

Coleridge in Bristol: the 1795 Slave Trade Lecture

Tim May

ON MONDAY, 15 JUNE 1795 COLERIDGE VISITED the Bristol Library Society, a subscription library standing between the Merchant Venturers' almshouse and the Theatre Royal in King Street, a short distance north of the vast and elegant Queen's Square. He borrowed two volumes, entering them in the 'Title' and 'To whom delivered' columns in the loans register: 'Clarkson on the Slave Trade' in his own name and 'Wadstrom on Colonization' in the name of Robert Southey, his fellow Pantisocrat and lodger in College Street, near the cathedral.¹

They had only one day in which to trawl through their books: Thomas Clarkson's *An essay on the impolicy of the African slave trade*, an empirical demonstration that the trade in human flesh, far from being the maritime 'nursery' described by the West Indian lobby, was in fact 'a grave for our seamen'; and the Swedish abolitionist Carl Bernhard Wadström's *An essay on colonization*, a plea for commercial cooperation with the intelligent Africans and their 'inexhaustible stores' through the formation of 'agricultural colonies' on the Guinea coast.² On Tuesday evening Coleridge left his College Street lodgings and headed back in the direction of the library, traversing the forest of masts and rigging on the River Frome and walking south down Broad Quay towards the Assembly Room in Prince's Street, the venue for balls and concerts backing onto Narrow Quay. His destination was the Assembly Coffee-House, underneath the huge 'great room' and next to the ships disgorging their goods onto the quayside; at eight o'clock he was due to deliver a lecture there 'on the slave trade and the duties that result from its continuance'.³

Abolition Fatigue

Thirteen years later Coleridge would tell Thomas Clarkson—whom he dubbed the 'Moral Steam-Engine' of the anti-slavery movement—that he had been prompted to give his lecture 'against the falling off of zeal in the friends of the Abolition'. 1795 certainly found the campaign in a deep trough, following the crest of 1792—the year of his 'first public Effort' on this issue, the Greek ode on 'the wretched lot of the slaves in the islands of the West Indies' which had won him a Browne Medal at Cambridge.⁴ After MPs had voted in April of that

¹ *Bristol Library Society Registers*, XI (25 September 1794–3 December 1795); George Whalley, 'The Bristol Library borrowings of Southey and Coleridge, 1793-8', *The Library*, 5th series, iv, 2, 1949, 121. For identification of the house in which Coleridge, Southey and George Burnett lodged and a description of College Street and its residents (a third of whom were ships' masters, active or retired, in the African (slaves, ivory and wood) and West Indian trades), see Tim May, 'The Pantisocrats in College Street', *Notes and Queries*, 52 (4), December 2005, 456-60.

² Thomas Clarkson, *An essay on the impolicy of the African slave trade*, 2nd ed. (London, 1788), 53; Carl Bernhard Wadström, *An essay on colonization, particularly applied to the western coast of Africa . . .* (London, 1794-5), 23.

³ *LPR*, 232-51 provides an edited and repaginated version of Ernest Hartley Coleridge's transcript of the original manuscript, which is missing. A stray page of this transcript has since appeared in *SWF* I 32-3.

⁴ *CL* III 179, 78.

year for 'gradual' termination of the British trade from 1 January 1796 the bill had lain moribund in the House of Lords. In 1794 Wilberforce's bill to abolish the trade supplying slaves to 'foreign territories', which accounted for one-third of the 18th-century British total, passed the Commons but was shelved in the Lords. The following year, shortly after Coleridge's move to Bristol in January, Wilberforce had presented a third motion for the abolition of the whole trade, only to see MPs vote by 78 to 61 for further delay. In June 1795 the Abolition Society's London Committee convened for the last of only two meetings that year, declaring that its hopes of the Commons had 'nearly vanished' and that they did not 'think the present juncture favourable for any further publick measure'.⁵ Eight years after the committee's formation in May 1787 abolition fatigue had set in. And amid the loyalist 'Church and King' hysteria whipped up by the increasingly bloody course of the French Revolution and the state repression epitomised in the 1794 high treason trials of Thomas Hardy, John Horne Tooke and John Thelwall, abolitionists were now demonised as 'Jacobins'—as proponents of a sinister 'new philosophy' of 'liberty and equality'.

The pages of *The Bristol Mercury*, which had advertised Coleridge's lecture on the day of his visit to the King Street library (see final page),⁶ were now dominated by issues other than the slave trade: the war with France, the extended suspension of Habeas Corpus, the hair-powder tax, food riots triggered by the soaring prices caused by an unusually severe winter, the massive debts of the Prince of Wales, and the anxiety that the successful 1791 Saint-Domingue slave insurrection and the ensuing French abolition of slavery in 1794, combined with their doctrine of the rights of man, would ignite rebellion in the British West Indian colonies. This had flared up in Grenada and St Vincent in March 1795 and was feared to be in danger of engulfing Jamaica, only a day's sailing from Saint-Domingue; the slaves on the island, who outnumbered their white masters by eleven to one, produced most of Britain's sugar, rum and coffee.

Bristol and the Slave Trade

Bristol's entry into the African slave trade had come in 1698 with the ending of the monopoly enjoyed by the London-based Royal African Company. During the ensuing 109 years of legal slave trading Bristol accounted for over 2,100 slaving voyages and over half a million of the slaves shipped from Africa—one-fifth and one-sixth, respectively, of the total British figures.⁷ After overtaking London during the peak of the late 1720s and early 1730s, when almost 50 ships a year cleared for Africa (roughly half the British total), the port was in turn overhauled by Liverpool in the 1740s. In 1795, the year of Coleridge's

⁵ British Library Add. MSS 21,254-6, *Proceedings of the committee for the abolition of the slave trade, 1787-1819*, *Fair Minute Books*, 3 vols, III (20 July 1790-9 July 1819), 25 June 1795, fos. 94v, 95r.

⁶ *The Bristol Mercury, and Universal Advertiser*, 15 June 1795, VI (277), 3, col. 1.

⁷ Bristol-owned ships embarked some 587,000 slaves from Africa between 1698 and 1807; over one-fifth of these did not survive the voyage to the Americas (David Eltis et al, *The Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade Database*, www.slavevoyages.org).

lecture, following a wave of bankruptcies triggered by the war with France, only 13 ships cleared for Africa; of these, just seven were in search of slaves.

There had been a moral shift away from the trade, connected in part with the substantial Dissenting presence in the city: in the late 18th century one in every five Bristolians was a Nonconformist. Some of these Nonconformists had slaving interests and even owned plantations and slaves in the West Indies—for example, the businessman Richard Bright who, along with other slave traders and sugar importers, attended the Lewin's Mead Unitarian chapel, perhaps the most influential of no fewer than 86 Dissenting places of worship in Bristol at this time.

Although Bristol's share of the slave trade itself had shrunk, the activities connected with it—sugar-refining, tobacco-processing, servicing and manning the ships, investing in the voyages, producing goods for export to Africa and the West Indian and North American plantations—still accounted for some two-fifths of the city's income. Hence the alarm of the sugar refiners and the West Indian planters and merchants at the abolitionist upsurge: they petitioned MPs, warning that abolition would cause 'the Ruin of Thousands of Individuals'.⁸

Sugar alone constituted one-seventh of the value of the national import total and over four-fifths of that of the West Indian imports arriving in Bristol. As Coleridge and Southey walked the quays in June they would have seen the first hogsheads of the season being unloaded. The coarse brown muscovado was dragged on sledges to the fifteen sugar refineries, concentrated around the Avon and Frome rivers, which supplied the local population and also consumers in western counties and in Ireland. This product of slave labour was the life-blood of the 'metropolis of the west', a city of some 60,000 notorious for its narrow concern with trade and commerce.

Coleridge's critique of 'Commerce'

Sugar was the reason for Coleridge's journey to the quayside coffee-house underneath the Assembly Room on the evening of 16 June. He launched his eight o'clock lecture with a list of 'West Indias' imports: 'Sugars, Rum, Cotton, log-wood [a dyestuff], cocoa, coffee, pimento, ginger, indigo, mahogany, and conserves'. These goods, Coleridge declared, represented an appalling example of 'the evils' deriving from desires which were 'artificial' or 'imaginary' rather than being related to 'the actual necessities and real comforts of Life'. They were the result of a perverted use of the 'restless faculty' of 'Imagination'—a gift from 'Our Almighty Parent' which, when properly employed, 'urges us up the ascent of Being' to the 'glittering Summits' of humankind's cultural achievements. Coleridge maintained that only two of the eleven commodities in his catalogue could be called 'useful'—cotton and mahogany; not one of them could be afforded by 'the poor and labouring part of Society'. The poor were condemned to manufacture the 'Tools, Raiment, and defensive Weapons'

⁸ *Journals of the House of Commons*, 44, 12 May 1789, 353.

exported to Africa and the West Indies to pay for luxuries which they themselves could never enjoy.

Coleridge was here continuing the assault on 'Commerce' and its 'vast evils' he had launched in an address delivered a few days earlier in the same coffee-house—the last of his 'Six Lectures on Revealed Religion'. Did 'Commerce', he had asked, bring him his own real 'wants', such as 'Corn, or Bricks or Wool'? Its 'true advantages', he maintained, 'consist in debauching the field Labourer with impropportionable toil by exciting in him artificial Wants.' In this lecture he had focused on the East rather than the West Indies as the source of luxury goods: the agricultural labourer was made to work 'like a brute beast' for 'ten hours a day exclusive of his meals' to provide the necessities of everyday life in order that others might enjoy an array of 'pestilent Luxuries' imported from India, China and the East India islands: 'gold, diamonds, silks, muslins & calicoes for fine Ladies and Prostitutes. Tea to make a pernicious Beverage, Porcelain to drink it from, and salt-petre for the making of gunpowder with which we may murder the poor Inhabitants who supply all these things.'⁹

Coleridge had dwelt on the slave-like condition of the poor labourer in his earlier lectures in Bristol. In the first he had given after arriving in the city—written overnight, delivered amid threats from 'Mobs and Mayors, Blockheads and Brickbats, Placards and Press Gangs', and speedily published as *A Moral and Political Lecture* to avoid treason charges—he had censured 'those institutions of society which should condemn me to the necessity of twelve hours of daily toil, would make my *soul* a slave, and sink *the rational* being in the mere animal.' Principal among these institutions was property, the focus of his second lecture 'on Revealed Religion', delivered late in May: not having property in a society where 'Property is Power' meant that a 'Poor Man is necessarily more or less a Slave.'

The slavish labour of the poor agricultural worker on behalf of 'unnatural Luxuries' satisfying 'artificial Wants' had taken on an especially acute dimension during Coleridge's stay in Bristol. A disastrous 1794 harvest had been followed by an arctic winter. The price of the four-pound quartern loaf had jumped from 7d to over 1 shilling, meaning that bread or flour now accounted for half or more of the labouring family's 9- or 10-shilling weekly budget. On 6 June—ten days before Coleridge's slave trade lecture—a mob attacked the butchers' stalls in a city-centre market and made off with some meat; fishmongers had already been targeted. In a February lecture on the misery and starvation caused by the war with France Coleridge himself claimed to have seen 'pieces of Beef' suspended above a recruitment centre as bait 'to attract the half-famished Mechanic'.¹⁰

Coleridge on the Slave Trade as a 'Grave' for Seamen

In the address he delivered at the Assembly Coffee-House on 16 June

⁹ LPR, 235, 236, 237, 223, 222, 226.

¹⁰ CL I 152; LPR, 11, 126, 69; cf. CN I 42: 'People starved into War.—over an enlisting place in Bristol a quarter of Lamb and piece of Beef hung up—.'

Coleridge turned his attention from the starving labourer to other victims of 'Commerce' and the appetite for unnecessary luxury goods—the slaves crammed onto the decks of a slave ship and the seamen who tended them. His source for the plight of the sailors was Thomas Clarkson's *An essay on the impolicy of the African slave trade*, the Abolition Society publication he had borrowed from the King Street library the day before his talk.

Clarkson's first book, *An essay on the slavery and commerce of the human species*—an expanded translation of the Latin essay which had won him a Senior Bachelors' Prize at Cambridge in 1785—had dealt primarily with the plight of the slaves: how they were obtained, the numbers taken from the African coast, the horrors of the Middle Passage, their sale on arrival in the Americas and the brutal 'seasoning' on the plantations. In *Impolicy*, published in mid-1788, Clarkson extended his critique to the predicament of the seamen on the slave ships. He deployed the information he had gathered in Bristol and Liverpool to demonstrate that, in addition to being 'inhuman' and 'unjust'—as he had shown in the first *Essay*—the slave trade was also 'impolitick': it not only contravened the ethical standards expected of a Christian country but was also detrimental to the national interest. By showing that more humane treatment of the slaves would lead to an increased birth rate (and therefore to an end to the need for imports), that Africa, with its wealth of natural commodities, could be opened up commercially to provide a growing market for British goods, and—in particular—that the slave trade was a cemetery for British seamen, Clarkson hoped to persuade MPs, planters and merchants it was actually in their interest to abolish the trade.

It was this last strand in the 'impolicy' argument—the mortality rate of the seamen—which Coleridge seized on for his lecture, devoting as much as one-seventh to the plight of the slave ship crew. Twice acknowledging Clarkson as his source, he cited virtually verbatim from *Impolicy*, focusing on the pages dealing with the duplicitous methods of recruitment, the misleading articles of agreement, the high death toll and the shocking state of the survivors.

Coleridge began with the 'extraordinary Temptations' employed to lure reluctant seamen onto a slave ship. The first of these was money: 'The wages, which able seamen receive in this Trade, are very considerably greater than in any other'—for example, the West Indies or East Indies trades.¹¹ He was referring to Clarkson's observation that experienced slave-ship crewmen were paid 'from thirty to forty shillings per month' and 'two months advance-money', compared with the 'thirty to thirty-five shillings per month' and 'one month's advance-money' paid in other trades.¹²

Coleridge devoted more space to a second 'Temptation': alcohol. He copied into his lecture Clarkson's account of the role played by devious local publicans in pressuring seamen onto a slave ship. The abolitionist had been guided by the

¹¹ LPR, 237.

¹² *Impolicy*, 35. The monthly wage of 30-40s. appears to compare well with the 24s. then paid to an able seaman in the Royal Navy and also—if a food allowance worth perhaps 12s. is included—with the 9s. a week of an agricultural labourer. But half of their earnings was usually paid in debased West Indian currency, meaning that they actually ended up with less than seamen in other trades.

landlord of the ‘Seven Stars’ on nocturnal expeditions into the public houses lining Bristol’s Marsh Street. He had discovered that many of the publicans were in league with the slave merchants and slaver mates, lured by the offer of a promissory note for the seamen’s advance wages:

These [landlords], having a general knowledge of the ships and seamen in the port, and being always on the look out, intice such as are more unwary or in greater distress than the rest into their houses. They entertain them with musick and dancing, and keep them in an intoxicated state for some time. In the interim the slave merchant comes, and makes his application. The unfortunate men are singled out; are perhaps taken from a dance. Their bill is immediately brought them. They are *said* to be more in debt, than even two months advance-money will discharge. They have therefore an offer made them, a *slave-vessel—or a goal* [gaol].¹³

Once the seamen had been forced on board the slave ship they were made to sign the articles of agreement governing their employment—often at times when they were busy about the ship. Most of them could not even read the articles and were capable only of scratching a clumsy cross next to their names. Clarkson cited four ‘iniquitous’ examples of these articles unique to the slave trade. Coleridge focused on two of them: the first had the seamen believe they were being employed ‘in his *Majesty’s* service’ (rather than ‘in the Merchants['] service’) and could therefore be subjected to ‘the most savage Punishments’ by the ship’s officers, such as a flogging with the ‘cat’—a legal instrument in the Royal Navy only; the second threatened crewmen with a £50 fine (c. £7,000 today) if they took their grievances to court before consulting the officers or owners of the ship.¹⁴

Coleridge ended his foray into the plight of the seamen with the principal plank in Clarkson’s *Impolicy* platform—his statistical demonstration that the slave trade was a ‘grave’ rather than a ‘nursery *for our seamen*’, destroying ‘more in *one* year, than *all the other* trades . . . destroy in *two*’.¹⁵ He cited Clarkson’s finding that ‘Every [slave] vessel from the port of Bristol loses . . . almost a fourth of the whole crew’—ten times as many as ships in the West Indian sugar trade.¹⁶ Of the 5,000 slave-trade seamen on Clarkson’s records for 1786, 1,125 (over one-fifth) had been ‘upon the *dead* list’—most of them the victims of the mosquito-borne diseases, yellow fever and malaria, contracted during the long wait for slaves on the African coast.

There were two further categories of slaver crew ‘lost to the service of this country’, Coleridge reminds us. The first included those who deserted or were discharged as sickly or surplus labour after the slaves had been landed in the West Indies.¹⁷ Some of these seamen—‘rather shadows in their appearance than

¹³ *Impolicy*, 36–7; quoted *variatim*, *LPR*, 237.

¹⁴ *LPR*, 238.

¹⁵ *Impolicy*, 53–4.

¹⁶ *Impolicy*, 57; *LPR*, 238.

¹⁷ *Impolicy*, 59.

men’—died in the hospitals there; others, who had sought relief in the local rum, descended into dereliction. Known as ‘wharfingers’ or ‘scowbankers’ or ‘beach horners’ because they haunted the wharves and beaches of the Caribbean islands, they begged from door to door, ‘dying daily in an ulcerated state’, often the victims of scurvy.¹⁸ Witnesses recounted seeing their corpses carried to the cemetery by the very slaves they had guarded on the Middle Passage, where they were buried alongside the African dead. The second additional category of the ‘lost’ consisted of the crewmen who had returned to England ‘generally incapacitated for future service by a complication of Disorder[s] contracted from the very nature of the Voyage’—the injuries and swellings caused by brutal treatment, blindness, scurvy, rheumatism and oedema.¹⁹ Coleridge copied in Clarkson’s estimate that, if all three categories were added together, ‘by the prosecution of the Slave Trade in the year 1786, not less than 1950 seamen [almost two-fifths of the total] were lost to the service of this Country.’²⁰

Southey’s Contribution: the Slaves

Coleridge now turned his attention to the more obvious victims of the slave trade—the slaves themselves. Here he had sought help: Southey wrote the section of the lecture text dealing with the plight of the transported Africans—a contribution accounting for over a quarter of the manuscript.²¹ He had early been an opponent of the slave trade, composing poems on the issue while still at Westminster School. As a Balliol undergraduate he gave up his beloved ‘gooseberry pye’, laden with West Indian sugar, and wrote the six sonnets published as ‘Poems on the Slave Trade’. Coleridge had praised the first of them, ‘Hold your mad hands!’, as ‘a noble Burst of Poetry’. The sonnet denounces ‘the pale fiend, cold-hearted Commerce’ and calls on the slave traders’ ‘bark of anguish’ to be plunged deep into the ocean; it recapitulates a fierce demand for retribution which runs right through his poems on the issue. While Southey was collaborating with Coleridge in their College Street lodgings on ‘Joan of Arc’ and other shorter poems he composed a 66-line sequel to the sonnets: ‘To the Genius of Africa’ calls on the ‘Avenging Power’ to ‘awake! arise!’ and unleash its hurricanes and storms to wreak vengeance for the horrors inflicted on its ‘children’ by ‘the Daemon COMMERCE’. Coleridge described it as almost ‘perfect’ and would later tell Clarkson that his own claim to have written on the slave trade was ‘evanescent when compared with Robert Southey’s’.²²

His substantial contribution to the lecture was essentially a labour of transcription and condensation of material from four sources. The first was *A*

¹⁸ *Impolicy*, 61; LPR, 238-9.

¹⁹ *Impolicy*, 62-3; LPR, 239.

²⁰ *Impolicy*, 63; LPR, 239.

²¹ LPR, 233.

²² CL I 146, 78, 290; CL III 78; *Poems* (Bristol and London, 1797), 33, 39-43; *Robert Southey: Poetical Works 1793-1810*, gen. ed. Lynda Pratt, 5 vols (London: Pickering and Chatto, 2004), V, *Selected Shorter Poems c. 1793-1810*, 49-50, #17.1, 54-6, #18.

particular account of the commencement and progress of the insurrection of the Negroes in St. Domingo, a translation of a 1791 address to the French National Assembly by six deputies representing planters on Saint-Domingue, the wealthy French colony which had just experienced a bloody slave revolt. In this pamphlet, sponsored by the London Society of West India Planters and Merchants, the deputies catalogued the atrocities perpetrated against the whites on Saint-Domingue's sugar and coffee estates by the 'uncivilized and ferocious men' driving the August 1791 slave uprising, an event which sent shockwaves through the plantations on neighbouring Jamaica. Responsibility for the carnage and destruction rested, they claimed, with the *Société des Amis des Noirs*, the French counterpart of the Abolition Society.

Southey cites a paragraph halfway through the deputies' address which puts forward a familiar anti-abolition argument: if the French abolished the slave trade their share would be taken up by other countries and their profits 'transferred to foreigners'. Coleridge here inserts his own reminder that the English slave trade lobby had deployed precisely the same argument in relation to the French: 'It is with nations as with individuals—Somebody must begin!'²³

Southey's second source was Carl Bernhard Wadström's *An essay on colonization*, the heavy quarto volume Coleridge had borrowed in Southey's name from the King Street library the day before his lecture. The author, a Swedish mining engineer, follower of Swedenborg and 'a zealous friend to the Africans', was a prominent figure in abolitionist circles. He advocated the establishment of enlightened 'agricultural colonies' on the coast where Europeans could assist Africans to cultivate sugar cane, tobacco, cotton, indigo and other natural products.

With only a day to spend on Wadström's 559 pages Southey deployed one paragraph on his observation, influenced by the Scottish legal thinker Lord Kames's *Sketches of the history of man*, that Africans, rather like many European peasants, acquired 'an acuteness of intellect' as a result of having to practise a wide range of trades: 'Each individual or family . . . spins, weaves, sews, hunts, fishes, and makes baskets, fishing-tackle and implements of agriculture.' The European 'artificer' or 'mechanic', on the other hand, 'to whom the division of labour . . . has assigned *one, simple* operation . . . forging horse-shoes, making nails, or burnishing buttons', was condemned to becoming 'a kind of live machine' in which the 'intellect lies dormant'.²⁴

Southey devoted the bulk of his contribution to the plight of the Africans after they had been enslaved by Europeans—the way in which they were procured, their treatment during the Middle Passage, their separation and sale upon arrival in the West Indies, the two or three years of 'seasoning' on the plantations, the system of gang labour and the derisory penalties attached to their murder. His third and fourth sources here were Clarkson's *Abstract* of the pro-abolition evidence presented to a Commons select committee in 1790 and

²³ Jean-Baptiste Millet et al., *A particular account of the commencement and progress of the insurrection of the Negroes in St. Domingo* . . . , 2nd ed. (London, 1792), 12; LPR, 239-40; SWF I 32-3.

²⁴ Wadström, *Essay*, 23, 16, 17, 18, 18n.; LPR, 240.

1791 and—his principal aid—*Considerations on the slave trade*, a short pamphlet by Thomas Cooper, a radical Manchester chemist and lawyer.

Clarkson's *Abstract* was available in the King Street library and Southey drew on it to describe the horrors of the 40- or 50- day voyage to the West Indies: slaves were 'brought up dead in the morning' after being suffocated by 'the hot & pestilent vapours' on the crammed and foul lower decks—so noxious that 'the very timbers of the vessel are rotted by them'; some Africans choked themselves 'by throwing back their tongues so <as> effectually to prevent respiration' while others refused to eat, earning a flogging or the thumb screw; the slaves were made to 'dance' in their irons in the afternoons 'and flogged if they refuse'; sometimes they were heard to sing—but 'their songs were songs of lamentation.'²⁵

Thomas Cooper, the author of Southey's principal source, *Considerations on the slave trade; and the consumption of West Indian produce*, had been a member of the Manchester abolition committee and had spearheaded the Manchester Constitutional Society's campaign for parliamentary reform. In 1793 Cooper joined the swarms of settlers and dissidents emigrating to America where he lived alongside the family of his close friend, the scientist and Dissenter Joseph Priestley, on the banks of the Susquehanna. *Considerations* was one of a number of pamphlets written to support the sugar abstention campaign launched following the defeat of Wilberforce's 1791 abolition motion. Cooper drew the bulk of his material—often cited verbatim—from the radical French historian the Abbé Raynal, the Quaker Anthony Benezet, the Methodist leader John Wesley and Thomas Clarkson.²⁶

Southey draws on *Considerations* to illustrate the methods used by European ships to acquire their cargoes of slaves on the Guinea coast. He copies from Cooper's description, drawn from journals kept by ships' surgeons, of two examples of a 'grand pillage'—the practice whereby African kings, often driven by their thirst for the Europeans' brandy and rum, would send hundreds or even thousands of soldiers to attack a large town for the purpose of capturing slaves. Southey then makes his way through *Considerations* page by page, often copying snippets verbatim, as he describes the intrusive physical examinations of the slaves shipped from the African coast, the brandings, the heart-rending separation of families, the arduous two-year 'seasoning', the 16-hours-a-day gang labour on the cane plantations and the night-time tending of the sugar mills.

Coleridge on Family Separation and Consumer Guilt

Coleridge also mined *Considerations*, focusing on Cooper's portrayal of the agony of the family separations caused by the slave trade: 'Parents are dragged from their families; children from the arms of their parents; husbands and

²⁵ [Rev. Thomas Johnes], *A catalogue of the books belonging to the Bristol Library Society* . . . (Bristol, 1798), 1; *An abstract of the evidence delivered before a select committee of the House of Commons, in the years 1790 and 1791* . . . , 2nd ed. (London, 1792), 34-5, 38-9, 42, 32, 33; LPR, 241-2.

²⁶ See Tim May, 'Coleridge's slave trade lecture: Southey's contribution and the debt to Thomas Cooper', *Notes and Queries*, 55 (4), December 2008, 425-9.

wives forced asunder.²⁷ He asks his listeners to recollect that the slaves seized from the African coast had been ‘torn from the bleeding breast of domestic affection, that each one had Wives, Brethren, Sons and Daughters’—and, in a nod to the ‘joyful return to Africa’ theme of his 1792 Browne Medal Greek ode, entreats the audience to recall that a slave’s ‘greatest Transport was at the moment when his fellow Slaves danced around him a congratulatory Dance of Death.’²⁸ Coleridge himself had known what it was to be torn from the ‘bleeding breast’ of his family in Devon as a young boarder at Christ’s Hospital—where the spartan and often brutal regime under the tyrannical flogging headmaster James Boyer must have seemed like that of a slave ship in the imaginations of many pupils. He may also have been influenced by *Slavery, a poem*, published seven years earlier by Hannah More, the Bristol-based Evangelical social reformer who was a close friend of Wilberforce and an early sugar abstainer. *Slavery* was bound up in a volume of ‘Poetical Tracts’ Coleridge had borrowed from the King Street library three months before his lecture.²⁹ More lamented that whenever she turned her eyes to Africa she saw: ‘The shrieking babe, the agonizing wife! . . . /The fibres twisting round a parent’s heart /Torn from their grasp, and bleeding as they part.’³⁰

Who then was responsible for the searing pain endured by these separated families? ‘Who’, Coleridge furiously demands, ‘are they that have joined in this Tartarean confederacy? where are these detested Kidnappers, Tyrants, Assassins who have done all this wrong—who have . . . first racked and then killed 180,000,000 men?’ He arrives at the same answer as Cooper—they are the consumers of the products of slave labour, such as sugar and rum: ‘the first and constantly acting cause of the Slave Trade—that cause by which it exists and without which it would immediately die . . . [is] self-evidently the consumption of its Products! and does not then the Guilt rest on the Consumers?’³¹ And, like Cooper also, Coleridge stresses that this guilt attaches to every single person involved in the slave trade: ‘is it not an allowed axiom in Morality That Wickedness may be multiplied but cannot be divided and that the Guilt of all attaches to each one who is knowingly an accomplice?’³²

This guilt extended to parliament. Here Coleridge was scathing: Wilberforce’s 1792 bill had been ‘mangled and mutilated’ by Dundas’s amendment requiring ‘gradual’ abolition and was now ‘dying in the House of Lords’: ‘a Body that assumes titles superior to that of Man,’ he quipped, ‘seems best adapted for the infamy of finally crushing it.’ He poured scorn on the ‘Princes, Dukes, & Earls’, singling out the Duke of Clarence, the future William IV: during the Lords debate on Wilberforce’s bill he had actually

²⁷ Thomas Cooper, *Considerations on the slave trade; and the consumption of West Indian produce* (London, 1791), 14.

²⁸ LPR, 247. See Tim May, ‘Coleridge’s slave trade ode and Bowles’s *The African*’, *Notes and Queries*, 55 (4), December 2007, 504–9.

²⁹ Whalley, ‘Bristol Library borrowings’, 119.

³⁰ Hannah More, *Slavery, a poem* (London, 1788), ll. 100, 109–10.

³¹ LPR, 247; cf. Cooper, *Considerations*, 12–13.

³² LPR, 247.

‘made his maiden speech in favour of the Slave Trade!’³³

Coleridge then turned his fire to the prime minister. He had already let fly with earlier broadsides at Pitt’s prosecution of the war with France, denouncing him for betraying the pacifist principles he had endorsed during the American war. In a February lecture he had warned that Pitt’s warmongering had earned him a role in a hellish Eucharist: ‘Heaven hath . . . given him an actual presence in the Sacraments of Hell, wherever administered, in all the bread of bitterness, in all the cups of blood.’³⁴

Pitt’s stance on the slave trade, however, was a more difficult target for he had been outspoken in favour of immediate abolition on several occasions. Coleridge’s case against him was this: if the prime minister commanded a parliamentary majority and if he were ‘really the zealous friend of Abolition’, why then had Wilberforce’s 1792 bill made such slow progress? The answer given by Pitt’s allies was that the Cabinet was divided on the issue—as Dundas’s ‘gradualist’ stance showed—and abolition could not therefore become a government measure. But ministers had been unanimous, Coleridge pointed out, on several ‘violent and unpopular measures’, such as the 1794 Habeas Corpus Suspension Act. ‘Our Representatives’, he jibed, were far less used to undoing fetters than they were to fastening them on—something they did ‘with an ease and rapidity which might have astonished the oldest Turnkey in Newgate’. Parliament, he concluded, could not provide a remedy: ‘the Legislature . . . ought never to have been applied to.’³⁵ Twenty-three years later he would throw all his energy into the elder Sir Robert Peel’s campaign to secure the passage of a bill regulating the working hours and age of employment of ‘the poor little white slaves’ toiling in the Lancashire cotton mills.³⁶ But in 1795 he regarded Wilberforce’s attempts to pass a law ending the trade in black slaves as superfluous. ‘What you can do for yourself,’ he contended, citing ‘the old Proverb’, ‘never ask another to do for you.’³⁷

Sugar Abstention

What British people could do in this instance, Coleridge argued, was to abstain from sugar and rum. In Cooper’s *Considerations* he would have come across an extract from William Fox’s *An address to the people of Great Britain*, a slim pamphlet running to 26 editions and 100,000 copies in which the Holborn bookseller chalked out some chillingly precise mathematics: ‘in every pound of sugar used . . . we may be considered as consuming two ounces of human flesh.’ Fox calculated that if 38,000 families were to abstain from their weekly five pounds of sugar and a proportionate quantity of rum for 19½ years the slave trade would be terminated. It was the consumer who was ‘the original

³³ LPR, 244. The royal duke, who knew the West Indies well from his long naval service there, had assured his fellow peers that ‘when the various ranks of society were considered’ the slaves on the islands were ‘comparatively in a state of humble happiness’ (*Parliamentary History*, xxix, 1349–50).

³⁴ LPR, 74.

³⁵ LPR, 246.

³⁶ See Tim May, ‘S. T. Coleridge: the 1818 child labour pamphlets’, *Notes and Queries*, 49 (1), March 2002, 30–1.

³⁷ LPR, 246.

cause, the first mover in the horrid process' of slavery; the slave-dealer, the slave-holder and the slave-driver were simply 'the agents of the consumer'.³⁸

Coleridge breathed new life into this abstention argument. He agreed with Fox and Cooper that the consumption of slave products was 'the first and constantly acting cause of the Slave Trade' and that 'the guilt of all' attached to every individual consumer. Even though parliament had proved ineffectual, he contended, the miseries of the trade could be avoided if 'one tenth part only of you [who] profess yourselves Christians were to leave off not all the West India Commodities but only Sugar and Rum—the one useless and the latter pernicious'.³⁹

The argument did have considerable economic force. In the year of Coleridge's lecture Britain imported over 100,000 tons of unrefined brown muscovado sugar and almost two million gallons of rum from the West Indies, representing some three-quarters of the £4.1 million imports from the islands. Sugar alone accounted for almost all the customs duty paid on West Indian imports and for more than one-third of the national customs total.⁴⁰ Large-scale abstention would obviously result in the government losing a colossal amount of revenue. During the early stages of the abstention campaign Thomas Clarkson had reported a £200,000 drop in a single quarter.⁴¹ But any decline in consumption would do little to affect the profitability of the plantations directly by lowering the sugar price itself. The 1791 Saint-Domingue slave revolt and the sudden end to sugar production in the wealthy French colony meant that prices rose sharply and that British sugar was assured of a ready market in the rest of Europe.

Alongside the pragmatic tactical reasoning there was another more gory strand to the abstention argument: to consume sugar was to consume slave blood. Fox's *Address* had left this at a figurative level: sugar was 'steeped in the blood of our fellow-creatures'.⁴² Benjamin Flower, the Dissenting Cambridge newspaper editor who published the Pantisocrats' play *The Fall of Robespierre* and several of their early poems, asked 'THE LADIES'—'formed to feel, *more* than the men are'—how they could 'continue morning and evening, to sweeten their tea, and the tea of their families and visitors, with the blood of their fellow creatures'.⁴³ Southey had berated 'ye who at your ease / Sip the blood-sweetened beverage' in one of his slave trade sonnets.⁴⁴ In a follow-up to Fox's

³⁸ William Fox, *An address to the people of Great Britain, on the propriety of abstaining from West India sugar and rum*, 5th ed. (Birmingham, 1792), 4; Cooper, *Considerations*, 12-13.

³⁹ LPR, 247, 248. Coleridge was wrong to condemn sugar as 'useless'. At a time of freezing winters and failing harvests sugared tea was an essential source of calories for someone he had championed in an earlier address — the impoverished agricultural labourer. David Davies, a Berkshire rector, noted that in 1787 labouring families in his parish were spending as much as ten pence out of their weekly earnings of eight or nine shillings on tea and sugar alone (*The case of labourers in husbandry* . . . (London, 1795), 8-13, 18-19, 38, 39).

⁴⁰ Hence Coleridge's punning reference in the title of his slave trade lecture to 'the duties that result from its continuance'.

⁴¹ Thomas Clarkson, January 9, 1792, *Correspondence of Josiah Wedgwood, 1781-1794* (London, 1906), 186.

⁴² Fox, *Address*, 1.

⁴³ Benjamin Flower, *The French Constitution* . . . 2nd ed., (London, 1792), 452-3.

⁴⁴ *Poems* (1797), 35; *Poetical Works* (2004), V, 51, #17.3, ll. 9-10.

Address Major-General Andrew Burn stepped up the shock tactics and entirely abandoned the language of metaphor. He invited his readers to consider that the sugar they added to their ‘Puddings, Pies, Tarts, Tea’ actually contained blood and ‘nauseous effluvia’ which had dripped off the sweating bodies of the Africans as they trod down the drained cane residue—‘for nothing is more common than to observe little hard lumps among it, of a darker hue than the rest.’⁴⁵

British consumers of sugar and rum, in other words, were cannibals. The barbaric practices which had been attributed, most notoriously, to the kings of Dahomey, with their rites of human sacrifice and roofs and walls adorned with skulls—and which, the slave trade lobby argued, fully justified yanking Africans from their native land—were now seen to characterise supposedly ‘civilised’ Europeans. Coleridge invited his Assembly Room listeners to confront this reversal of the conventional opposition between savagery and civilisation. When they got up to say Grace before their meals, he asked, how could they possibly ask God to bless food which had been ‘sweetened with the blood of the Murdered’:

Bless the Food which thou hast given us! O Blasphemy! Did God give
Food mingled with Brothers blood! Will the Father of all men bless the
Food of Cannibals—the food which is polluted with the blood of his
own innocent Children?

If Jesus—‘the inspired Philanthropist of Galilee’—were to return to this world and re-appear at the Cana wedding feast described in St John’s Gospel he would do more than change water into wine—he would turn sugar and rum into blood: Christ would ‘convert the produce into the things producing, the occasioned into the things occasioning’. Through the agency of ‘truth-painting imagination’ his audience would be able to perceive ‘sweetmeats’ and ‘Music’ as they really were, stripped of their disguise: they would be eating the ‘Tears and Blood, and Anguish’ of the slaves and listening to their ‘groaning and the loud Peals of the Lash’ on the Africans’ backs.⁴⁶ Here Coleridge foreshadows Marx’s analysis of commodity fetishism: what seems to be a relationship between things is really the product of a relationship between people.

Coleridge’s Christ and the Golden Rule

Christ and the New Testament lay at the heart of Coleridge’s Bristol lectures and of his early stance on the slave trade. His Christianity was the Unitarian ‘Religion of the meek and lowly Jesus’ as opposed to the Anglican ‘Religion of Mitres and Mysteries . . . of Pluralities and Persecution’, of ‘Eighteen-Thousand-Pound-a-Year’ bishops who voted for continuing the bloody war with France. His Christ was not the abstract union of ‘the Godhead and manhood’ of the ‘Thirty-Nine Articles’ but the very human figure envisaged by

⁴⁵ [Major-General Andrew Burn], *A second address to the people of Great Britain* . . . , 2nd ed. (London, 1792), 7–8.

⁴⁶ *LPR*, 248.

the Unitarians in his audience.⁴⁷ In the third of his lectures on ‘revealed religion’, delivered in the same coffee house three weeks earlier, Coleridge had presented a human being capable of great affection and deep sorrow: ‘Jesus was a Son, and he cast the Eye of Tenderness and careful regard on his Mother Mary, even while agonizing on the Cross. Jesus was a Friend and he wept at the Tomb of Lazarus.’

For Coleridge, Christ provided a model for how the ‘home-born’ feelings within a family could provide a foundation for true ‘benevolence’ and for our love of friends, neighbours, country, humankind and—ultimately—God. Here he was turning his back on an earlier mentor, William Godwin, and the ‘Stoical Morality’ set out in his *Enquiry concerning political justice*. He now denounced Godwin both for his atheism and for basing his evaluation of gratitude, benevolence and family feelings on narrowly rational criteria rather than on the bedrock of how human beings actually think and feel. Godwin’s ‘Principles’, he emphasised, were very different from ‘the precepts of Jesus’: the latter were ‘mild and full of Love’, even though they were also uncompromising with respect to ‘our Vices or our Follies’.⁴⁸

One of the most important of these precepts was the ‘Golden Rule’ of the Sermon on the Mount. Addressing those in his audience who ‘independently of all political distinctions, profess themselves Christian’, Coleridge asked them to recall Christ’s teaching: ‘you are commanded to do unto others as ye would that others should do unto you.’⁴⁹ He was not of course the first to apply this rule to the slave trade: both Quaker abolitionists, such as George Fox and Anthony Benezet, and non-Quakers, such as Joseph Priestley and Olaudah Equiano, invoked the precept. Coleridge would have read Cooper’s appeal in *Considerations* to ‘all who are in truth the disciples of that master, who commands his followers to do to others, as they would that others should do to them.’⁵⁰

In his own vivid illustration of the Golden Rule Coleridge gets his audience to imagine the stark horror of being snatched from their native land and shipped to the plantations:

Would you choose that Slave Merchants should incite an intoxicated Chieftain to make War on your Tribe to murder your Wife and Children before your face and drag them with yourself to the Market—Would you choose to be sold, to have the hot iron hiss upon your breast, to be thrown down into the hold of a ship ironed with so many fellow victims so closely crammed together that the heat and stench arising from your diseased bodies should rot the very planks of the Ship? Would you choose to work sixteen hours a day to procure foolish Luxuries for others and be repaid for it with a red herring?⁵¹

⁴⁷ LPR, 66-7.

⁴⁸ LPR, 163, 165.

⁴⁹ LPR, 247.

⁵⁰ Cooper, *Considerations*, 15.

⁵¹ LPR, 247-8.

Coleridge here confronts the arguments of the slave trade lobby by concentrating on the particular and the concrete rather than on the general and the abstract—an approach which would also characterise his 1818 crusade in support of legislation regulating child labour in the Lancashire cotton mills.⁵² His assault on the slave trade involved painting in the actual sufferings of the seamen and slaves rather than appealing to abstract natural rights in the manner of many abolitionists.

The Bristol Coleridge did of course have a conception of human rights: a contemporary observer of his lectures praised him for having done ‘in public what none had the courage in this city to do before,—he told Men they have Rights.’⁵³ But Coleridge’s notion of rights derived not from a political philosophy based on natural law but from the teachings of Christ. The Christian religion, he declared in a letter written the following year to his atheist friend John Thelwall, ‘certainly teaches in the most explicit terms the rights of Man, his right to Wisdom, his right to an equal share in all the blessings of Nature.’⁵⁴

Coleridge’s position in 1795 was this: although Christ did not specifically condemn slavery, the principles embedded in his teachings entailed its abolition. In a letter written to his clergyman brother George a few weeks before he left Cambridge for Bristol he explained his position as follows:

I have been asked what is the best conceivable mode of meliorating Society—My Answer has been uniformly this—‘Slavery is an Abomination to every feeling of the Head and the Heart—Did Jesus teach the *Abolition* of it? No! He taught those principles of which the necessary effect was—to abolish all Slavery. He prepared the *mind* for the reception before he poured the Blessing—.[’]⁵⁵

Abolition of Property

One of the principles entailing abolition was the Golden Rule he had portrayed so vividly in his slave trade lecture. Another such principle was Christ’s prohibition of private property. A slave of course was a chattel—moveable property: to prohibit property was to forbid the holding of slaves. Coleridge did not explicitly articulate the link between the two but it is implicit in his conception of property at that time.

A ‘System of no Property’—‘Aspheterism’, as he and Southey termed it—had formed the nucleus of the Pantisocracy scheme they had debated with such enthusiasm in the summer of 1794. Godwin had supplied much of the

⁵² cf. ‘Generalities are apt to deceive us. Individualize the sufferings which it is the object of this Bill to remedy’ (*Remarks on the objections* . . . (London, 1818), SWF I 722).

⁵³ *The Observer, Part 1st. Being a transient glance at about forty youths of Bristol* . . . (Bristol, 1795), 15.

⁵⁴ CL I 282.

⁵⁵ CL I 126. Compare this 1831 formulation: ‘The Gospel is a remedy for Corruptions in the Will . . . and darkness in the Reason . . . of Persons, of Individuals—It was not intended as a *direct* remedy for *Things*—and Institutions, *States* of Society, &c are *Things*—& therefore excluded from a *Spiritual* agency. . . . Slavery—i.e. the perversion of a Person into a Thing—is contrary to the Spirit of Christianity’ (*M* VI 28-9).

inspiration: in a projected 'book of Pantisocracy' Coleridge intended to include 'all that is good in Godwin'—in particular, the concept of 'Justice' articulated in his *Enquiry*, according to which 'the Good of the whole is the Good of each Individ[ua]l'. He also drew from Hartley's emphasis on familial relations and on the role of 'necessity'—the deterministic notion, developed further by Godwin, according to which human behaviour is the product of social circumstances. 'The leading Idea of Pantisocracy', declared Coleridge, 'is to make men *necessarily* virtuous by removing all Motives to Evil.' The principal 'Motive to Evil' was private property.

Slave-holding, like any form of property ownership, was clearly incompatible with the Pantisocratic order. In Coleridge's view servants also would be excluded. Here he clashed with Southey, who during their pre-Bristol discussions had talked of his plans to bring along his manservant Shadrach Weeks and family. Coleridge was particularly outraged by his fellow Pantisocrat's suggestion that, while these servants might dine with them and be treated equally in all other respects, they would have to see to the manual work while the better-educated Pantisocrats pursued 'philosophical Studies'. 'A *willing Slave*', declared Coleridge, 'is the worst of Slaves—His *Soul* is a Slave.'⁵⁶ By the time Coleridge came to deliver his Bristol lectures Godwin and the 'book of Pantisocracy' had been replaced by Christ and the New Testament. Godwin had not insisted on the abolition of property—only on its more equitable distribution.⁵⁷ Joseph Priestley, Coleridge's 'Patriot, and Saint, and Sage', believed that Christian principles entailed equal rights but not common ownership—as his dabblings in French government bonds and American land illustrated: 'there never was any obligation on christians', he averred, '... to *throw their goods into common*.'⁵⁸ John Thelwall, regarded as the most Jacobinical of the defendants in the 1794 high treason trials, took equality to mean 'the equality of rights, not of property'.⁵⁹

Coleridge, on the other hand, insisted that Christ's teachings involved the total abolition of property. In his final address 'on revealed religion', delivered only a few days before his slave trade lecture, he followed up his assault on commerce and luxury with a demonstration, backed by a battery of Gospel references, that Christ had demanded more than mere 'Equalization of Property': 'I have asserted that Jesus Christ forbids to his disciples all property—and teaches us that accumulation was incompatible with their Salvation!'⁶⁰

Coleridge's perspective on property would change radically. But his concern with slavery—with what it was for an enslaved human being to exist without hope, to be treated as a thing rather than as a person—persisted throughout his life. In June 1833, as he approached his final year and as Parliament prepared

⁵⁶ CL I 90, 115, 114, 122.

⁵⁷ William Godwin, *An enquiry concerning political justice* . . . , 2 vols (London, 1793), II, 790-1.

⁵⁸ CL I 98; Joseph Priestley, *Letters to the Right Honourable Edmund Burke* . . . , 2nd ed. (Birmingham, 1791), 77.

⁵⁹ John Thelwall, *Peaceful discussion and not tumultuary violence* . . . (London, 1795), 14.

⁶⁰ LPR, 228, 226-7.

to enact the emancipation of Britain's 775,000 slaves, he pencilled some notes in a shaky hand into a digest of Commons select committee evidence.⁶¹ It had been sent him by Thomas Pringle, the Scottish poet and secretary of the Anti-Slavery Society. When the parliamentary debates were under way Coleridge wrote to Pringle from his sick-bed, insisting that, despite his reservations about the legislation as a route to true freedom, he had been 'an ardent & almost life-long Denouncer of Slavery.'⁶²



This painting (1760-85) of Bristol's Broad Quay is attributed to Philip Vandyke, a Dutch artist who settled in the city. It shows the celebrated forest of masts lining the River Frome—belonging to ships which had negotiated the difficult seven-mile passage down the Avon from the Bristol Channel. The dockside crane depicted unloaded their cargoes of Irish linen and meat, Baltic iron and timber, Mediterranean wine, sherry and wool, North American tobacco, rice and pitch—and the sugar, rum, pimento, ginger, dyewoods, mahogany, indigo and coffee produced by African slaves in the West Indies. These imports and the goods exported in exchange (copper and brass ware,

⁶¹ *Analysis of the report of a committee of the House of Commons on the extinction of slavery* . . . (London, 1833); M I 31-6.

⁶² CL VI 940.

glass, pottery, bricks, soap, spirits, gunpowder, lime and refined sugar) were transported on sledges to avoid damaging underground storage cellars. Huge hogsheads of coarse brown muscovado sugar were carried in this way to the city's 15 sugar refineries. The person wearing a wig and frock coat (centre bottom)—probably a free black, unlike the Nevis planter and sugar merchant John Pinney's slave-servant Pero—appears to be pointing out the destination for what may be puncheons of rum made from the sugar residue (molasses).

The sugar and rum were the focus of the evening lecture on the slave trade Coleridge delivered on 16 June 1795 at the Assembly Coffee-House on Narrow Quay, a short walk south from the scene in the painting. Coleridge had advertised his address in the previous day's *Bristol Mercury* (see over: first column, top). The source of the 'para[t]jicular desire' was probably his tanner friend, Tom Poole. He was a fierce opponent of the slave trade and refused to use slave products, regaling Coleridge with honey pie and entering into a pact with his brother-in-law Thomas King, an African merchant, whereby he would give up his beloved snuff for a year if King gave up sugar.

At the bottom of the *Mercury's* second column are two advertisements for auction sales of puncheons of rum imported from Jamaica. Along with cotton checks, iron bars, woollen cloth, brass and copper ware, guns, gunpowder, tobacco, cowrie shells and Venetian glass beads, slave ships included large quantities of rum and brandy in the cargo they carried to the west coast of Africa and traded for slaves. Driven by their appetite for these goods, African kings would often embark on a 'grand pillage', sending hundreds or even thousands of soldiers to attack a large town—on their own or on enemy territory—for the purpose of capturing slaves. Southey's contribution to Coleridge's lecture includes an extract from a surgeon's journal describing how the brandy-crazed King of Barsally (in Gambia) responded to a captain's request for slaves by fighting a bloody three-day battle which claimed 4,500 lives (*LPR*, 241). A contemporary account describes how the king would set fire to towns at night and seize the inhabitants as they tried to escape the flames, marching them to the coast for sale to European traders. 'Lesser pillages' involved private raids on smaller towns and villages by bands of 20 or 30 warriors. Slaves were also procured through smaller-scale 'panyarring' (kidnapping). The abolitionist Thomas Clarkson estimated that these sources accounted for four-fifths of the Africans exported to the West Indies and North America, thereby rebutting the anti-abolition argument that the majority of slaves were convicts or prisoners taken in wars unconnected with the slave trade.

In the year of Coleridge's lecture almost 70,000 Africans were shipped to the Americas—over one-third of them in British vessels. During the 18th and 19th centuries the slave-trading nations embarked close to 10.5 million slaves from the west coast of Africa—only 9 million of whom survived the voyage known as the 'Middle Passage'. They were the residue of a much larger figure—the 21 million actually captured in the African interior. The damage to the demographic fabric of the continent was immense: according to one

estimate, the 1850 African population of some 111 million was only 5 million up on the figure for 1750 and down from 13.4 to 8.8 percent of the world total; it was perhaps half what it would have been without the slave trade.

TO-MORROW EVENING, Tuesday, June 16,
S. T. COLERIDGE,
 Will deliver (by particular desire)
A LECTURE on the SLAVE TRADE,
 and the duties that result from its continuance.
 To begin at Eight o'clock, at the **ASSEMBLY**
COFFEE-HOUSE, on the Quay. Admission 1s.

BOUNTY ON FISH.
 THE MAGISTRATES of this City hereby give notice, that in consequence of, and to reduce the present high Price of Provisions, they will pay a Bounty of **TWO SHILLINGS per Hundred Weight, on the first Hundred Tons of good mackerel and salted Sea Fish, (excepted) which shall be brought to the Clerk of the Market to be weighed, and exposed to open sale in the Fish-market of this City.**

WORRALL, Town-Clerk.
BRISTOL COUNCIL-HOUSE,
June 3, 1795.

COUNCIL-HOUSE, BRISTOL.
9th JUNE, 1795.

WHEREAS several evil-disposed Persons did on SATURDAY last, in a riotous manner, demand of the Magistrates of this City, that at such Prices as they should offer, and on refusal, they abused the Magistrates, and took their Malt from them, and did the same with the Malt in the Markets; And whereas the House of SAMUEL KINDON, situate near Blind Stairs, was, during such Tumults, and Riots, feloniously broken into, and the Doors, Windows, and Window-Shutters thereof destroyed;—The Magistrates hereby given, that all such Persons as are detected in committing the like Offences will be prosecuted, and the Butchers will be protected in offering their Malt for Sale in such manner as the Law directs.

THE MAGISTRATES were all such evil-disposed Persons, that the Office committed in the House of the said SAMUEL KINDON is capital, and the said Journal of the Offenders are now in custody.

By Order of the Mayor,
WORRALL, Town-Clerk.

STAMP-OFFICE,
BRISTOL, June 10, 1795.
 By Order of His Majesty's Commissioners of Stamps,
NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN,
 THAT all Persons who continue to wear HAIR-POWDER, without taking out a Certificate, shall be immediately informed against, and the penalty of **TWENTY POUNDS** levied, as directed by the Act.

This day is published,
 Price One Shilling and Six-pence,
A WORD IN SEASON,
 OR, A CALL to the INHABITANTS of GREAT-BRITAIN, to stand prepared for the consequences of the present war.
 By **J. BICHENO.**
 Also by the same Author, in two Parts, price One Shilling and Six-pence, the **SIGNS of the TIMES, &c.**
 London: Printed for the Author, and sold by P. Colman, Fleet-street; W. Knott, Lombard-street; W. Bland, Strand; Cottle and James, Bristol; Hazard, Lanes, Cambridge; March, Norwich; Langens, Leeds; Smeeth, Reading; Fuller, Newbury; and Belcher, Birmingham.

MAY 18, 1795.
ELIZABETH, Widow of the unfortunate
W. W. MARSHALL, who was burnt in the month of February last, on board the *Jason*, returns with sincere and grateful thanks for the liberal Sum of **£1000** bestowed on her by the following Members, Officers of the Customs, Ladies, and Others, who have afforded her a seasonable relief, and hopes that they will prove a means of supporting her and her children.

CLARE-STREET, No. 17,
OPPOSITE THE DRAW-BRIDGE.

T. HAWKINS respectfully informs his Friends and the Public, that he has just received a new and elegant Assortment of Goods in the **LINEN-DRAPERY LINE,**

Which will be found much cheaper than any yet offered for sale in this city. He particularly recommends the following Articles, being confident they will merit attention.

About 100 Pieces of new and elegant japanned and figured **MUSLINS** for Ladies' Dresses, from two to four shillings per yard under the regular prices. Curious **DECCA**, worked, for Dresses.

Real India **LONG CLOTHS, COSSAS, &c.** for ditto. **STRIPES** of all descriptions.

India **BOOKS, CRAFT MULLS, SIERHAUDS, SIERHAUDCONNEAS, SIERBETTS, TER-RINDAMS, ALLIBALLIES, JACCONOTS, &c. &c.**

CORDED DIMITIES, particularly cheap. A large assortment of **PRINTS, GINGHAMS, &c.** adapted to the season.

COUNTERPANES and Marfeller QUILTS. **FURNITURE CALICOES** from 1s. 6d. to 5s. per yard. **FINISH LINENS** of the best fabrics.

MODES and MODE CLOAKS, which for colour and durability cannot be exceeded.

BY ROYAL AUTHORITY.
 The most expeditious and safest mode of travelling to and from **BRISTOL to ENGLAND.**

THE ROYAL CANALINE.
A NEAT DILIGENCE, to carry THREE

inside Passengers, and ONE outside, will set out every morning at Six o'clock, from the **WHITE LION, Broad-street, Bristol**, and go through *Croft, Bridgewater, Taunton, and Honiton*, to **THOMPSON'S HOTEL, Exeter**.—*Parcels, &c.* carried on reasonable terms.

N. B. The Proprietors will not be answerable for any plate, jewels, or writings, more than Five Pounds value, unless entered as such and paid for accordingly.

The above **COACH** sets out from *Exeter* to *Falmouth* every morning at Five o'clock, and goes through *Oakhampton, Looe, St. Ives, Bedmin, and Truro.*

BRISTOL, June 12th, 1795.

A REPORT having been erroneously spread abroad, through some unfortunate mistake, that on weighing the butter of the several persons bringing it to the markets of this city, on Saturday last, the 6th of June inst. the Butter brought by **Mrs. MARY HOLDER, of Long-Ashton**, in the county of Somerset, was found short of weight: In justice to the character of the said **Mrs. HOLDER, WILLIAM LUDLOW, the Deputy Clerk of the Markets** in this city, hath made the following Affidavit:

Bristol, (to Wit.)
WILLIAM LUDLOW, of the city of Bristol, Gentleman, Deputy Clerk of the markets within the said city, maketh Oath and faith,—That on Saturday the 6th day of this inst. June, he, this deponent, by the order of the Mayor of the said city, weighed

FOR SALE BY AUCTION,
 At the **EXCHANGE COFFEE-HOUSE,**
 On **THURSDAY** the 18th inst. at Eleven o'clock in the Forenoon,
175 Puncheons Jamaica RUM,
 In suitable lots of 5 and 10 Puncheons each. Just Imported in the *Liberty from Jamaica*, of a most excellent quality, and now lying in the Bonded Warehouse.

Catalogues to be had and the Samples seen by applying to
T. WINWOOD, Broker.

FOR SALE BY AUCTION,
 At the **EXCHANGE COFFEE-HOUSE,**
 On **WEDNESDAY** the 17th inst. at Eleven o'clock in the forenoon,
69 Puncheons of prime stout Overproof JAMAICA RUM.
 Now lying in the Bonded Warehouse.
 * * * * * Samples and conditions to be seen the day preceding the sale, at the office of
J. BONBOUS, Broker.
Bristol, June 10, 1795.

BRISTOL, June 6, 1795.
FOR SALE BY AUCTION,
 By **J. FARGUS,**
 On **TUESDAY** and **WEDNESDAY** the 16th and 17th inst.—All the

STOCK IN TRADE
 Of the late **Mr. HUGH STRATTON, Carpenter** in the Old-Market:

Consisting of an assortment of well seasoned deals, flooring, oak and elm planks and boards; timber, benches, ironmongery, and a variety of other articles; also some mahogany in planks, boards, and veneers; together with a quantity of modern well-made new (sashes and frames, doors and architraves, fit either for a new building or any intended alterations; old waincot, shutters, sashes, &c.

The sale to begin precisely at Ten o'clock in the morning and continue till Two, and from Three till all is sold.—Catalogues will be timely delivered.

FOR SALE BY AUCTION,
 On **TUESDAY** and **WEDNESDAY** the 16th and 17th June inst.—All the near

Household Furniture, Plate, China, Books, & Prints.

Of **Mr. MORGAN, deceased**, at his late dwelling-house, in *Cumberland-street*.

Consisting of four-post mahogany bedsteads, with dimity and other furniture, window curtains to match; feather and mill-puff beds; mattresses and bedding; mahogany dining, pier, and card tables; mahogany chairs stacked over the stairs; sofas; a handsome bookcase, with a secretary and wardrobe; chests drawers; bureau; pier looking-glasses in burnished frames; Wilson and Scotch carpets; kitchen furniture and brewing utensils; a mangle; several gallons of cider in casks and bottles; about one dozen and a half of Sherry; with a large quantity of bottles, &c.

The Plate consists of two pair candlesticks, a two-handled cup, salts, a cream-pot, table and tea-spoons, &c. &c.

The Books are elegantly bound in Russia and calf, among which are the works of *Johnson, Stackhouse, Stone, Daisymple, Fabley, Richardson, Anstey, Rolius, Knox, Newton, Langens, Evergo, Burnett, Peter Pindar, Thomson's Seasons, (Bishop Newton's Edition)* with many others too tedious to mention. The Plate and Books will be sold on **Wednesday.**

JOHN WALL, Broker,
 At *Wall and Dyer's Tea and China Warehouse, High-street, Bristol.*

The sale will begin each morning at half past Ten o'clock and Four in the afternoon.

TO BE SOLD BY AUCTION,
 On the Premises, in *Queen-street*, on **THURSDAY** the 18th June inst. at Ten o'clock in the morning, by order of the Assignees of **SAMUEL LOCKE, HOOPER,** ALL THE REMAINING

STOCK of TIMBER,
 And casks of various sizes and descriptions, building-timber, boards, sashes, two chimney-house desks acclimated in such manner as to be made into a whole South-east corner of *Alfred-street*, let at the clear yearly rent of 26l. 5s.

Subject to a chief rent of 20s. per ann.

For further particulars or private sale apply to **Mr. RACETER, Attorney at Law, King's-town; or at his Office, Exchange Buildings.**

J. STEPHENS, Broker.

FOR SALE BY AUCTION,
 By **J. STEPHENS,**
 At the *Deaf-yards* of **WILLIAM ROBERT JAMES**, opposite the *Limchlin Glass-house*, leading to the *Hotwells*, on **FRIDAY** next the 19th of June inst.

A QUANTITY OF
Spinning Billies and Jennies.
 Also, several new and old Anchors and Grapnels, Anchor-pulms, Ring-bolts, Tackle-hooks, Crow-bars, Ships' Hand-screws, and sundry other Articles in the *Smith Line*; and about 50 Cwt. of Sheathing-paper.

All of which may be viewed on the Premises previous to the sale, where printed catalogues may be had.

The sale to begin at Eleven o'clock in the morning.

BRISTOL, 5th June, 1795.