



PROJECT MUSE®

---

'Not so pleasant to the taste': Coleridge in Bristol during  
the mixed bread campaign of 1795

Samantha Webb

Romanticism, Volume 12, Number 1, 2006, pp. 5-14 (Article)

Published by Edinburgh University Press

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1353/rom.2006.0009>



➔ *For additional information about this article*

<https://muse.jhu.edu/article/199849>

*‘Not so pleasant to the taste’:  
Coleridge in Bristol during the mixed  
bread campaign of 1795*

At the same time as Samuel Taylor Coleridge and Robert Southey were plotting their Pantisocratic community in America, England was undergoing one of the worst wheat scarcities it had ever experienced. The Pantisocracy scheme was an elaborate vision of creativity amid plenitude: by growing as much of their food as they could and sharing the labour, members expected to free their time for study and conversation, and thus to produce great and useful literary works. The wheat scarcity, which affected all areas of the food supply either by limiting its availability or inflating the price, forced English society to confront finitude. In 1795, food prices were so high that many of the poorest families were priced out of the food market entirely. Food riots flared up throughout the country, at least fifty-eight between March and November.<sup>1</sup> Newspaper articles, magazines and pamphlets inflamed public opinion against farming monopolies, land enclosures, cheating bakers and, most importantly, the war with France, which had been raging for nearly two years.<sup>2</sup> When a mob attacked the King’s carriage in October, the crowd’s chant of ‘No war! Bread! Bread!’ illustrated to an alarmed Parliament just how closely the public linked the scarcity with the war.

Given this crisis, it should be small wonder that Coleridge, Southey and the other Pantisocrats wanted to begin anew in America.

Pantisocracy is a quintessential Romantic social experiment: in seeking to create a society outside corrupting conventions, the participants foresaw an existence pared down to essentials yet plentifully supplied through the bounty of nature. Thomas Poole described the experiment: ‘Their opinion was that ... each man should labour two or three hours in a day, the produce of which labour would, they imagine, be more than sufficient to support the colony. As Adam Smith observes that there is not above one productive man in twenty, they argue that if each laboured the twentieth part of the time, it would produce enough to satisfy their wants.’<sup>3</sup> A careful equilibrium of production and consumption would have to be maintained. Ideally, no one would desire more than he or she could have, and thus desire would be perpetually satisfied. Southey wrote rhapsodically before the scheme was abandoned: ‘never did so delightful a prospect of happiness open upon my view before; to go with all I love; to go with all my friends ...; to live with them in the most agreeable and most honourable employment; to eat the fruits I have raised, and see every face happy around me.’<sup>4</sup> However, while Coleridge and Southey imagine that everyone will be completely fulfilled in body and spirit, their actual existence in America would hardly have been luxurious. Their lifestyle would likely have been quite modest, even frugal, and certainly

more laborious than they calculated. Southey foresaw this, and it led him to argue that the Pantisocrats needed servants to do the heavy work.

The temporal proximity of the Pantisocracy scheme and the scarcity of 1795 raises an intriguing paradox that reveals one of the central tensions in Romantic discourse itself: the dream of freedom and plenty for everyone checked by the reality of finitude. It finds its most pessimistic expression in Thomas Malthus's theory of population (1798). Working in Bristol at the height of the scarcity panic, Coleridge conducts a more sanguine exploration.<sup>5</sup> In political lectures, in *The Watchman*, and in verse, Coleridge attempted to define the parameters of plenty – how much is enough? – and to rescue his melioristic social vision in an English context. The wheat scarcity offers a way of reading the Romantic interest in revolutionary politics, millennial expectations and domesticity as part of the same set of interests in social transformation.<sup>6</sup> If Coleridge attempts to 'combine the millennial with the domestic', the scarcity is one of the linchpins in that combination.<sup>7</sup> By engaging the scarcity and the politicized rhetoric of food that it inspired, Coleridge's early work articulates a concept of plenty in both national and domestic terms.

By 1795, bread had become one of the most contested articles of food in England, along with sugar and tea. Its status was even more complicated than sugar and tea because it did not have associations with slavery and colonialism. Not a foreign luxury and not purchased by slave labour, bread was 'the staff of life', entirely rooted in English habits, tastes and history. Until the beginning of the eighteenth century, the standard loaf was brown, composed of virtually all of the wheat, and frequently mixed with other cereals.<sup>8</sup> White bread (also known as wheaten bread), composed of only the best parts of the grain, led to waste, and was therefore a symbol of privileged status reserved for the wealthy.

Improved agricultural techniques and increased wheat production led to the increased popularity of white bread. Adulterations were also rampant. Bakers used chalk, alum or lime to produce artificially whiter loaves.<sup>9</sup> By mid-century, most people, particularly in the southeast and the Midlands, ate no bread but white. Bread was no longer merely an accompaniment to a poor family's meals. It had become the chief part of it, as wages failed to keep up with inflation and poor families became less able to supplement their diets with other foods. Rightly or wrongly, people assumed that fine white bread was more filling and nutritious than brown, although dietetics had only begun to contradict this belief.<sup>10</sup>

When the crops began to experience shortages sporadically throughout the 1780s and 1790s, the white bread habit had to be broken. Since the poor were now such great consumers of white bread, they became an easy target for blame, as well as objects of concern. In 1795, bread became the subject of intense Parliamentary debate and scientific experimentation. It was an almost daily topic in newspapers and magazines, many of which offered recipes for wheat substitutes. In the spring, Parliament shut down distilleries and passed a tax on hair powder (which only succeeded in gaining payers of the tax the nickname 'guinea pigs').<sup>11</sup> During the same session in which it enacted the Seditious Meetings and Treasonable Practices Bills, Parliament initiated a series of symbolic measures calculated to encourage economy in all households, punish frauds, facilitate grain imports, and most importantly, quell dissent. MPs signed a statement pledging to give up fine white bread, pastries and hair powder.<sup>12</sup> The Board of Agriculture mounted an aggressive promotional campaign to encourage people of all ranks to eat 'mixed bread', whose flour has been mixed or substituted with barley, oats, rye or potatoes. But the Board had to contend with numerous resistances. Chief

among them was the public's general opposition to any policy of compulsion. Even the poorest people had grown used to white bread, and would not easily give it up, especially since mixed bread would not necessarily cost less. White bread was a marker of status, distinguishing the poor of the south and Midlands from the lower orders of Scotland and Ireland.<sup>13</sup> In addition, mixed bread was reportedly not very good. In July, the Board published a series of experiments it had commissioned on wheat substitutes. While the findings suggested that a number of good loaves could be had with substitutes, Board members were cautious about touting any of the bread as tasty:

very few, if any, of the loaves then exhibited, were *too bad for human food in times of scarcity*; and afterwards, when given to the poor, all of them were most thankfully received, and eaten: and here it may be observed, as a circumstance particularly deserving of attention, that the practice of a few days, will reconcile the taste and stomach to different sorts of food, which, at first, might be disagreeable; and consequently, that the failure of a few trials at first, ought not to be discouraging.<sup>14</sup>

By emphasizing bad taste in its substitution experiments, the Board of Agriculture actually gives credence to the prejudice against brown bread. The conductors of the experiments found themselves ultimately excusing that inferior taste on the grounds that the times require it. But the Board's biases reveal themselves: it is the poor who must get used to it, even be grateful for it. Coupled with Parliament's symbolic self-restraint, the *Account* implies that the problem is that the poor have begun imitating the consumption patterns of their betters, expecting more than they can afford, and thus putting a strain on supply. Moreover, as the largest class of bread eaters, their consumption – not the war – exacerbates the

scarcity of wheat in ways the food choices of the rich do not.

Many bread pamphlets published during this time express concern about the poor's consumption of bread as an imitative habit. The goal was to encourage mixed bread consumption among the rich so that the poor would imitate them: 'All the Lower Classes will comprehend it. They will admire and venerate it ... and many of them will gradually imitate it,' declared Lord Auckland.<sup>15</sup> The reformer and police magistrate, Patrick Colquhoun tried to capitalize on this assumption in his much-admired pamphlet, *Useful Suggestions for the Relief of the Poor*. He stated that, contrary to popular opinion, the rich do not feed their children bread and butter for breakfast, but potatoes and milk porridge, precisely the dietary regime he was proposing as the solution to the hunger problem.<sup>16</sup> One of Hannah More's exemplary heroines, Mrs White from the tract *The Way to Plenty*, refuses to 'use such white flour again, even if it should come down to five shillings a bushel'.<sup>17</sup> One anonymous pamphleteer argues that the price of bread should be kept inflated (not subsidized) to discourage the poor from consuming it.<sup>18</sup> In this view, supply and demand economics suggests the 'natural' remedy to scarcity: price out the largest class of consumers and the supply will be secure. The anxiety surrounding the wheat shortage crystallized around the poor as consumers of bread, not the rich.

With the wheat supply dwindling, food prices soaring and the war raging, radical organizations seized on the scarcity as yet another argument against the war and for Parliamentary reform. 'Cheap Bread or no King!' was one of the many seditious pieces of graffiti that appeared around the country.<sup>19</sup> Roast beef notwithstanding, bread was construed as one of the most 'English' of foods, and its status as a contested marker of class, political orientation and patriotism is captured

in the public debates.<sup>20</sup> On the one hand, proponents of the war argued for mixed bread and conservation; on the other, anti-war commentators argued for peace. When the committee of Merchants, Bankers and Traders of London met on 14 July 1795 (a politically resonant date) to discuss remedies to the wheat crisis, a dispute broke out between supporters of the war and supporters of a quick peace. A clergyman suggested the committee adopt a resolution 'to quiet the minds of the people', 'informing them, that they were now suffering under the hand of Providence, and not under the hand of man'. He was clearly referring to some of the more antagonistic sentiments being expressed in the press. He was immediately opposed by someone arguing instead that the only way to alleviate the scarcity was 'to petition for peace.' The meeting ended with a stern reprimand from the chairman, William Devaynes, and a reminder that the committee had gathered to discuss relief, not politics.<sup>21</sup> This meeting inspired William Frend, a Jesus College acquaintance of Coleridge who had been expelled from Cambridge in 1793 for publishing a pamphlet sympathetic to France, to write his own scarcity pamphlet addressed to Devaynes. While Frend's ostensible subject is the scarcity, his real subject is the war as 'the chief cause of our distress'.<sup>22</sup> Frend calls for subsidies on bread and other necessities through government and individual donations, and the repeal of taxes. However, Frend's piece is far more temperate than some of the other tracts. An anonymous pamphlet from 1795, *Rare News for Old England!*, compares the American and French Revolutions to the current English situation:

It is well known that certain eminent characters in this kingdom place much confidence in the efficacy of a system of *Starvation* ... they have found that French *sans-culottes*, as well as American *Rebels*, can live for years, and grow fat upon

nothing, or, what was very little better, upon bread made of *rotten wood* and *soap lather*, and soup of old hats and shoes ...

Though John Bull generally discovers an astonishing degree of obstinacy and stupidity, yet who knows but a system of *Starvation*, rigorously put in force, like the present, may succeed in producing a revolution – I mean counter-revolution, in this country.<sup>23</sup>

The author plays creatively with the political associations surrounding mixed bread (as well as other politicized foods like soup). Mixed bread is transformed from being food for starving, desperate labourers into fuel for rebels and revolutionaries. Politics and food are inseparably connected. Indeed, from this author's perspective, the scarcity – and more significantly the measures being adopted to counteract it – is the prelude to revolution.

The opposite side of the ideological spectrum is captured in a curious little propaganda pamphlet by 'Thomas Tapwell', a 'journeyman shoemaker'. Entitled *A Friendly Address to the Poor of Great Britain*, it registers the complex net of ideologies associated with the mixed bread campaign as it sought to curb consumption, change personal habits, and quell dissent all at the same time. Tapwell's 'friendly address' exploits the notion that the poor will imitate their betters. He speaks as an example of contented poverty and reconstructed taste. The pamphlet seeks to refute common objections to mixed bread – that it tastes bad and that it is less wholesome and filling than white bread. Like the Board of Agriculture, he admits that mixed bread is 'not so pleasant to the taste as wheaten bread', but he defends it as necessary in times of scarcity. He assures readers that they can get used to it.<sup>24</sup> Taste is mere prejudice, a matter of habit rather than of innate goodness; it can be retrained if circumstances demand it. He praises the efforts of the Board of Agriculture, and thanks the rich

for their charitable support during the difficult winter. Reinforcing the propagandistic aspect of the tract, Tapwell cites his authorities: 'the clergy, the justices of peace, the churchwardens and all the best and worthiest persons in every parish in England', all of whom are eating mixed bread cheerfully and patriotically (pp. 4–5). It is incumbent on the poor to continue their imitative habits and emulate the rich. The journeyman shoemaker speaks explicitly for the state and its ideological apparatus. To adopt this 'friendly' advice is not just to conserve wheat, it is also to align oneself with the government and its policies of conservation. Any way you slice it, mixed bread is packed with more ideology than taste. It fuses an ideal of self-denial and self-discipline with the patriotic love of king and country.

For Coleridge, the scarcity was intimately bound up with the war. He writes in a notebook entry that he later incorporated into his lecture 'On the Present War': 'People starved into War. – over an enlisting place in Bristol a quarter of Lamb and piece of beef hung up.'<sup>25</sup> The discourse of mixed bread put anti-war radicals like Coleridge in an awkward rhetorical position. To argue for peace instead of mixed bread meant opposing the good efforts of government and industry to conserve wheat and thereby feed the poor; it meant exacerbating the scarcity, which they blame on the government. Much of Coleridge's work in Bristol is remarkably consistent in its attempts to undo this double bind. While the scarcity is a frequent reference point, it becomes a potent symbol for his larger ameliorating project. It provides both a bottom line argument against Pitt and the war and, in a debate that only visualized finitude, a spur for imagining plenty without compromising taste. A number of Coleridge's associates were involved with the scarcity debate at some level. I have already noted William Frend's contribution to the debate. His friend Thomas Beddoes also wrote a pamphlet, which Coleridge reviewed in the fifth

number of *The Watchman*. We also know about Coleridge's two lost Bristol lectures, one on the Hair Powder bill, and the other on the Corn Laws. Coleridge's close friend Thomas Poole actually performed experiments with bread. He tried loaves with barley, potatoes and turnips, the latter turning out to be rather inedible.<sup>26</sup> While we don't have Coleridge's reaction to the bread itself, we can determine what he thought of the mixed bread campaign. No longer the 'staff of Life', bread is now very much the 'staff of state', and therefore antithetical to Coleridge's politics at this time.

Coleridge opens the *Conciones ad Populum* with 'A Letter from Liberty to Her Dear Friend Famine', in which he satirizes the current state of the country. In this piece, Liberty asks Famine's help in obtaining support in England, which she is about to abandon forever: 'Liberty, the MOTHER OF PLENTY, calls Famine to her aid. O FAMINE, most eloquent Goddess! plead thou my cause. I meantime will pray fervently that Heaven may unseal the ears of its vicereagents, so that they may listen to your first pleadings, while yet your voice is faint and distant, and your counsels peaceable – ' (1. 31). Coleridge does not say precisely how Famine can help the 'mother of plenty', but the implication would have been clear to those listeners and readers following the scarcity debates. By galvanizing the people and radicalizing them to revolutionary activity, famine will open the door for liberty and plenty to return to the land. Famine is the evil from which good things will come, auguring the revolution. But Coleridge's 'Letter' focuses on famine's potential transformative power, not on the famine itself, nor on the new world he sees emerging from it. The 'Letter' thus carries revolutionary overtones similar to those found in *Rare News for Old England*. In the context of his other writings, however, there is a millennial resonance not found in the radical pamphlets. Coleridge's use of a quotation from Ovid's *Metamorphoses* points to the positive

potential of great suffering: 'You [Famine] will doubtless be surprized as receiving a petitionary Letter from a perfect Stranger [Liberty]. *But Fas est vel ab hoste*' ["'Tis proper [to learn] even from an enemy"]. All whom I once supposed my unalterable friends, I have found unable or unwilling to assist me' (30). Paradoxically, Famine is Liberty's last resort. In this sense, it is England's only hope for the positive, permanent transformation that Coleridge seeks. Coleridge may also be suggesting that *he* has learned from his enemies, those who are bringing about famine by continuing the war.

*Religious Musings* has been interpreted according to its millennial interest in a future society.<sup>27</sup> But its use of scarcity images also locates it in this immediate context. 'The Present State of Society', a fragment of *Religious Musings* that was published in the second number of *The Watchman*, considers the conditions that will be necessary to bring about the new society of Coleridge's imaginings. Food and access to food are central to this consideration. The poem employs key images from the scarcity debate – gluttony and deprivation:

O ye numberless,  
Whom foul oppression's ruffian gluttony  
Drives from life's plenteous feast! O thou  
poor wretch  
Who nursed in darkness and made wild by  
want,  
Roamest for prey, yea thy unnatural hand  
Dost lift to deeds of blood ...  
O aged women! Ye who weekly catch  
The morsel tossed by law-forced charity,  
And die so slowly, that none call it murder!<sup>28</sup>

Nature affords 'plenty' for everyone; only gluttony disturbs the natural economy. 'Gluttony' and 'want' are corruptions of nature. The passage dramatizes a competition for food, a scene that was highlighted during the scarcity, as commentators insisted that anyone refusing

to follow strict rules of economy was essentially driving others into starvation. Here, however, it is the consumption of the rich and powerful that drives the poor to starvation and not, as conservative thinking had it, the poor driving themselves into starvation by their sheer number. Even charity cannot stave off famine. The image of the 'aged women' catching the weekly 'morsel' attacks the measures implemented to deal with poverty, in which measures of subsistence literally equal starvation.<sup>29</sup> Such evils, Coleridge states, are precisely what will bring down 'the Kings and the Chief Captains of the World' (66). Like the allegorized character of Famine returning Liberty to her rightful home, the present evils of society will bring about a new social organization based on the shared labour that guarantees perpetual plenty. The picture of the future state owes as much to the contentiousness of scarcity as it does to the Biblical imagery and the ideal of Pantisocracy:

Return, pure FAITH! return, meek PIETY!  
The kingdoms of the World are your's: each  
heart  
Self-govern'd, the vast Family of Love,  
Rais'd from the common earth by common  
toil,  
Enjoy the equal produce. (pp. 65–6)

The real-world politics of food suffuse most of the pressing issues that Coleridge engages in *The Watchman*, grounding his more abstract, millenarian musings in an immediate context. Throughout, he attempts to dismantle the rhetoric equating true patriotism with the suppression of appetite and taste. In the 'Essay on Fasts',<sup>30</sup> Coleridge wittily uses the occasion of the March 9th government-sanctioned fast day to underscore the absurdity of calling for a general fast during a scarcity:<sup>31</sup>

... first of all, it is ridiculous to enjoin fasting  
on the poor (they are Pythagoreans, and  
already eat neither fish, flesh, or fowl at any

time), and it is the crimes of the poor and labouring classes that have brought down the Judgement of Heaven on the nation. This is *probable* a priori from their being incalculably the larger number, and it is *proved* by the absurd and dangerous consequences of the contrary supposition: for if our public calamities were to be attributed to the wickedness of the rich and powerful, it would more than insinuate doubts of the incorruptness of our House of Commons, and the justice and the necessity of the present war ... (p. 54; emphasis in original).

Coleridge captures the ambiguous status of the poor during the scarcity: on the one hand, they were to be pitied and helped through charity; on the other, they were blamed for bringing it on. In the context of an official fast day, self-restraint, frugality, even hunger, became signs of patriotism, but they are relative terms. Coleridge elaborates this view in the fourth number of the magazine in a short piece entitled 'We See Things With Different Eyes' that he adapted from the *Morning Chronicle*. In this little counter-cultural fable, the author (not Coleridge) contrasts the political opinions of the well-fed rich with those of the meanly fed poor. A wealthy couple, after 'an excellent dinner', expresses satisfaction that 'the Jacobins are suppressed, the mouth of Sedition is shut'. Meanwhile a poor family of five is sitting down to dine on a 'one penny loaf of mixed bread, and a pound of boiled Potatoes', and wondering "what business had *we* with the French?" (2, 146). If deprivation and mixed bread symbolize patriotism, as the scarcity discourse suggested, this family is as patriotic as the Pittites could wish. But this kind of imitative patriotism can easily erupt into subversive and transformative anger.

If nature affords plenty for everyone, as Coleridge suggests in *Religious Musings*, how can that plenty be achieved in a scarcity-struck

England? The work of Coleridge's friend Thomas Beddoes provides an initial answer. Beddoes, who founded Bristol's Pneumatic Institute, contributed a pamphlet to the scarcity debate entitled *A Letter to the Right Honourable William Pitt*, which Coleridge reviewed in *The Watchman*. Like many radical commentators, Beddoes lays the blame for the scarcity squarely at Pitt's feet. He castigates the Prime Minister, sarcastically asking why it never occurred to him to make provisions for subsistence during wartime. No mixed bread for Beddoes: he first proposes that men of science find ways of making grass and hay fit for human consumption;<sup>32</sup> failing that, he argues that animals should be fed potatoes and turnips instead of grass, since humans could turn to these crops in times of scarcity 'without any change of habits'. In this way, wheat scarcities would be far less disruptive. He also suggests the mass production of a 'broth machine', a machine that boils down meat and bones by exposing them to intense heat for eighteen hours to create 'two hundred quarts of very good wholesome palatable soup for half a crown' (p. 18). Beddoes's broth machine was compelling because of its seemingly limitless production of broth to feed the hungry. In this sense, it represented a guarantee of plenty through technological invention.

What appears most interesting to Coleridge in his review of Beddoes, however, is not so much the solutions, but the way Beddoes positions himself as a scientist. Beddoes charges Pitt with dereliction, seeking to wrest the scarcity problem away from politicians and give it over to science. He casts scientists as imaginative geniuses of immense creative power whose talents should be marshalled for bettering society rather than for war (p. 15). Indeed, he claims a status for scientists that can only be described as prophetic. Beddoes acknowledges that his plan 'will appear like one of the most extravagant flights of insanity'. He offers it, however, on the grounds that scientific



innovations have already transformed nature in ways that 'are beheld as conquests of art, almost over impossibility itself' (p. 14). Science and scientists will be the real heroes of the wheat scarcity, offering solutions that will go beyond the limited temporary substitution efforts of the Board of Agriculture. In Beddoes's vision, the broth machine will replace the war machine.

Coleridge approves of this vision. As he does in a number of poems of the period, he constructs a pantheon of living scientists and thinkers, including Joseph Priestley, and places Beddoes among them. He suggests that, in contrast to the politicians, *they* would 'have suggested modes of employing two hundred millions of money to more beneficial purposes than the murder of two million of their fellow-creatures' (2. 103). These disinterested scientific visionaries become the far-sighted leaders who will lead the country out of poverty and want. By locating moral authority in the men of science and reform, Coleridge is able to resist the state-sanctioned language of mixed bread and 'substitution' without compromising his vision of a future, better society. Plenty will be assured if men like Beddoes are allowed to do their transformative work, independent of politics. By applying their expansive imaginations to nature, nature itself is transformed, like the meat and bones that go into the broth machine. In the future, nature will provide endlessly through the mediation of scientific innovation.

Coleridge abandoned Pantisocracy at a moment when food – the most quotidian of things – came under politicized scrutiny. Means to produce it, access to it, how to get enough of it – all these issues emerged amidst fears of invasion and revolution. Since the mixed bread campaign was as much about national identity and politics as it was about feeding people, Coleridge absorbs it rhetorically, refusing to be bound by the terms set by bread campaigners who used the topic of bread substitutes to elide

the problem of the war. He represents scarcity as a catalyst for change, and appropriates the rather modest concept of plenty that it spawned as an image for the harmonious social and domestic organization he foresaw. In this sense, Pantisocracy was not abandoned so much as retrenched for an England undergoing hard times. The 1790's scarcity discourse and its politicization of food thus spurred the Romantic interest in domestic economies, an interest that some critics have called a retreat from politics.

In the autumn of 1800, another crop failure brought about yet another wheat scarcity, far worse than the one of 1795. This time, rather than simply 'encouraging' the use of mixed bread, Parliament legislated it. But this failed as decidedly as the earlier promotion campaign: people would not substitute their fine white flour with potatoes or barley. It is intriguing to consider whether Coleridge and Wordsworth, working on a small taste-making experiment of their own, had learned the lessons about substitution, and decided instead to 'create a taste' for their own heavily mixed bread. ■

University of Montevallo, Alabama

#### NOTES \_\_\_\_\_

1. J. Stephenson, 'Food Riots in England, 1792–1818', in *Popular Protest and Public Order: Six Studies in British History 1790–1920*, ed. by R. Quinault and J. Stevenson (New York, 1975), pp. 33–74 (p. 54).
2. Sandra Sherman, *Imagining Poverty: Quantification and the Decline of Paternalism* (Columbus, OH: Ohio State University Press, 2001).
3. Mrs Henry Sandford, *Thomas Poole and His Friends*, 2 vols (London: Macmillan & Co., 1888), I, 97–8.
4. Charles Cuthbert Southey, *Life and Correspondence of Robert Southey*, 6 vols (London: Longman, Brown, Green, Longman, 1849), I, p. 216.
5. Malthus contributed a pamphlet about scarcity, although not until 1800, entitled *An Investigation of the Present High Price of Provisions* (London: J. Johnson, 1800). In it, he argued that the scarcity proved his theory of population correct. The

contentious relationship between Malthusian economics and the major Romantic poets is only beginning to be explored. See Phillip Connell, *Romanticism, Economics and the Question of 'Culture'* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001); Tim Fulford, 'Apocalyptic Economics and Prophetic Politics: Radical and Romantic Responses to Malthus and Burke' *Studies in Romanticism*, 40 (Fall 2001), pp. 345–68; Gregory Dart, *Rousseau, Robespierre and English Romanticism* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999), especially chapter 5, 'Strangling the Infant Hercules: Malthus and the Population Controversy'.

6. In this regard, I am agreeing with critics like Nicholas Roe and Nigel Leask, who argue that Pantisocracy was very much in tandem with Coleridge's later work. See Roe, 'Pantisocracy and the Myth of the Poet' in *Romanticism and Millennialism*, ed. by Tim Fulford (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), pp. 87–102; Leask, 'Pantisocracy and the Politics of the 'Preface' to *Lyrical Ballads*' in *Reflections of Revolution: Images of Romanticism*, ed. by Alison Yarrington and Kelvin Everest (London and New York: Routledge, 1993), pp. 39–58.

7. Morton D. Paley, *Apocalypse and Millennium in English Romantic Poetry* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 117.

8. Background on bread is taken from: Massimo Montanari, *The Culture of Food*, tr. by Carl Ipsen (Cambridge, Mass.: Blackwell, 1994); Walter M. Stern, 'The Bread Crisis in Britain, 1795–96', *Economica*, n.s. 31:122 (May 1964), pp. 168–87; Roger Wells, *Wretched Faces: Famine in Wartime England, 1793–1801* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1988); C. Anne Wilson, *Food and Drink in Britain From the Stone Age to the Nineteenth Century* (Chicago: Academy Chicago Publishers, 1991).

9. Although these adulterations were well known at the time, nothing was done about them until the nineteenth century. See Wilson, p. 263. For eighteenth-century objections to adulteration, see Jonas Hanway, *The Great Advantages of Eating Pure and Genuine Bread* (London: [n. pub.], 1773) and William Buchan, *Observations on the Diet of the Common People* (London: A. Strahan, T. Cadell jun. and W. Davies, 1797).

10. See Wells, p. 15; Buchan, p. 6.

11. Background information on the 1795 scarcity is taken from: Donald Grove Barnes, *A History of the English Corn Laws from 1660–1846* (New York: Augustus M. Kelley, 1965); J.R. Poynter, *Society and*

*Pauperism* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1969); Sherman; Stern; Wells. Primary sources include: *Transactions in Parliament in 1795, on the Apprehension of a Famine!* (London: [n. pub.], 1798); *Continuation of the Transactions of the House of Commons in 1795* (London: [n. pub.], 1798),

12. *Transactions in Parliament*, pp. 99–101. While Parliament chose not to legislate conservation measures, it did need to amend some of the Corn Laws. Among other things, it relaxed the assize laws that guaranteed the quality of bread and stiffened penalties for frauds. For a detailed account of the legal measures adopted, see Barnes, chapter 5, 'The Corn Laws and the Wars, 1791–1813'; also Wells, chapter 12, 'Dietary Expedients and Vested Interests'.

13. For background on the class associations with bread, see Wells, chapter 12, 'Dietary Expedients and Vested Interests'; Montanari, chapter 3, 'To Each His Own'. For its associations with Englishness, see Sherman, chapter 2, 'The Rhetoric of Poverty'.

14. Board of Agriculture, *Account of the Experiments tried by the Board of Agriculture in the Composition of Various Sorts of Bread* (London: G. Nicol, 1795), p. 10. The emphasis is mine.

15. Quoted in Wells, p. 210.

16. Patrick Colquhoun, *Useful Suggestions Favourable to the Comforts of the Labouring People and to Decent Housekeepers* (London: Henry Fry, 1795) p. 14.

17. Hannah More, *The Way to Plenty* (London and Bath: Marshall, 1795), p. 290.

18. *Thoughts on the Most Safe and Effectual Mode of Relieving the Poor During the Present Scarcity* (London: T.N. Longman, 1795), pp. 10–11.

19. Wells, p. 144.

20. See Sherman, esp. chapter 2, 'The Rhetoric of Poverty'.

21. 'Meeting of the Committee', *Morning Chronicle* (15 July 1795), p. 1.

22. William Frend, *Scarcity of Bread: A Plan for Reducing the High Price of this Article in a Letter ... To William Devaynes* (London: J. Smith, 1795), p. 2.

23. *Rare News for Old England!* (London: [n. pub.], [1795]), pp. 1–2. Emphasis is in original.

24. Thomas Tapwell, *A Friendly Address to the Poor of Great Britain* (London: J. Rivington and C. Rivington, 1796), p. 5.

25. *The Notebooks of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, vol. 1, ed. by Kathleen Coburn (New York: Pantheon, 1957), entry 42 G.34. The note is polished for 'On the Present War', *Lectures on Politics and Religion*, ed. by

Lewis Patton and Peter Mann, *Bollingen Collected Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1971), p. 69. Further references to the *Collected Works* will be cited in the text.

26. Sandford, I, pp. 134–5. Poole also contributed a series of articles on the corn trade to the *Morning Post* during the scarcity of 1800. The essays were heavily edited by Coleridge, and appear in his *Essays on His Times*, ed. by David V. Erdman, *Bollingen Collected Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, 3 vols (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978); see vol. 3. See also Poole's letter to Coleridge giving his extensive thoughts on the scarcity in Sandford, II, pp. 11–13.

27. See especially Paley, chapter 2, 'Coleridge'; David Collings, 'Coleridge Beginning a Career: Desultory Authorship in *Religious Musings*', *ELH*, 58 (1991), pp. 167–93.

28. Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *The Watchman*, ed. by Lewis Patton, *Bollingen Collected Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1970), p. 65. Further references will be cited in the text.

29. For background on bread scales, see Poynter, chapter 2, 'The Lessons of Scarcity'. Sherman (chapter 2) contends that the scales led to the

generalizable belief that the poor ate nothing but bread, and therefore charity need offer nothing more.

30. Coleridge regretted this piece shortly after he published it. He felt that the tone was too strong and that it sounded like 'the harsh scoffing, of an Infidel'. See *Collected Letters of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, ed. by Earl Leslie Griggs, 6 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1956), I, p. 118.

31. Fast day sermons were routinely published and reviewed in the major magazines. In the April 1796 they were reviewed alongside scarcity tracts, giving the whole exercise a deeply ironic feel that surely did not escape Coleridge. See, for example, the *Monthly Review* for April 1796.

32. Thomas Beddoes, *A Letter to the Right Honourable William Pitt on the Means of Relieving the Present Scarcity* (London: J. Johnson, 1796), p. 16. Further references will be cited in the text. Coleridge's interest in science has been explored by Nicholas Roe, 'Atmospheric Air Itself: Medical Science, Politics and Poetry in Thelwall, Coleridge and Wordsworth' in *1798: The Year of the Lyrical Ballads*, ed. by Richard Cronin (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998), pp. 185–202, and by Mark Kipperman, 'Coleridge, Shelley and Science's Millennium', *Criticism*, 40, 3 (Summer 1998), pp. 409–36.