have been. See: "Papers of the Rev. Philip Martin concerning his research into the wreck of The Deutschland in 1875," *Oxford, Bodleian Libraries*: MSS. Eng. misc. c. 809.
Julie F. Saville gives a figure of "roughly 123 passengers and 90-100 crewmen" in Saville. *A Queer Chivalry*. 60.
[781] Norman White compares the public interest to the macabre fascination with death that appears to permeate Victorian society. White notes how train disasters were also received with great curiosity. See: Norman White. *Gerard Manley Hopkins in Wales* (Wales: Seren, 1998) 91-92.

authorities carried out, reaching the ship "30 hours after she had struck."[782] Diplomatic tensions also surfaced between the German and British authorities regarding the reasons behind the incident and how it was investigated. As Philip Martin highlights, the quickness of holding the inquest and inquiry so soon after the incident "indicates its peculiar importance, not least given current diplomatic relations with Germany."[783] This partially explains the circumstances that led to the incident remaining in newspaper reports over a prolonged period.

An unavoidable part of shipping relates to the risk and loss of vessels and cargo, and it was through such concern that many, including Hopkins' father Manley, made careers as marine insurance brokers.[784] The loss of ships (or the safe arrival of a vessel) was where Manley Hopkins earned a considerable sum, which helped to revive the family's once-ailing fortunes.[785] He published several books on the subject, including *A Handbook of Average* (1857) and *A Manual of Marine Insurance* (1867), the latter of which provided an overview of the background, history, and necessity of marine insurance and references to over sixty significant cases and lawsuits supporting his claims. Manley exalts the benefits of insurance as "modern growth" found in "social history"[786] and that: "Had it not been for the ingenious invention of Insurance, which in dividing loss took away fear, and raised the merchant from being a half gambler, half mariner, to conduct his aims with the certainty given by science..."[787] For Manley Hopkins, insurance provided peace of mind for shipping companies, although mainly in the interest of material possessions (such as cargo, transported goods, and luggage) rather than one that accounts for the loss of life. A review from *The Spectator* was critical of Manley's approach and "his disrespectful comments on legal technicalities."[788] They conclude that his "guidance is not wholly trustworthy," despite this, the book is lauded for "its clearness [which] is increased by the recapitulation at the end of each chapter."[789] The semi-dubious presentation by Manley is evidently of concern to the

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[782] Philip Martin. "Notes on the Aftermath of the Wreck of the 'Deutschland'," *The Hopkins Quarterly*. Volume 8, No. 1 (Spring 1981): 9.
[783] Martin. "Notes on the Aftermath of the Wreck of the 'Deutschland'," 13.
[784] As White explains, an insurance career was fuelled by the early death of Manley's father, who died "almost bankrupt, having failed as a commodity speculator, leaving a penniless widow and young family."- White. *Gerard Manley Hopkins in Wales*. 11.
[785] See: White. *Hopkins: A Literary Biography.* 5 and 10-11; and Martin. *Gerard Manley Hopkins: A Very Private Life.* 2-9.
[786] Manley Hopkins. *A Manual of Marine Insurance* (London: Smith, Elder and Co, 1867) 1.
[787] Ibid. iv.
[788] "A Manual of Marine Insurance. By Manley Hopkins (Smith and Elder)," in *The Spectator* (September 14, 1867): 23.
[789] "A Manual of Marine Insurance," 23.

reviewers, but his texts on insurance demonstrate an attempt to make the benefits of such cover clear and accessible.[790]

Manley Hopkins attaches value to items in a formalised, quantifiable manner, removing anything that accounts for spiritual or divine influence and dispenses with immeasurable occurrences. His son would have a different view of divine influence when he wrote to Bridges about his desire for "an incomprehensible certainty." (*LI* 187) The notion of certainty in God is clear for Hopkins, but at times, it represents a "mystery less incomprehensible, [but] it is true." (*LI* 188) In insurance, this mystery is not calculable by attributing blame and ascribing value in a commercial setting. The process explained by Manley Hopkins seeks "a common denominator" where cost and risk are calculated through "technical"[791] and quantifiable means rather than divine intervention. Manley Hopkins understands it as a "certainty given by science"[792] where a technical approach does not account for God's presence in marine disasters. The younger Catholic Hopkins' idea of God centred on an orthodox thought that the almighty was a prevalent and omniscient figure who is gradually revealed and understood in the world he created. St Augustine's declaration that "God is present everywhere, and wholly present everywhere" embodies Hopkins' beliefs on the matter, where there are "No limits [which] confine him. He can present without showing himself."[793] The consistent comfort of the vitality and energy of God is not always quantifiable, but the ever-present sensation of hope that it offers is essential to Hopkins' reassurance on death.

In the business of marine insurance, there is no consideration for sentimental value or, indeed, for human life, with the primary focus being on the vessels and their cargo, which the shipping companies consider to be of more extraordinary material worth. In the 1877 sonnet 'The Lantern Out of Doors', Hopkins values the people who "go by me whom either beauty bright/ In mould or mind or what not else makes rare." (*Poems* 71, ll.5-6) These individuals bring light into the lives of others, even if it is only momentary "till death or distances buys them" (l.8). The conclusion for Hopkins is that these lives are essential because "Christ minds: Christ's interest" (l.12) is the most precious affirmation of value and that Christ is

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[790] Manley Hopkins' occupation as a marine adjuster influences the poem's accumulation of numerous nautical terms, demonstrating a high level of understanding of the subject. As Cheryl Stiles notes, the first lines "Thou mastering me" (*Poems* 51, I.1) indicate knowledge of not just God having power over everything but also "master, [as] the epithet for the captain or the commander of a merchant vessel; [in which] master mariner [is] one who holds a certificate from the Board of Trade."- Cheryl Stiles. "A Nautical Glossary of 'The Wreck of the Deutschland,' Part the First," *The Hopkins Quarterly*, Volume 39, No. 3/4. (Summer- Fall, 2012): 108.
[791] Manley Hopkins. *A Handbook of Average*. 4th ed. (London: Stevens and Sons, 1884) 1.
[792] Hopkins. *A Manual of Marine Insurance.* iv.
[793] St. Augustine. *Concerning the City of God*. 41.

"their ransom, their rescue, ánd first, fást, last friénd." (l.14) Comfort in Christ is worth more spiritually than insurances and calculations of risk, where the "first, fást, last friénd" provides the only reassurance that a person should need. The sea is a reminder of life's fragility and the incredible power of the natural world. Manley Hopkins' dealings as a marine adjuster were not only an indication of the additional assurance required for what could be a risky endeavour but also demonstrated a necessary form of intervention to mitigate the commercial consequences of any potential loss.

Martin Dubois observes how the poem "honours martyrs who were contemporary rather ancient."[794] In doing so, Hopkins is drawing attention to nineteenth-century piety and the valued presence of the divine in all matters. Martyrs and saints are individuals of exceptional religious devotion who have been honoured in the church because of the strength and commitment of their faith. Humankind cannot achieve the prospect of being angels, but they can aspire to the righteousness and devotion of martyrs and saints. In the five nuns on board the *SS Deutschland*, "Hopkins sees the martyr's sacrifice in the context of the secular-Roman Catholic 'culture wars'," [795] and therefore, their deaths become a political and theological statement. Hopkins' declaration that he "was affected by the account" (*LII* 14) demonstrates an emotional connection that is "motivated as much by current events as by theological ideas."[796] Wordsworth referred to a similar notion of poetry as the "spontaneous overflow of powerful feeling,"[797] and it is the strength of such emotion that is compelling to Hopkins' composition.

The nuns provide a link back to Hopkins' Catholic orthodoxy, where they have an affinity to him and his faith despite never meeting. Through the nuns, we see Hopkins drawing on theological and political arguments to condemn those who abandoned and cast them out. As Michael Hurley notes, this demonstrates "his willingness and ability to fight his epistemological corner"[798] through which clear condemnation is made. The nuns hold a further significant and personal connection to Hopkins as four of the five bodies recovered were transported to the Catholic church in Stratford, a short distance from the former family home, before being laid to rest in St Patrick's Cemetery, Leytonstone. Catherine Phillips highlights how "a large number of people visited the convent at Stratford-le-Bow where the

[794] Dubois. *Gerard Manley Hopkins and the Poetry of Religious Experience*. 112.
[795] Ibid. 113.
[796] Ibid. 113.
[797] William Wordsworth. "Preface to the Second Edition…" 387.
[798] Hurley. "Wrestling with Gerard Manley Hopkins," 926.

nuns were prepared for burial."[799] The emphasis on locality becomes a curious feature with Blake Morrison suggesting that the line "at our door/ Drowned" (ll.273-74) refers "not just to England in general but, more slyly, to the nuns at the door of his old house."[800] The reverence of the nuns takes on a great symbolism, and although Hopkins was "away in the loveable west,/ On a pastoral forehead of Wales" (ll.185-86), he also recognises a shared unity in God: "her master and mine!" (l.146)

Henry Manning, the Roman Catholic Archbishop of Westminster,[801] gave the following homily at the funeral mass to celebrate the nuns: "When at length a means of escape was at hand, they refused and allowed others to take their places and to save themselves […] Their example strengthened the courage of others and expectedly awaited with them the wet death."[802] Manning's speech emphasises the nuns' good and charitable nature by focusing on their good deeds and selflessness. The Catholic publication *The Tablet* reported that the nuns' faces, whilst laying in open coffins, wore "a very placid aspect, and there was nothing about them indicating the sad manner in which death had occurred."[803] Much like Hopkins' poem, Manning's homily romanticises the story, arguably exaggerating the accounts and skewing them towards a more religious angle that exerts greater sympathy and emotional response.

It is "the call of the tall nun" (l.151) that forms an essential part of the poem's second section, where she is described as "a lioness [who] arose breasting the babble,/ A prophetess towered in the tumult, a virginal tongue told." (ll.135-36) She is presented as the "first of five and came/ Of a coifed sisterhood" (ll.153-54) and calls "to the black-about air, to the breaker, the thickly/ Falling flakes, to the throng." (ll.189-90) Hopkins appears to borrow from newspaper reports, with her call of "O Christ, Christ, come quickly" (l.191) bearing similarities to *The Times'* report that the tall nun was "calling out loudly and often 'O Christ,

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[799] Catherine Phillips, ed. *Gerard Manley Hopkins: The Major Works* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002) 339.

[800] Blake Morrison. "Poet of the other Stratford: Blake Morrison reports on how a deprived East End suburb is rediscovering its most famous son," *Independent on Sunday* (July 24, 1994) <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/poet-of-the-other-stratford-blake-morrison-reports-on-how-a-deprived-east-end-suburb-is-rediscovering-its-most-famous-son-1415866.html> (Accessed Oct 26, 2022).

[801] Manning, like Hopkins, was also a convert from the Church of England to the Roman Catholic. He had been ordained as an Anglican priest and increasingly became influenced by the High Church, eventually aligning himself with the Oxford Movement. The Gorham Trials saw Manning's trust in the Church of England shaken, and he subsequently converted to Roman Catholicism in 1851. In 1865, he became the second Archbishop of Westminster and, therefore, the head of the Roman Catholic Church in England and Wales. He was appointed as Cardinal in 1875.

[802] Henry Manning's funeral mass homily as referenced in Sean Street. *The Wreck of the Deutschland*. (London: Souvenir Press, 1992) 105.

[803] *The Tablet*. 18th December 1875, p.786.

come quickly!' till the end came."[804] There is further evidence that news reports romanticised elements, distorting the truth. *The Times* referred to her "expression of calmness and resignation"[805] even in death whilst covering the bodies lying on display in St. Francis' Church, Stratford. Leo van Noppen, however, finds flaws within the narrative of the tall nun as the heroic figure as reported, stating that "the reporter of *The Times* made a mistake in identifying the tall nun as 'the chief sister.'"[806] Van Noppen also notes that Manning's depiction goes against some of the reports, stating that the nuns "were scared to death and in a state of uncontrollable panic" instead of the martyr-like interpretation depicted.[807]

The exact truth is irrelevant to Hopkins' ambitions, as Saville draws attention to the "preoccupations and assumptions"[808] in the poem, which results in distortion and exaggeration for poetic and theological benefits. God is the "master of the tides,/ Of the Yore-flood, of the year's fall" (l.249-50) with "a mercy that outrides/ The all of water" (ll.257-58). Saville argues that the narrative shifts from "the shocking truth of moral failure" to "soothing descriptions of decorous generosity and sympathetic respect."[809] The nuns are essential participants in Hopkins' poetic and theological vision, where the wreck is side-lined to focus on the power of God and condemn those who chastise believers. As Maureen Moran demonstrates, Hopkins' evocation of the "Incarnate and suffering Christ" is combined with "the clotted emotionalism of the baroque sensibility [and] with the sensuousness that informs much Catholic devotional literature and liturgy of the period."[810] The seemingly emotionally wrought Hopkins is, therefore, reflecting the Catholic sentiments of the time where he mourns the loss of comrades whilst presenting them as martyrs against evil. The paradoxical devastation at the violence levelled against his fellow Catholics is counteracted by the "pride" (l.279) for their holy "King" who will return "back" and recapture the "énglish sóuls!" (l.276)

Hopkins' reference to the Falk Laws relates to Otto Von Bismarck and Adalbert Falk's "Kulturkampf", or Culture Struggle, which attempted to stabilise the newly reunited Germanic states in the 1870s.[811] It aimed to promote and strengthen German identity by suppressing elements that were incompatible with these values. As Frederick Hollyday

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[804] *The Times*. 11th December 1875. p.7.
[805] Ibid.
[806] Leo van Noppen. "Hopkins's Tall Nun: An Erroneous Qualification," *Notes and Queries*. Volume 28, Issue 5 (October 1981): 419.
[807] Leo van Noppen as quoted in conversation in White. *Gerard Manley Hopkins in Wales*. 100.
[808] Saville. *A Queer Chivalry*. 60.
[809] Ibid. 62.
[810] Maureen Moran. *Catholic Sensationalism and Victorian Literature* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2007) 265
[811] Hopkins assigns the policies to Falk in particular, as seen in the poem's epitaph. The various Falk Laws were passed over the course of a few years, with four in 1873, another in 1874, and two more in 1875.

explains, the secularisation of German politics related to Bismarck's concerns about "the desire of the international Catholic church to control national Germany using the papal claim of infallibility […] statesmen of the time were of the chancellor's persuasion."[812] The fear of Catholic political interference prompted the enforcement of the "Kanzelparagraphen", or "Pulpit Paragraph", which was "intended to limit the ability of priests to urge parishioners to vote for center candidates in their sermons, and a law prohibiting the Jesuit order originated during this time."[813] Rebecca Ayako Bennette calls these laws: "romantic nationalism […] with its emphasis on the splendour and unity of the Middle Ages - before the division of the Reformation."[814] Hopkins was critical of how the nuns were "loathed for a love men knew in them," where their difference of faith saw them "banned by the land of their birth" (ll.161-62). Their dismissal prompts questions about how the restoration of old values can exclude the most pious and committed individuals.

The Kulturkampf highlights the context as to why the nuns were "American-outward-bound" (l.90) to escape political and religious prejudice in Germany, which Hopkins had witnessed in Catholics from across Europe. Robert Bernard Martin notes that Hopkins may have read a three-part series entitled *Letters and Notices* (1873-74), "which told of the frightful journey of a community of nuns driven out by the French Revolution."[815] Catholic persecution was further recognisable due to the number of "refugee Continental priests who came to Manresa and Stonyhurst."[816] Hopkins was, therefore, surrounded by victims of religious intolerance in their home nations and undoubtedly heard many stories of their ordeal. This is similar to the Italian exiles in Christina Rossetti's childhood home and how Samuel Taylor Coleridge's West Country residence was a place of safety for apparent "radical" creatives outside of the mainstream.

The nuns may well be exaggerations of the facts in their overtly pious and dedicated portrayal, but Hopkins stresses the importance of understanding prejudice and hate. He is most explicit in his condemnation and horror of such persecution, stating they were: "Loathed for a love men knew in them, / Banned by the land of their birth, / Rhine refused them, Thames would ruin them" (ll.161-63). The incident is described as "unchancelling" (l.166), a word that W. H. Gardner and N. H. Mackenzie link to "'chancel' (sanctuary)"

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[812] Frederick Hollyday. *Bismarck*. (United States: Prentice Hall, 1970) 6.
[813] Rebecca Ayako Bennette. *Fighting for the Soul of Germany: The Catholic Struggle for Inclusion After Unification*. (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2012) 43.
[814] Ibid. 19.
[815] Martin. *Gerard Manley Hopkins: A Very Private Life*. 243.
[816] Ibid. 243.

(*Poems* 260-61), with a religious sanctuary being undone by the Kulturkampf, the storm, and the failed rescue efforts. The only saviour for them is God, who is "weighing the worth" (l.166) and sees the value of the nuns as being the "dearest prizéd and price." (l.174) I argue that faith transcends traditional commodification and valuation, with Hopkins portraying their human lives and devotion as the thing to be most celebrated and admired.

The nuns' deaths are not an absolute tragedy; Martin Dubois notes, "Hopkins's idea of the coming of the future age stands fully and deliberately within the pattern of human fall and redemption."[817] Comfort can, therefore, be taken in that the nun's demise is not the final part of their journey but merely acts as the next stage of their spiritual endeavours. Owen Holland argues, "Hopkins's understanding of 'wrecking', and what it might mean to 'wreck', had grown to encompass - or, rather, had been encompassed by a version of God's mercy and projected adoration."[818] Catherine Phillips maintains that Hopkins is suggesting "that God is bringing the nuns into public prominence through their deaths,"[819] therefore, linking their deaths to a divine plan. Phillips also states that "the sisters were considered by many Catholics in England to have been martyrs…"[820] This would explain the reverence with which Hopkins represents them. Hope is not lost; by the end, it is gained with the poem dedicated to the nun's happy memory rather than a sad loss. This relates to Coleridge's epitaph poems, where he hoped for a happy memory that would result in "life in death" (755, l.6). The emphasis in the case of Coleridge and Hopkins is on death as a positive part of God's plan and mercy, and the de-emphasis of the wreck in favour of the nuns is, I argue, a demonstration of Hopkins own positive conclusions of the incident.

Hopkins expresses confusion on how "the giver of breath" (l.2) can so easily take it away that an almighty, loving God is both "Lord of living and dead" (l.4). In him and the nuns, Hopkins finds the same God and declares that he "feel[s] thy finger" (l.8) a touch that has "fastened" flesh (l.5) to create life, but this can also be "unmade" (l.6). The "terror" (l.12) of this power is counteracted by "the swoon of a heart" (l.14) bringing his love closer to "the heart of the Host". (l.21) He comes to realise that the written word of "the gospel proffer, a pressure, a principle" which tells of "Christ's gift" (l.32). This God of "living and dead" (l.4), as Hopkins concludes, is part of "the world's splendour and wonder" (l.38), further demonstrating how everything is "charged with the grandeur of God" as 'God's Grandeur'

[817] Dubois. *Gerard Manley Hopkins and the Poetry of Religious Experience*. 143.
[818] Holland. "Lovescape crucified," 3.
[819] Phillips. *Gerard Manley Hopkins.* 339.
[820] Ibid.

declares (l.1). Such a gift and splendour are seen as a "mystery" (l.39) which can only be revealed and known at the right moment, when it becomes "instressed, stressed" (l.39). Hopkins' notion of "instress" defined by Dubois as a "force […] and the effect of observing the inscape on the beholder,"[821] embodies such a notion. The stressed instress of God forms what Jane Bennett described as "an inexplicable vitality or energy,"[822] a pull and presence that is independent to all who encounter it. The need to be receptive and alert to the gift of God leads Hopkins to conclude that "I greet him the days I meet him, and bless when I understand" (l.40). To understand such energy is to begin to unveil the mystery of God and to be presented with evidence of an almighty's offer of comfort and love.

These sometimes brutal and often violent manifestations are enough to dissuade many, where "the faithful waver, [and] the faithless fable and miss" (l.48). Comfort in God, however, returns because of stories passed down the generations: "Beyond saying sweet, past telling of tongue[s]" (l.69). Hopkins realises that God is "lightning and love […] a winter and warm" (l.70), therefore represented as several contradictory, but simultaneously factual statements, where God is love but is also a powerful force. Both sides must be acknowledged and understood because God, like a blacksmith "with an anvil-ding" (l.73), creates "mercy in all of us, out of us all" (l.79). Here, Hopkins lays the theological foundations of the poem by drawing on his own experiences to present with a Catholic orthodoxy the reasoning behind horrific tragedies, such as those that occurred on the *SS Deutschland*.

In a sermon entitled 'On Death', Hopkins remarks, "*Death is certain* and uncertain, certain to come, uncertain when and where." (*SD* 244) He calls death one of the "greatest of earthly evils" in which lives become robbed, resulting in us being unable to see "sunshine, starlight, fresh air, flowers, [and] fieldsports" (*SD* 245). There is a clear distinction between being above ground in an environment that "surrounds and infuses"[823] where one can see the beauty of creation, and being below ground where that beauty is gone forever following death. This would suggest that everything good is outweighed by the fear and irreversible charge of death, but Hopkins highlights that there are three comforts of death: "the last sacraments, the grace of contrition, and holy hope." (*SD* 248) Pat Jalland observes "the traditional Christian ideal of the 'good death', which required piety and fortitude in the face

[821] Dubois. *Gerard Manley Hopkins and the Poetry of Religious Experience*. 12.
[822] Bennett. *Vibrant Matter*. 18.
[823] Ibid. 4.

of suffering,"[824] and for Hopkins' the nuns' fearlessness is evidence of a "good" death with strong Catholic devotion.

**Memory and Mourning in Hopkins' 'Binsey Poplars'**

Hopkins spent two significant periods in Oxford: the first from April 1863 to June 1867 as an undergraduate at Balliol College, and the second from December 1878 to October 1879 as the curate at the church of St Aloysius Gonzaga, which had been consecrated and opened just three years before Hopkins' arrival. His time at St Aloysius Gonzaga lasted ten months, and the church served a largely working-class community, which would have seemed at odds with the privileged Oxford communities he had encountered as an undergraduate. Although Hopkins had shown himself to be a competent university student, his training for the priesthood was seen as less successful. Eleanor Ruggles suggests that the main reason for the Oxford posting was his superiors' feeling that "Father Hopkins was a university man"[825] who would fit in such an environment. Returning to Oxford, I argue, is filled with mixed emotions that recall earlier academic successes but also account for more recent failings in spiritual training.[826]

The city and the university had changed significantly in the decades since his undergraduate studies. Those he had known at the university had moved on, graduated, or died, in addition to Hopkins now primarily working with Oxford's Roman Catholic community rather than the affluent undergraduates he had been accustomed to. He noted the struggle of this return, writing to Robert Bridges that: "small as Oxford compared to London is, it is far harder to set the Isis on fire than the Thames" (*LI* 61), a worried but humorous statement considering that the Isis is an alternative name for the Oxford portion of the Thames. The city had grown considerably, with new colleges forming, expanded university buildings, residential areas, and modern church construction. In 1869, the Basilica-style St Barnabas Church opened to serve Jericho's local growing working-class district, north of the city centre, bordering the canal and river to its west.[827] The church's benefactor, Thomas Combe, was an early promoter of the Pre-Raphaelites and the Superintendent of the University Press. Combe and his wife were also supporters of the High Church Oxford

[824] Jalland. *Death in the Victorian Family*. 2-3.
[825] Ruggles. *Gerard Manley Hopkins: A Life*. 141.
[826] See: Joseph J. Feeney. "Hopkins' 'Failure' in Theology: Some New Archival Data and a Reevaluation," *The Hopkins Quarterly*, Volume 13. Number 3/4 (October 1986 – January 1987): 99-114.
[827] The St Barnabas Church was designed by Arthur Blomfield (1829-99), the son of Charles Blomfield, a former bishop of London from 1828-1856. Charles Blomfield had been present at the consecration of St Michael's Church, Highgate, which Coleridge had attended on 8th November 1832.

Movement, who, under John Keble and others, had pushed against evangelism in favour of reinstating the traditional Catholic elements back into the Church of England.

The Oxford Movement and its legacy continued to thrive in the city, with Eleanor Ruggles noting how St Barnabas reflected High Church sentiment and practices, demonstrating how "the religious […] romantic revival inaugurated by Keble and Newman had run amok."[828] *Historic England* highlights that "the Italianate Romanesque style for St Barnabas was most unusual at a time when Gothic was overwhelmingly the norm for church building," suggesting that the building was "suited to Tractarian ritual."[829] From the outset, St Barnabas was a statement piece to the Movement's orthodox principles and the assertion of High Church ritualist values in the working class district of Jericho.

The area had become highly industrial due to its proximity to the Oxford Canal, with the Eagle Ironworks opening in 1825 and the relocation of the Oxford University Press to the area in 1830. According to Christopher and Edward Hibbert, Jericho became "Oxford's first purpose-built suburb,"[830] which continued to grow throughout the nineteenth century but became a place of residence primarily for the working-classes. The poor maintenance of the area resulted in much overcrowding, flooding, and the spread of illnesses, and it "experienced the worst ravages of cholera and typhoid."[831] It was said that streets around St Barnabas "were choked with carriages, and undergraduates poured in to fill all twelve hundred seats for the 11am High Celebration […] one bewildered convert, who had been a parishioner at St Barnabas's, complained sadly that worship at St Aloysius's seemed extremely bare, even Spartan, in comparison."[832] Although St. Aloysius Gonzaga was the Roman Catholic Church in central Oxford, it struggled to become fully established due to the immense popularity of nearby Anglican churches with more ritualistic and traditional qualities. Hopkins' experience in Oxford demonstrates the close competition between the High Church and Catholic movements, something I argue is important to understanding the poetry from this time.

This contextual footing provides an insight into the circumstances in which 'Binsey Poplars' was written during his time as a curate at St Aloysius Gonzaga. The poem refers to the felling of trees alongside the Thames close to the village of Binsey, west of Oxford.

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[828] Ruggles. *Gerard Manley Hopkins: A Life*. 141.
[829] "Church of St Barnabas", *Historic England.* List Entry Number: 1299646 <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1299646?section=official-list-entry> (Accessed October 31, 2022).
[830] Christopher and Edward Hibbert. *The Encyclopaedia of Oxford* (London: Macmillan, 1998) 197.
[831] R. C. Whiting. *Oxford: Studies in the History of a University Town Since 1800* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1993) 116.
[832] Martin. *Gerard Manley Hopkins: A Very Private Life*. 291.

Hopkins, as a student, had been familiar with the trees and meadows in this area, recording in his journal in May 1866: "With Addis in meadows beyond Binsey […] meadows yellow all over with buttercups. Strong dark shadows of trees through grass and buttercup stems chequering the effect. Heard corncrake." (*J* 137) Writing to Richard Watson Dixon in March 1879, Hopkins explains the inspiration behind 'Binsey Poplars': "I have been up to Godstow this afternoon. I am sorry to say that the aspens that lined the river are everyone felled." (*LII* 26)[833] He does not mention Binsey by name, but the letter's wording echoes the phrasing of the poem, such as "everyone felled", bearing similarities to: "All felled, felled, are all felled." (*Poems* 78, l.3) The trees become anthropomorphised, referred to in the letter as "everyone" (*LII* 26) and described like soldiers in the poem as "following folded rank" (l.4). The latter image is possibly influenced by Hopkins' time ministering at Cowley Barracks, leading to the composition of 'The Bugler's First Communion' written in the same year as 'Binsey Poplars.' Hopkins' spiritual empathy with the natural world is evident in an 1873 journal entry, where he wrote:

> The ashtree growing in the corner of the garden was felled. It was lopped first: I heard the sound and looking out and seeing it maimed there came at that moment a great pang and I wished to die and not to see the inscapes of the world destroyed any more.
>
> (*J* 230)

The destruction of the natural world had strong emotional ties for Hopkins, which is expressed in a significant outpouring of grief and devastation. The overt sentimental and extreme nature of Hopkins' sadness in the 1873 entry is arguably toned down in 'Binsey Poplars' from 1879, but it is nonetheless damning in its attack on ecological obliteration.

A possible interpretation of the poem is that Hopkins' long periods of instability and inability to remain rooted, or to lay roots, in one church is of concern, where employing an arboreal analogy to the poplars is particularly apt. Although not violently felled, he is uprooted constantly and given little time to mature in his respective positions. Between his ordination in 1877 and his appointment as professor of Greek and Latin in Dublin in 1884, Hopkins had served in no less than six different churches, often holding a junior or minor position for just a few months. The nature of his work as a priest in the Roman Catholic Church meant that Hopkins went where he was needed or where he was told to go by senior clergy. In their chapter on Hopkins and the composition of 'Binsey Poplars', Beatrice and Peter Groves argue that the poem's motivation derives itself from "Hopkins [and his]

[833] The village of Godstow is located on the western bank of the River Thames, a few miles northwest of Oxford's city centre. To access the village, Hopkins would likely have travelled through or at least past another village, Binsey, which sits a short distance south of Godstow—it also being on the western bank of the Thames.

determination to create roots he so badly needed."[834] This would be a literal interpretation of the poem, which suggests that the uprooting of the trees is a metaphor for the constant uprooting that Hopkins encountered. As a result of his role as a Jesuit priest, he is given little time to lay down roots to establish himself and blossom, and, therefore, he fails to reach maturity in those locations. During his undergraduate studies, Hopkins' first time in Oxford saw him supposedly described by Edward Pusey as "the star of Balliol."[835] His academic brilliance is evident in his graduating with a first-class degree. However, this first period in Oxford was fraught with his concerns of religious convictions. During this time, he listed poetry as one of the things to give up for Lent in January 1866 - something he would take more seriously when he "resolved to be a religious" less than two years later. (*J* 165) His training for the priesthood did not equal the same academic excellence as achieved at the University of Oxford. He would study at significant Roman Catholic centres of education, including Roehampton, Stonyhurst, and St. Beuno's College, but Joseph J. Feeney concludes that in 1877, Hopkins "received a low pass and, in view of the Province's manpower shortage and other factors, was prematurely removed from theology to help fill the apostolic needs of the English Province."[836] The consequence was Hopkins' near constant upheaval to new parishes, with many curate roles lasting a few months, suggesting an inability to truly settle.

Although this interpretation of uprooting is credible, I argue that 'Binsey Poplars' contains a far more profound and compelling influence beyond not feeling rooted in a location. Instead, I want to trace the poem's context to recent and ancient history and its bearing on Hopkins' thoughts on spirituality and ecology. For Hopkins, this period was a rare revisiting of a place that held many memories and allowed him to recall moments of academic success and reflect on his journey so far. Oxford and the surrounding area are entwined with the feelings and experiences of his undergraduate days. Upon returning to Oxford, Hopkins was not met with the same environment where he had studied. Instead, he encountered a place that had undergone a significant transformation where the rapid growth and development of the city had left it almost unrecognisable, leaving him with an overall negative impression of the city.[837]

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[834] Beatrice and Peter Groves. "Gerard Manley Hopkins and 'Binsey Poplars'," in *Binsey: Oxford's Holy Place: It's Saint, Village, and People*. eds. Lydia Carr, Russell Dewhurst, and Martin Henig. (Oxford: Archaeopress, 2014) 126.
[835] White. *Hopkins: A Literary Biography*. 99.
[836] Feeney. "Hopkins' 'Failure'," 100.
[837] Phillips provides a list of the many new buildings in the city with a particular reference to the "Modern Gothic" buildings that appeared between 1850 and 1874. See: Phillips. *Gerard Manley Hopkins and the Victorian Visual World*. 93.

Oxford had long been a centre of religious importance due to the number of abbeys in the city centre or nearby, as well as many of the colleges that form part of the university, which can also trace their history back to religious origins.[838] The St. Frideswide Priory[839] and Binsey are significant to the area's local history, and their historical and spiritual importance is what I consider to be an understated element in 'Binsey Poplars'. Binsey was not situated along a major thoroughfare or an interconnected network of rural roads; instead, it was at the end of a mile-and-a-half track from Osney, west of the city centre.[840] Robert Bernard Martin notes, "Hopkins was particularly attracted by the isolated little settlement of Binsey […] reached from Port Meadow through ponies and geese wandering free."[841] The village's historical association with the Anglo-Saxon princess and later patron saint of the city and University, St Frideswide, adds a spiritual value and appeal to this landscape.[842] Frideswide's story states that she fled to Binsey to escape the advances of Algar, who wanted to marry her despite her vow of celibacy and dedication to God. Later, she was chased back to Oxford, where Algar was struck blind upon entering the city's gates.[843] During her time in Binsey, Frideswide is said to have prayed to God for a closer water source, which led to the

[838] The abbey sites include Godstow, Osney, St Frideswide, and Rewley. Ordnance Survey maps continued listing them on their surveys. This is notably evident on the OS six-inch map of Oxfordshire, which, although published in 1887, had been surveyed in 1876, just two years before Hopkins' return to the city.
Ordnance Survey: OS Six-inch England and Wales, 1842-1952 "Oxfordshire Sheet XXXIII, surveyed: 1876, Published: 1887" from *National Library of Scotland* <https://maps.nls.uk/view/102346822> (Accessed September 28, 2021).
[839] The Priory of St. Frideswide was suppressed and dissolved by Cardinal Wolsey in 1524 to become his new college known as Cardinal College. In the 1530s, the King took over the site, leading to Christ Church's founding.
See: "Houses of Augustinian canons: The priory of St Frideswide, Oxford," in *A History of the County of Oxford: Volume 2*, ed. William Page (London: Victoria County History, 1907), 97-101; and "Christ Church," in *A History of the County of Oxford: Volume 3, the University of Oxford*, eds. H. E. Salter and Mary D. Lobel (London: Victoria County History, 1954), 228-38.
[840] Osney is technically an island with the Thames running along its eastern fringes, the Bulstake Stream along the east and southern edges, and several other streams and smaller waterways. From Osney, a lane heads north to Binsey, crossing over the Bulstake Stream, leaving Osney Island for another island.
[841] Martin. *Gerard Manley Hopkins: A Very Private Life*. 64.
[842] Frideswide is also referenced in "The Miller's Tale" of Chaucer's Canterbury Tales, in which a section set in Oxford finds John the Carpenter praying to Frideswide: "This carpenter to blessen hym bigan,/ nd seyde, 'Help us, Seinte Frydeswyde!" The Carpenter also travels to Osney Abbey, a short distance from Oxford and the village of Binsey- Geoffrey Chaucer. "The Miller's Tale" in *Canterbury Tales* from *The Riverside Chaucer*, ed. Larry D. Benson. 3rd ed. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1987) I.3448-49.
[843] For further information on the story and context of St Frideswide and associated miracles, see: Simon Yarrow. "The Miracles of St Frideswide of Oxford" in *Saints and their Communities: Miracles Stories in Twelfth-Century England*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006) 169-89.

creation of a miracle well. The well of St Margaret,[844] as it became known, was noted for its healing properties after reputedly curing the blindness of Algar and subsequently became a holy pilgrimage site.

Martin is among the few who draw attention to this significance by highlighting that pre-reformation Binsey was once "a great pilgrimage centre"[845] and a vital Christian location in the Middle Ages. During Hopkins' undergraduate years at Oxford, the well was a forgotten relic described as nothing more than a "trickle of water [and] blocked up."[846] By the time he returned, the situation had changed; a new entrance and stonework were constructed under the supervision of Thomas Prout, a fellow of Christ Church who served as vicar of Binsey from 1857 to 1891.[847] Under the pen name Lewis Carroll, Prout's colleague and friend Charles Dodgson wrote *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (1865), filled with coded representations of Oxford and the people he knew.[848] The holy well at Binsey was one such location around Oxford that inspired the Dormouse's story of the "Treacle Well"[849] during the Mad Hatter's tea party.[850] Treacle was traditionally used in the Middle Ages as a pharmacological term to mean healing fluid,[851] thus demonstrating Carroll's familiarity with

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[844] Frideswide is reputed to have prayed to St Margaret of Antioch, who similarly had endured the desires of an unwanted suitor. Still, tragically, the suitor takes revenge on St Margaret, who is denounced for her Christian faith and beheaded. Following the apparent appearance to Joan of Arc, the cult of St Margaret, much like that of Frideswide, gained a wide following in Medieval England, with more than two hundred churches dedicated to her.
See: Lori Ann Garner. "'If tradition can be trusted': Pilgrimage, Place, and the Legend(s) of Saint Frideswide," *Modern Language Review*, Volume 117, Part 4, (October 2022): 604-07.

[845] Martin. *Gerard Manley Hopkins: A Very Private Life*. 64.

[846] Ibid. 64.

[847] The current stone inscription at the entrance to the well states that in 1874, the well was restored under T. J. Prout.

[848] Hopkins writes in 1885 that he had been asked to recommend some English story books, to which he suggests *Alice in Wonderland* but comments in the letter to his mother that it was "a book I never admired, indeed never read much of; I hold it is not funny." (*LIII* 167)

[849] Martin Gardner notes that the Binsey well is almost certainly what Carroll used as inspiration for the Treacle Well based on comments from Vivien Green and Mrs Henry A. Morss Jr. see footnote 12 of *The Annotated Alice*. ed. Martin Gardner (London: Penguin, 2001) 80-81.

[850] "'Once upon a time there were three little sisters,' the Dormouse began in a great hurry; and their names were Elsie, Lacie, and Tillie; and they lived at the bottom of a well—'
[…]
'They lived on treacle.'
[…]
'It was a treacle-well.'"- Lewis Carroll. *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (London: Penguin, 1998) 65.

[851] "treacle, n." *OED Online*. September 2022. Oxford University Press. <https://www.oed.com/view/Entry/205337?rskey=RamiB3&result=1> (accessed September 22, 2022).

the well's significance.[852] Prout is believed to have inspired the novel's Dormouse, the character who tells the story of the treacle well, forming a link between the well, Prout, and Binsey.[853] Furthermore, Alice Liddell, the inspiration for the titular "Alice", would recall several decades after the many "trips up the river to Godstow,"[854] a similar trip that Hopkins would have experienced during his time at Oxford, such as when he witnessed the tree felling. Liddell does not mention Binsey by name, nor do many critics or editors of subsequent editions of *Wonderland.* Martin Gardner, however, draws a link between Carroll and the Binsey well, noting the broader narrative of Frideswide, who states that she "supposedly founded a nunnery at the spot where Christ Church now stands. The treacle well was a popular healing spot throughout the Middle Ages."[855]

The well dedicated to St Margaret was a holy miracle believed to have healing properties and through which people "consulted it as an oracle on the state of their burdened souls [and in which] maimed and sick persons drank and bathed in the waters, and were cured by them."[856] Therefore, the area of Binsey is charged with the spiritual vibrancy laid there by Frideswide, which goes beyond physical church building, instead giving an importance to the natural surroundings. Although the Reformation had "excised most of the portions dependent on the cult of the saints,"[857] thereby rejecting and abandoning sacred shrines and the cult of saints, the story of St. Frideswide was being revived in Hopkins' lifetime. In 1858, Pre-Raphaelite artist Edward Burne-Jones was commissioned to design a stained-glass window for the Latin Chapel of Christ Church Cathedral,[858] whilst the 1870s saw pieces of the

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[852] Hugh Haughton's notes for the Penguin Classics edition (1998) that "Medicinal springs in Oxfordshire seem sometimes to have been known as 'treacle-wells'"- See: Lewis Carroll. *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland.* (London: Penguin, 1998) 313; and R. L. Green's notes on *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982) 259.
Carroll portrays the well and its medicinal benefits as making the sisters even more ill. This either suggests a comical misunderstanding of the well's benefits (mixing medicinal treacle with sugary, syrup treacle) or a more cynical view of the supposed health benefits of such water.
[853] "Thomas Jones Prout (1823-1909), Divine and college constitution reformer," *National Portrait Gallery, London* <https://www.npg.org.uk/collections/search/person/mp03669/thomas-jones-prout> (accessed September 22, 2022).
[854] Morton N. Cohen, ed. *Lewis Carroll: Interviews and Recollections* (London: University of Iowa Press, 1989) 84.
[855] Gardner. Footnote 12, *The Annotated Alice*. 81.
[856] R.C. Hope. "Holy Wells: their Legends and Superstitions" in *The Antiquary*. Volume XXV. (London: Elliot Stock, 1892) 118.
[857] Cummings. "Introduction" in *The Book of Common Prayer.* xxvii.
[858] Garner. "If tradition can be trusted," 585.

original shrine rediscovered, bringing Frideswide's story to the forefront.[859] I want to highlight how these two events overlapped with Hopkins' life and his time in Oxford, where he was a student shortly after Burne-Jones designed the stained-glass window. His return to Oxford in the 1870s coincided with the period that saw the rediscovery of the shrine's fragments and the restoration of the holy well. The legacy and influence of Frideswide were re-evaluated and retold during Hopkins' Oxford years, emphasising her devout faith and connection with nature.

Lori Ann Garner argues that Frideswide's narrative means that "Binsey has clearly become a fixed and constant element in the story."[860] Further still, Garner notes, "the Frideswide legend has always been peripheral outside of Oxford yet has never wholly disappeared, precisely because of its inherent ambiguity and continuous adaptability enabling the story to find new meaning and provide guidance in a constantly changing world."[861] Although Garner does not discuss 'Binsey Poplars', the poem's link with preservation is one of its most striking qualities, especially at a time when the narrative of Frideswide was being restored under Victorian parameters. The story of a strong female pushing against expectations to maintain her devotion to God, which is rewarded through the creation of the holy well, is admirable and commendable. Garner draws attention to how the story has the "capacity to shape identity,"[862] where I would advocate that Frideswide's link to an older, purer Christianity results in Oxford and its surroundings at Binsey laying claim to having experienced God's power and grandeur firsthand. The "meadow & river & wind-wandering weed-winding bank" (l.8) in the poem is part of the tangible connection with that past, where it is an "especial" (l.24) environment because of the Frideswide connection and the celebration of Catholic piety.

Therefore, destroying the trees violates the "Sweet especial rural scene" (l.24), sharing Hopkins' similar distaste for the polluted cities. The destruction of "ten or twelve" (l.20) trees in which "not [one is] spared" (l.5) is tantamount to environmental vandalism and causes "havoc" (l.21). The "shadow" or shade provided by the trees has been lost (l.7), the ability to look upon their beauty has gone, and consequently, no subsequent visitor to this scene will be

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[859] There is some variation in the story, with some sources saying parts of the structure were discovered in the 1870s and others suggesting the 1880s.
See: James J. Moore. *The Historical Handbook and Guide to Oxford: Embracing a Succinct History of the University and City from the Year 912*. 2nd edition (Oxford: T. Shrimpton and Son, 1878) 151-53; and Michael Tavinor. *Shrines of the Saints* (Norwich: Canterbury Press, 2016) 147.
[860] Garner. "If tradition can be trusted," 587.
[861] Ibid. 606.
[862] Ibid. 607.

able to "guess the beauty [that had] been" (l.19). The concerned Hopkins appears horrified that the trees are destroyed in "only ten or twelve/ strokes" (ll.20-21) and their years of wisdom and heritage are lost with it. Hopkins laments the loss and the destruction of the natural world, with the removal of the trees becoming an evident sign of a departure from a long-established and adored landscape. Its impact will be felt by the poet and other regular visitors, as well as the river and its ecosystem, the birds, and the numerous insects and creatures that would have called the trees their habitat.

Hopkins begins the final stanza with a warning about our impact on the world: "O if we but knew what we do/ when we delve or hew." (ll.9-10) This resembles the caution shown in 'The Wreck of the Deutschland' where Hopkins writes: "Remember us in the roads, the heaven-haven of the reward:/ Our King back, oh, upon Énglish sóuls!" (ll.273-76) He reflects on the wreck and its spiritual aftermath on the nation that, in the eyes of Hopkins, cruelly deserted the *Deutschland*. For Hopkins, there is a hope to return to a good and renewed spirituality when "Our King [is] back, oh, upon Énglish sóuls" (l.276), offering safety and assurance. As Christina Rossetti wrote: "Tread softly! all the earth is holy ground" (*CP* 350, l.1), and this would be the profound meaning assigned to Hopkins' growing concern about the tree's destruction, if we are to believe that all of nature is God's creation, then it is not the place of man to destroy them.

The trees at Binsey are more than a beauty spot; they are a tangible connection with Frideswide and old Oxford. These trees serve as a testament to the enduring legacy of the past and provide a perceptible connection to the area's spiritual and historical significance, forming an ecological hagiography. They are part of the Catholic identity of the city that Hopkins urges to be preserved for future generations to appreciate and cherish because it is "so tender" (l.12).[863] The "sweet especial, rural scene" (ll.23-24) has been corrupted by those who do not understand or appreciate its significance. The warning in the line "O if we but knew what we do/ when we delve or hew" (ll.9-10) echoes the plea made by Christ at the crucifixion: "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." (*Luke* 23:34) Christ pleas for the redemption of others, even those who have committed greater sins and crimes, not for himself. In this case, the ecocide of the trees is an act of vandalism committed by those unaware of the consequences.

[863] A recent children's book has been adapted for modern audiences but focuses on the trees and natural aspects of the story. See: Jackie Holderness. *The Princess who Hid in a Tree: An Anglo-Saxon Story* (Oxford: Bodleian Libraries Publishing, 2019).

Hopkins asks whether humanity knows "what we do" (l.9), questioning whether a better understanding would change the outcome. Knowledge, or the act of learning, is seen as a significant part of preventing further destruction, where the fault does not necessarily lay with the loggers but with the lack of knowledge and foresight that such actions cause. The scene is "especial" (l.24) because it has an energy, "a kind of thing-power"[864] to borrow Jane Bennett's phrase, which highlights Hopkins' "awareness of the complicated web of dissonant connection between bodies, [… and] wider interventions into the ecology."[865] The sadness derives from the commodification of nature, which values it as a resource and profit rather than something of beauty worthy of protection and admiration. He describes the incident as "havoc unselve" (l.22), with Ricks Carson noting the pun on "s*ilva,* Latin for forests or woods."[866] The use of "unselve" denotes the undoing of the self by emphasising how the destruction of nature takes away the essence and energy that fed into everyday life. The separation of the self from the trees creates a barren and dehumanised existence that lacks beauty and spirituality. The value of the trees should not be viewed for material worth but in what they offer through aesthetics and connectivity - a tangible link that is harder to quantify and measure, yet it creates importance, albeit subjectively.

Writing to Bridges, Hopkins includes a poem by his father, "called forth by the proposal to fell the trees in Well Walk (where Keats and other interesting people lived)..." (*LI* 61) Jude V. Nixon notes that "Hopkins' trip to Binsey was triggered by the poem his father sent him on the fate of the Well Walk trees," a group of black poplar trees close to the family home in Hampstead. Nixon concludes that the Hampstead trees "had been saved because of the timeliness of public and poetic protest."[867] The Hampstead incident proved that ecological heritage could be saved and cherished, influenced by issues such as: "history and historical memory, progress, gender, health, nature, ecology, the environment, aesthetics, economics, and the poor."[868] While his father's poem protested the potential destruction of trees, Hopkin's poem instead mourns the ecological and spiritual damage that has already occurred. The poem, therefore, acts as an elegy for the "aspens dear" (l.1), where there is a lament at being too late to prevent the undoing of the "growing greening" (l.12). The sense of

[864] Bennett. *Vibrant Matter*. 18.
[865] Ibid. 4.
[866] Ricks Carson. "Hopkins's Binsey Poplars," *The Explicator*. Volume 53, Issue 3 (Spring 1996): 163.
[867] Jude V. Nixon. "Fathering Graces at Hampstead: Manley Hopkins' 'The Old Trees' and Gerard Manley Hopkins' 'Binsey Poplars'," *Victorian Poetry*. Volume 44, Number 2 (Summer 2006): 207.
[868] Ibid. 208.

helplessness dominates, as Hopkins can only watch those "airy cages quelled" (l.1) and witness the end of something that had once been extraordinary.

As part of ecological management, tree felling and replanting is a well-established tradition, and new saplings would be planted at Binsey.[869] Despite the new trees' aesthetics, they will only partially recover the memories and emotions connected with the originals. There is a lament because the "shadow that swam or sank/ On meadow and river" (ll.7-8) caused by Hopkins' trees will not be replicated precisely with their replacements; the same shadow cannot exist when its source has been lost. This situation raises the issue of the significance of trees beyond their ecological function. The poem expresses that attempts to "mend" nature will not result in a positive outcome; instead, it will "end" nature as we know it. (l.18) For Hopkins, they hold a cultural and emotional value, and their removal and replacement have an impact beyond the immediate physical landscape.

The ability to link the trees with holy qualities, particularly as being symbolic of God's spirit in abundance in a thriving natural environment, helps to further argue for the sacred quality of Hopkins' poplars. The trees are sacred not solely because of their ecological benefits but also because of the historical and sentimental value placed on them. Again, they have an energy or "thing-power," as Bennett describes,[870] emphasising the importance of humanity's relationship with the natural world. The Binsey trees symbolise a connection to a long-gone period, embodying a shared, collective history with figures such as Frideswide. Tim Richardson notes that the "mysterious and semi-wild space" of Christ Church Meadow is "in fact railed off so that the visitor never actually walks on the meadow itself, but progresses around the perimeter […] railings having been put up in 1606."[871] Although a protected, rural space, it is impenetrable and inaccessible, providing the illusion of a connection with nature without total immersion. Binsey and its surroundings, however, offer a more authentic sense of a wild and accessible landscape compared to the "semi-wild space" of the Meadows. The quieter and more natural aspect of Binsey, therefore, appears to be much closer to a purer form of creation, where a visitor is free to explore every tree and plain grass without restriction. It is a place that has seen little human interference, and through this, the concept of purity in this location, much like Rossetti's earth being "holy ground" (l.1), can be felt and experienced to its fullest extent.

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[869] See: Richard Alleyne. "Poet's lament echoes as trees face axe again," *The Telegraph*, December 11, 2002. <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/1415794/Poets-lament-echoes-as-trees-face-axe-again.html> (Accessed November 11, 2023)
[870] Bennett. *Vibrant Matter*. 18.
[871] Tim Richardson. *Oxford College Gardens*. (London: White Lion Publishing, 2018) 58.

It is through the presence of these trees that it is possible to rekindle a connection to the past and gain a greater appreciation for the struggles of our ancestors. Through the act of recording, Hopkins effectively preserves the memory of the poplars, thereby cementing their place in history and ensuring their continued presence in the public consciousness, even after the felling. Documenting their value is a testament to the trees' significance and contribution to the surrounding environment. While "after-comers cannot guess the beauty been" (l.19), it is through this literary preservation that Hopkins secures the legacy from fading into obscurity.

## Hopkins and Old Oxford

In 'Dun Scotus's Oxford' (1879), Hopkins also explores the idea of a previous golden age, where he recalls Oxford in the Middle Ages and its association with Catholic Europe.[872] He longs to connect with the time before the reformation, which he views as being of greater purity and religious conviction. Writing to Dixon, Hopkins explains he had:

> …returned to my Alma Mater and need not go far to have before my eyes 'The little-headed willows two and two' and that landscape the charm of Oxford, green shouldering grey, which is already abridged and soured and perhaps soon be put out together...
>
> (*LII* 20)

The excitement of returning to his old university city draws many challenges, with Oxford being described as a "skeleton" in the winter (*LII* 20). Although the seasonal changes would alter the city's appearance, the deathly, fleshless image of the "skeleton" also applies to the broader decline he witnesses. A letter to Bridges sees Hopkins lamenting "the decline of wild nature" (*LI* 73), and within Oxford itself, he is aware of a struggle where the "green" wild nature is "shouldering [the] grey" of the encroaching man-made buildings and the growing city. (*LII* 20)

Oxford had changed in the eleven years since Hopkins was last there, and his attempt to connect with the "weeds and waters" (l.10) draws attention to the treasured natural spaces he held dear, as seen in 'Binsey Poplars.' In 'Dun Scotus's Oxford', Hopkins attends to the city itself and the concern that it had faded over time due to a "graceless growth" (l.7), losing its connection with the world and spirit of Scotus from the pre-reformation era. Hopkins presents the traditional imagery of Oxford, a romanticised portrayal that emphasises the city's churches, towers, and historic buildings: "Towery city and branchy between towers;/

[872] Raymond Williams is critical of the notion of "Golden Ages", which he refers to as "an idealist retrospect". Williams. *The Country and the City*. 34.

Cuckoo-echoing, bell-swarmèd, lark charmèd, rook racked, river-rounded." (*Poems* 79, ll.1-2). It is a description that emphasises the city's rural and historical charms, where the two entities work in harmony.

In a diary entry from 1864, during his undergraduate studies, Hopkins wrote a list of Oxford buildings, creating what appears to be an architectural tour of Oxford that visited: "New College Chapel and Gardens; Trinity, S. John's, Wadham, ditto. The Radclyffe. The Bodleian. Christ Church Meadows. The Barges. The Tow Path. Merton new buildings. Christ Church new buildings. The Botanical Gardens. The Museum." (*J* 21) As Catherine Phillips notes these locations offer an insight into his thought processes at the time because they "reflected the history of the Catholic Church at the time of the Reformation."[873] Hopkins' tour highlights the evolution of Christianity in Oxford and underscores the importance of the historical context in understanding its present-day character. He associates these buildings with a spiritual significance in keeping with the value of an Old Catholic truth and with specific ecologies such as the gardens, meadows, and the canal towpath. It demonstrates the comprehension that Hopkins sees in the connection between faith and the landscape, a Catholic Oxford partly lost due to development—with each further construction and destruction distancing the city from that which Scotus and old Catholics had known.

This "graceless growth" (l.7) forms a disharmony with the natural world that surrounds the city; indeed, it "sours" (l.5) the "neighbour-nature" (l.6). He notes that this had not always been the case and "that country and town" did encounter each other but "coped and poised powers"(ll.3-4) kept them in balance. Oxford, however, enters a transition where old and new are simultaneously fighting for existence, with the "brickish skirt" (l.5) of the new features having "confounded" (l.7) the old, rustic qualities. The simplicity of the former "rural keeping" (l.8) is lost, and the once abundant "folk, flocks, and flowers" (l.8) are now in decline. Where once Hopkins believed that he could connect with Scotus and old Catholicism with "This air I gather and release" (l.9), he now feels that this presence is of "haunted" (l.11) nature rather than a tangible connection. It was in "these weeds and water, these walls" (l.10) that Scotus had resided, the landscape and the buildings maintaining a physical connection. Scotus' haunting portrays a relic of the old order, seemingly outdated with modern changes. Hopkins' Oxford is growing distant from Scotus' Oxford, where the Catholic elements of the city had faded and lost their previous significance, leaving only remnants of that legacy. This

[873] Phillips. *Gerard Manley Hopkins and the Victorian Visual World*. 95.

made the felling of the trees at Binsey concerning to Hopkins because the legacy and spirituality that charged that environment was diminished.

'Dun Scotus's Oxford' goes on in a similar critical manner as 'Binsey Poplars' about the notion of progress in which it decries everything that "sours/ That neighbour-nature" (ll.5-6). The "graceless growth" (l.7) is an unjustified and unnecessary expansion, contributing little to the existing good features and having "confounded/ [the] Rural" (l.8). The criticism is focused on Oxford's transformation, which has created a distance from the city that Scotus himself would have recognised. The "brickish skirt" (l.5) reflects the growing brick-built Victorian suburbs which had begun to surround the historic gold stone centre of Oxford, with this sprawl taking up land that once contained "flocks" and "flowers" (l.8). The rural space cannot thrive as a wilderness if the town continues to impact the fabric and ecological makeup. The emotional attachment in 'Dun Scotus's Oxford' is similar to that of 'Binsey Poplars', where the fragility of nature is shown to be "tender" (l.12) and delicate.

Hopkins' architectural tour of Oxford highlighted the finest examples of the city's pre-reformation Catholic history, where subsequent additions have eroded that appearance, further underscored by the felling of trees at Binsey. The risk to the "Rural" (l.8) relates to the disharmony of "country and town" (l.3), where the town's growth lessens the value of the countryside. Scotus' idea of *haecceitas* or "this-ness" captures a place's unique and positive qualities, through which Hopkins would create his theory of inscape. The "this-ness" energy allows a landscape to be filled with the grandeur of God and the vibrancy of cultural and theological ancestors. Scotus' defence of the Immaculate Conception presented "Mary without spot" (l.14), where she was free from sin and impurities. The same cannot be said of Hopkins' Oxford due to the "abridged and soured" (*LII* 20) changes that have occurred and where the "graceless growth" (l.7) lacks spiritual integrity. The very essence of God being present in all things is challenged by human interference, and with that comes the fear that life "without spot" (l.14) is but a distant ambition.

# Conclusion

The writings of Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Christina Rossetti, and Gerard Manley Hopkins demonstrate how they thought that church leadership and membership had lost its spirituality and devotional integrity. In turn, this represents the ongoing evolution of Christian orthodoxy in the transition from rural to urban living. Rossetti's plea to "Tread softly! all the earth is holy ground" (*CP* 350, l.1) indicates the need she felt to protect all things because it is imbued with a holiness where God created the world and entered it through Jesus Christ. Although these writers would all subscribe to versions of Christian orthodoxy, which should suggest a clear set of beliefs, my research has shown how they were forced to accommodate their faith within societal changes. Increasing secular sentiments, industrialisation, and commodification become forces that the writing of Rossetti and Hopkins reacts against by adopting versions of Romantic pantheistic thinking. Through this evolving spiritual message, empowered by Christian orthodoxy, they attempt to find God and goodness in the world.

This research has critically examined selected works by Coleridge, Rossetti, and Hopkins, where a materialist and ecological perspective has shed light on themes of God and nature in their writing. It is how these entities were experienced, understood, and documented amidst the industrialisation, pollution, and destruction that occurred in the Romantic and Victorian periods which has proven most fruitful. The aim was to investigate how these writers of Christian orthodoxy, according to the definition provided by G. K. Chesterton, endow their surroundings and experiences with a spiritual value. For these writers, God is the creator and force behind all things, human or otherwise, where everything is touched and filled with God's love and energy, exalting them beyond normalcy into something more. Although drawing on the similarities produced by such an orthodoxy, this research has demonstrated how this is manifested in different ways, namely Coleridge's spiritual nature with its "secret ministry" (452, l.1), Rossetti's world enhanced because of her faith, and Hopkins' natural world being evident of God's power and love.

My conclusions offer an exploration of the intersection between materiality, ecology, and spirituality in the works of these writers. The illuminating perspective has centred on a reappraisal of many elements of their writing by emphasising their connected orthodoxy and the role of dirt and their surroundings. By examining dirt and its changing role in a nation rapidly becoming urban and industrial rather than rural and agrarian, I have demonstrated how environmental alterations impacted their theological and sociological thinking,

transforming dirt as matter and metaphor from something usual in the rural to an unwelcomed entity when experienced in an urban environment. The perception of this change towards something that signifies pollution and spiritual staining highlights the increasing modifications being made to society and nature due to urbanisation and industrialisation.

Cecil Frances Alexander's 'All Things Bright and Beautiful' provided the opening to my thesis and began my research, with its emphasis on Christian belief in God as the creator of all things in a universe where matter is elevated beyond normalcy because it is charged with holiness. Although my methodology and critical approach are not Marxist, I have found the views of Marxist thinkers, particularly Eric Hobsbawm and Terry Eagleton, helpful in critiquing my writer's concerns about poverty and social injustice. Concerns about immorality, poverty, and commodification play a significant role in their writing, with Rossetti and Hopkins shown to have faced urban social issues first-hand. In their poetry, there is not the assertion of a God-given position of status, as is the case of Alexander's hymn, but instead a genuine concern about the plight of the poor.

When Hopkins wrote: "All things are therefore charged with love" (*SD* 195), he expressed a mood and Christian ideology in keeping with traditional teaching and practices. Following this line, Hopkins was more interested in the rural qualities representing God in the purest form but was forced to confront the harsh Victorian urban environment.[874] Britain in the Long Nineteenth Century had to attempt to comprehend, justify, and manage the paradoxes of the age, hoping to understand and align this period of transition with their religious beliefs. As Hobsbawm observed, Britain at the beginning of the Long Nineteenth "was at once much smaller and much larger than ours,"[875] emphasising the period's contradictory elements as both exhilarating and a cause for concern, as experienced by Coleridge, Rossetti, and Hopkins in their respective locations. The Industrial Age's political, economic, social, and theological pressures disrupted and upturned many structures and traditions linked with the past and the idea of the rural idyll.[876]

John Keble's view that rural residents "show keener solicitude" and that countryside hierarchies and communities were crucial for safeguarding and maintaining Christian beliefs

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[874] Works such as Engels' seminal *The Condition of the Working Class in England* (published in German in 1845 and in English in 1887) are undoubtedly key investigative pieces into the difficult living, working, health, and economic conditions of the working classes. Engels argues further for the need "to prove that society *knows* how injurious such conditions are to the health and the life of the workers, and yet does nothing to improve these conditions. That it knows the consequences of its deeds; that its act is, therefore, not mere manslaughter, but murder…" Engels. *The Conditions of the Working Class in England*. 128.

[875] Hobsbawm. *The Age of Revolution*. 19.

[876] Raymond Williams refers to the "Problem of Perspective" and how this has clouded judgement about the realities of the countryside. See: *The Country and the City*. 9-12.

places him within the context of an urban critic.[877] His argument that rural dwellers "may find secure and inviolate repose in their native place, side by side with their forefathers, and in the familiar plot of dedicated ground"[878] heightens the sense of danger towards the towns and cities. Keble's vision, in which the countryside was exalted, centred on the High Church's view of continuity and tradition as the cornerstones of respectable and devout living. This romanticised view, however, is nostalgic and flawed in its affinity for a rural way of life by emphasising the threat against the Church of England and conventional values. Rossetti, among others, is evidence of how the orthodoxy and ritualism of the High Church could thrive in urban locations.

The understanding of this local world's impact and influence returns to Tobias Menely's materialist ecocriticism and the view of poetry as the "inescapable imbrication in the Earth system, the condition of all productive activity."[879] As a result, "any poem can be understood, in its world making and time shaping, to offer a meditation on the enigmatic yet omnipresent nature of energy, in its planetary and social manifestations."[880] This energy has proven to be an essential factor in the writing of Coleridge, Rossetti, and Hopkins, where "so-called in-animate things have a life, that deep within is an inexplicable vitality or energy, a moment of independence from and resistance to us and other bodies: a kind of thing-power."[881] The allure and appeal of this local world are essential not just in their reassurance of the power and beauty of God but also in their affirmation of the inherent goodness of all things. The complexity of this energy arises out of social and environmental changes which shift the circumstances and reach of how people perceive and understand such a power. Hopkins would write that "All things are therefore charged with love" (*SD* 195) in addition to the world being "charged with the grandeur of God" (*Poems* 66, l.1). Rossetti also wrote on similar spiritual connections in the world through her summary that "all the earth is holy ground" (*CP* 350, l.1). Their worlds are shown to be elevated beyond normalcy because of the sensation that their surroundings are aligned with the power and love of God.

The study of these writers has demonstrated the multifaceted connections and interplay between their writing and theological beliefs and the ongoing development of urban and rural dichotomy. The starting point began with the notion of "West Country Romanticism", which has been reinterpreted to feature Coleridge at its spiritual and creative

[877] Keble. *Keble's Lectures on Poetry.* 32.
[878] Ibid
[879] Menely. *Climate and the Making of Worlds*. 13.
[880] Ibid. 14.
[881] Bennett. *Vibrant Matter*. 18.

heart, where he infuses his works with a rich cultural context that reflects the diverse influences of his surroundings. This becomes evident through his keen observations of the landscape, local traditions, and religious beliefs, which he integrates into his writing. In doing so, Coleridge creates a vivid and immersive reading experience that is both engaging and enlightening in demonstrating the vitality of faith and nature. It is of further importance because it marks a period in which Coleridge's writing was heavily influenced by his distinct understanding of the world and the West Country. It was an effort to embrace a simplistic, rural way of life and to escape from the complexities of modern living, where he infused the environment with a sense of holiness and powerful energy.

For over a decade, Coleridge's final years were spent as a guest of the Gillman family in Highgate, representing one of the most prolonged periods in which Coleridge resided in one location. This extended settled status is a unique period in Coleridge's life, and I have argued that it was during this time that Coleridge solidified his religious leanings. Key philosophical and theological works such as *The Statesman Manual* and *On the Constitution of the Church and State* reflect his move towards a conservative Anglican position. These works provide valuable insights into Coleridge's thinking during this unique period in his life. Additionally, his collaboration with his neighbour Hyman Hurwitz should be considered one of the most significant and productive moments in his writing career. After examining Coleridge's early and later life, it becomes evident that nature and faith played a significant yet intricate role in his worldview. His perspective on a society impacted by industrial and urban change was unique and emphasised the importance of God's continued presence and the natural environment's spiritual benefits. Later in life, Coleridge returned to High Church orthodoxy, which aimed to re-evaluate and clearly define the relationship between the church and the state. His unwavering belief in the sanctity of the church and the imperative to safeguard its integrity profoundly impacted subsequent High Church groups, including the Oxford Movement.

The impact of the Oxford Movement is most evident in Rossetti's beliefs as a devout member of the High Church. This movement's teachings are shown to have flourished in rapidly growing urban environments. This research has taken a unique approach to viewing Rossetti as a product of the city by expanding and analysing Dinah Roe's use of "the urban Rossettis"[882] as a crucial context for understanding and interpreting her poetry. Through the Rossetti women, it becomes evident how a High Church orthodoxy offered comfort,

[882] Roe. *The Rossettis in Wonderland*. 35.

certainty, and a sense of purpose in a largely patriarchal society. This represented the apparent paradoxical freedom of orthodoxy that G. K. Chesterton argued when he wrote of the "old fashioned" doctrines, which were "the only safeguard of the new democracies…"[883] Rossetti's poetry offers a unique insight by embodying those High Church teachings and demonstrating the materialism and environmental influences of city life. These poems are infused with urban sounds, smells, actions, and stimuli from Rossetti's perspective and understanding of such a location. Although Rossetti wrote frequently about the rural and natural world, this research has shown that most of her life was spent in the city, where she seemingly thrived and exalted its benefits.

The final chapter on Gerard Manley Hopkins continued the link with the High Church orthodoxy and Coleridge, where Hopkins could, therefore, be viewed as a product of their works in the same manner as Rossetti. This chapter, however, presented Hopkins in contrast to Rossetti, arguing his reluctance as an urban dweller who detested the conditions and uninspiring cities. In Hopkins, the darker side of city life is evident in his poetry, whilst his poems on nature demonstrate a yearning for a simple and rural life. The intense growth of industrial and urban areas is portrayed as monstrous and concerning, especially when compared to what Hopkins saw as the divine perfection of God's creation in the natural world. For Hopkins, the urban man-made environment is shown to be devoid of natural goodness and wonder, the very essence of which should be a clear sign of God's presence and love.

Chesterton argued that "old fashioned" doctrines were "the only safeguard of the new democracies…"[884] This captures what my thesis has set out to investigate: how the various elements of Christian orthodoxies embodied by Coleridge, Rossetti, and Hopkins shaped their understanding of the world as they knew it. Their adherence to the High Church was centred on the principles of certainty but also demonstrated an ability to approach the unusual and ever-changing aspects of the nineteenth century with a degree of flexibility. Religion, therefore, becomes a means for not only viewing the beauty of the world but also for finding a way to adapt and understand the harsh realities of urbanisation and industrialisation.

The scope of this research has been ambitious in its reach, particularly in its grouping of writers who are generally not studied together. However, the sheer scale of works by or on these writers has necessitated the need to focus and concentrate on a carefully selected range of writing by Coleridge, Rossetti, and Hopkins. While these three writers are distinguished by

[883] Chesterton. *Orthodoxy*. 214-15.
[884] Ibid.

their distinctive literary fields, their shared orthodox beliefs and connections render them significant and pertinent objects of study as a collective. The intersection of the Romantic and Victorian eras has been mitigated by employing a broader historical framework incorporating Hobsbawm's concept of the Long Nineteenth Century. This approach has helped contextualise the period's literary and theological developments and reveal how larger socioeconomic and political forces shaped them. Situating the Romantic and Victorian eras within a longer historical trajectory has allowed for a better understanding of the continuities and discontinuities between different periods and tracing the evolution of key themes and trends over time. My research has looked beyond the usual addressed nineteenth-century concerns about industrialisation, the condition of the urban poor, and rural depopulation. Consequently, critical attention has been refocused on what has been left out of such cultural materialist studies, such as threatened nonhuman environments in the city and countryside, and their spiritual significance.[885]

The limitations of such research should be considered, as well as the wider questions posed by this project. Restrictions concerning my research have occurred in several ways, due in no small part to the limits posed by the word count and the initial disruption of almost two years in the early stages due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The result was a prolonged period with restricted library and archive access, to which digital material needed to be faster to fill the gap and could not always provide the full coverage of the works required for such a project. In some cases, significant progress was made in correcting this shortfall, which allowed for some further online and in-person access; however, not all elements have remained accessible and available in the run-up to the preparation for submission of this thesis.

This has, therefore, highlighted further opportunities with these writers to analyse additional works, correspondence, and events that support the points I have been making. For example, I have largely left Hopkins' time in Dublin untouched, not least because there is already a large volume of work on this period of his life and writing. Indeed, Hopkins' frequent short-term residencies due to his priestly position have required a selective reading of his work to demonstrate the key overarching themes and attitudes without trying to repeat myself. Similar issues occur with Coleridge, where the comprehensive Princeton University

[885] As I referenced in the introduction, Hobsbawm refers to the "dual revolutions" of the French and Industrial Revolutions as instigators of the Long Nineteenth Century and having a prolonged influence. Hobsbawm. *The Age of Revolution*. 14-16. The end of the Long Nineteenth Century is given as occurring with the start of the First World War in 1914, which would profoundly impact politics and society.

Press *The Collected Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge* runs to sixteen volumes, with some volumes in multiple parts. For clarity and adequate space for analysis and research, this thesis has limited Coleridge to two significant locations, which I have deemed vital to understanding his theological and environmental concerns. A future research project of a larger scale and longer duration would undoubtedly allow for an expanded scope and reach of the investigation I have undertaken here. The limitations of the word count meant that a previously proposed chapter dedicated solely to the Oxford Movement could no longer be used, and this also represents a future research project to build upon the foundations that I have already undertaken. Any potential study in the future would have the opportunity for greater flexibility and fewer restrictions, allowing for a more sustained case study on each of these writers in their respective key locations. However, this research has shown the fruitful yet understudied materialist and ecological critical readings available, opening up a wealth of re-interpretations and new nuanced considerations of the lives and works of Coleridge, Rossetti, and Hopkins.

In summary, this study has presented an analysis and insight into works by Coleridge, Rossetti, and Hopkins, encouraging, at times, the reconsideration and recontextualising of their writing in terms of their orthodox beliefs. This has drawn out how they try to comprehend and address the complex challenges posed by societal and environmental changes. Through their poems and correspondence, they have sought to identify and respond to the multifaceted issues arising from urbanisation, including poverty, industrialisation, and pollution. In doing so, this perspective, based on a materialist and eco-critical understanding of these writers' works, has highlighted some of the complexities and nuances of their writing. At times, it has been necessary to challenge some of the traditional readings of these writers and to emphasise their orthodox views to demonstrate how they attempt to reconcile their views on religion and how it shapes their worldview. Overall, this analysis has offered critical insights into the complex relationships between religion, society, and the environment, as reflected and understood in the works of Coleridge, Rossetti, and Hopkins.

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