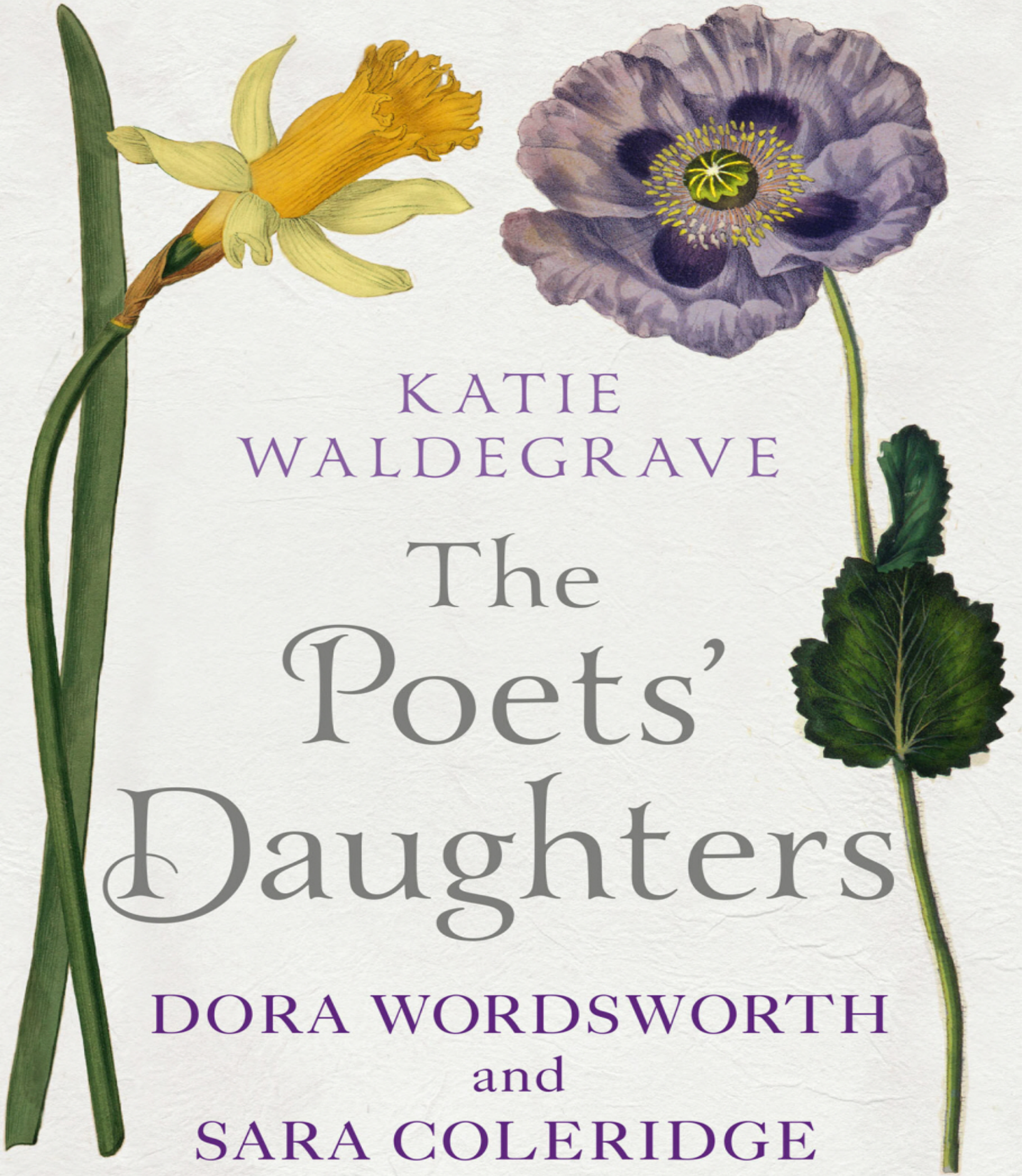


KATIE WALDEGRAVE

The Poets' Daughters

DORA WORDSWORTH and SARA COLERIDGE

CONTENTS

About the Book

‘You are the best poetry he ever produced: a bright spark out of two flints.’

Dora Wordsworth and Sara Coleridge were lifelong friends. They were also the daughters of best friends: William Wordsworth and Samuel Taylor Coleridge, the two poetic geniuses who shaped the Romantic Age.

Living in the shadow of their fathers’ extraordinary fame brought Sara and Dora great privilege, but at a terrible cost. In different ways, each father almost destroyed his daughter. Growing up in the shadow of genius, each girl made it her life’s ambition to dedicate herself to her father’s writing and reputation. Anorexia, drug addiction and depression were part of the legacy of fame, but so too were great friendship and love.

Drawing on a host of new sources, Katie Waldegrave tells the never-before-told story of how two young women, born into greatness, shaped their own legacies.

About the Author

Katie Waldegrave studied history at Oxford and subsequently became a history teacher. She now runs First Story, a charity she founded with author William Fiennes in 2008. First Story places acclaimed authors in challenging secondary schools to promote creativity and literacy. *The Poets' Daughters: Dora Wordsworth and Sara Coleridge* is her first book.

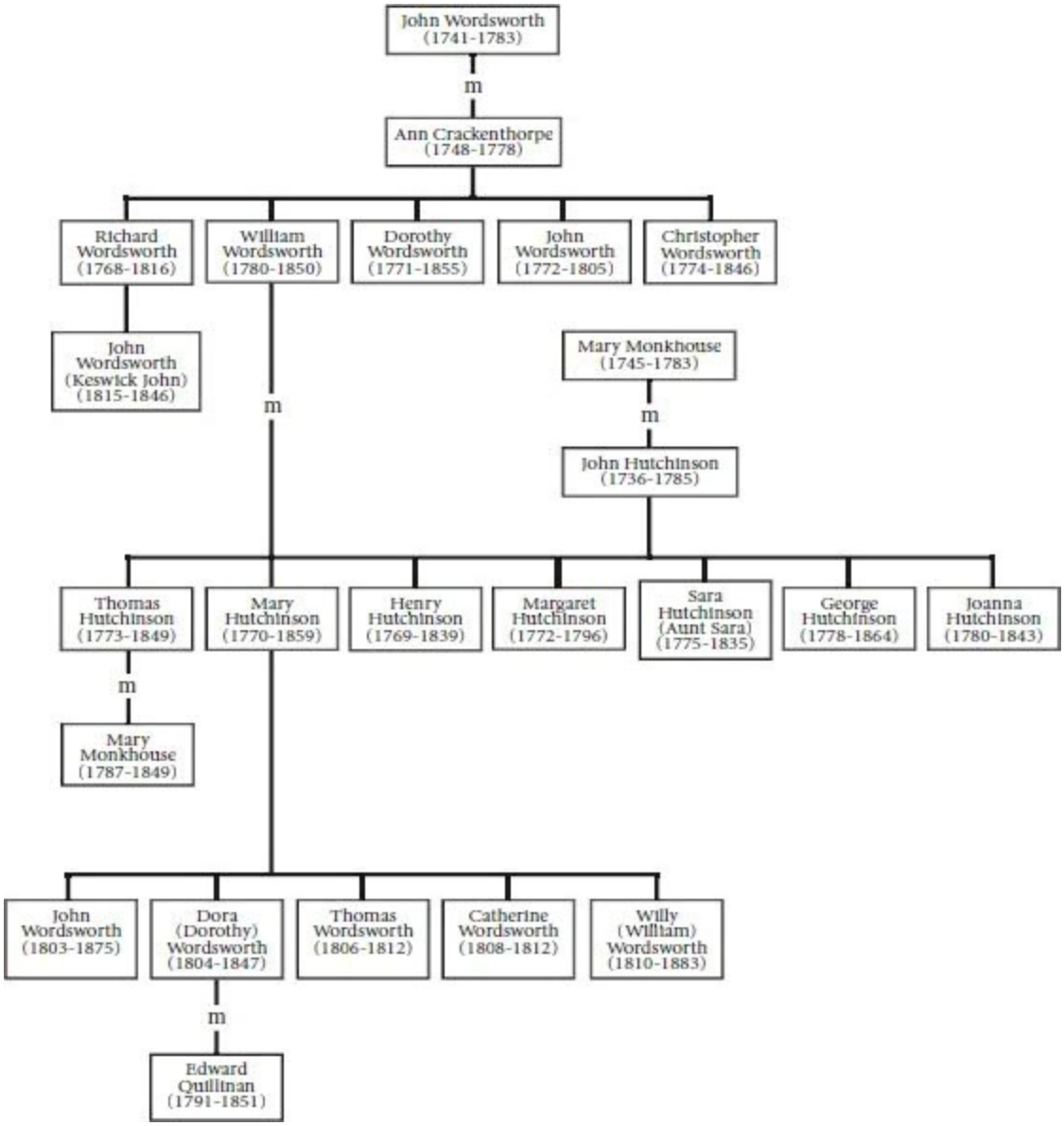
The Poets' Daughters

Dora Wordsworth
and
Sara Coleridge

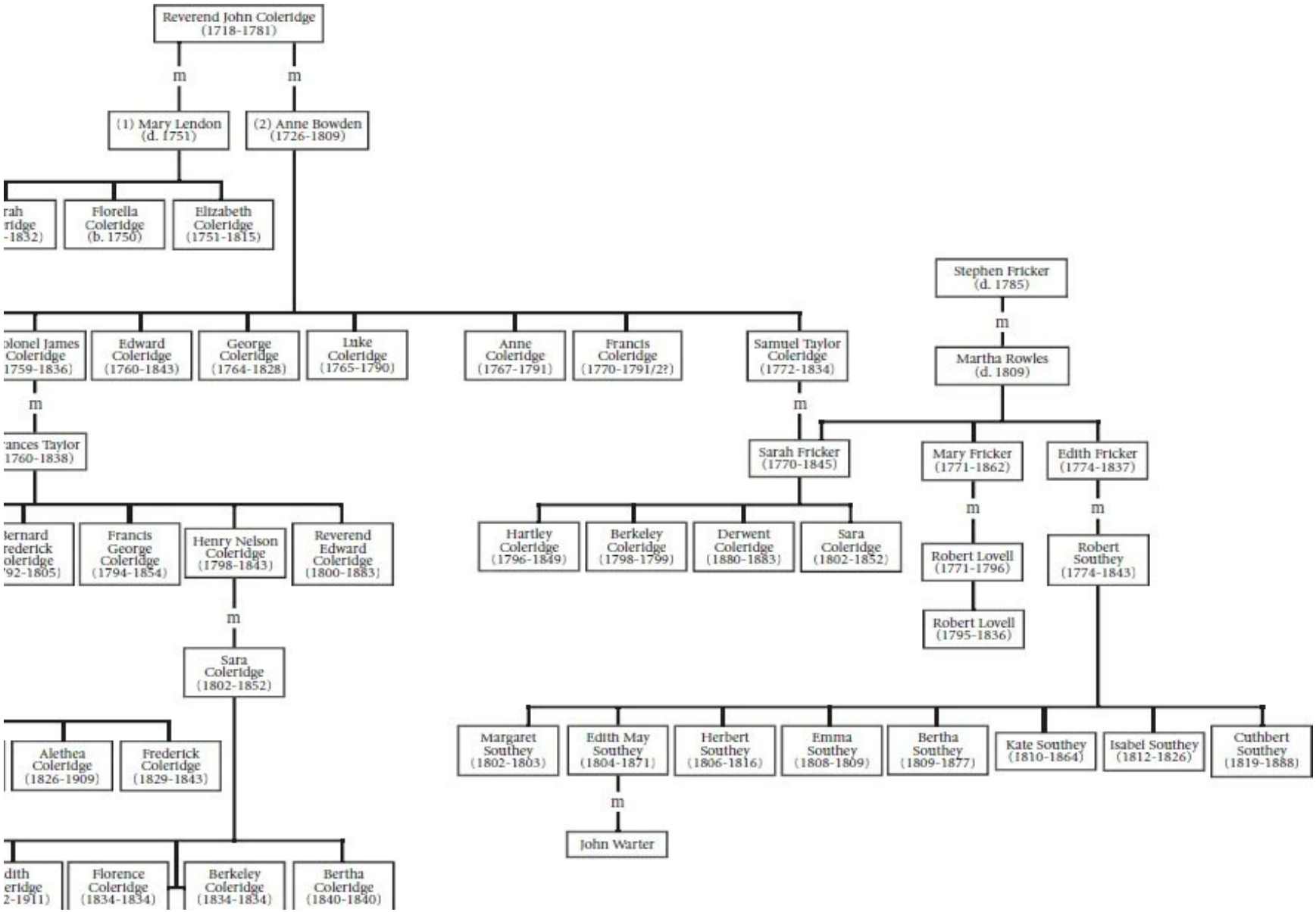
Katie Waldegrave

To Mum, Dad and Indro

The Wordsworth and Hutchinson family tree



The Coleridge and Southey/Fricker family tree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Emma
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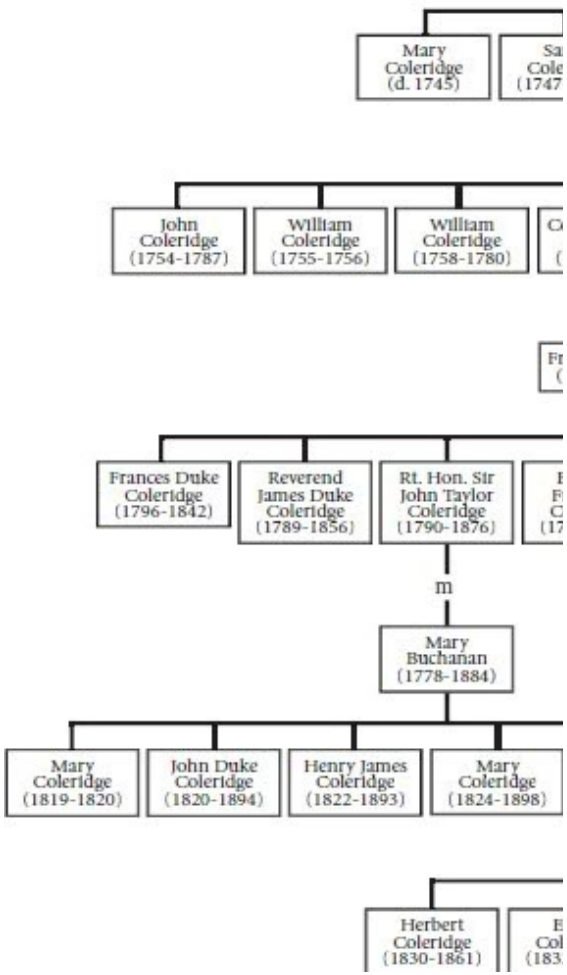
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William
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(1758-1780)
Frances Duke
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(1796-1842)
Reverend
James Duke
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(1789-1856)
Rt. Hon. Sir
John Taylor
Coleridge
(1790-1876)
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Mary
Buchanan
(1778-1884)
Mary
Coleridge
(1819-1820)
John Duke
Coleridge
(1820-1894)
Henry James
Coleridge
(1822-1893)
Mary
Coleridge
(1824-1898)
Herbert
Coleridge
(1830-1861)

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

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FOREWORD

Father! – To God himself we cannot give a holier name.
William Wordsworth, 'Sponsors',
Ecclesiastical Sonnets XXI

Dora Wordsworth and Sara Coleridge led parallel lives in the shadows of monumental fathers who were the greatest poets of their day. Between 1797 and 1807 William Wordsworth and Samuel Taylor Coleridge worked, and often lived, together. They wrote poetry which established that period of literature we now call the Romantic and in their wake came Byron, Shelley, Keats and a host of others. Theirs was one of the greatest literary friendships in English history. Its high point was 1797–8, a year in which they jointly produced the *Lyrical Ballads*, the most important single volume of poetry of the Romantic period.[fn1] Twelve years later, in 1812, when the lives of their families – including their daughters – were intertwined, the relationship between the poets was destroyed by a bitter quarrel.

Living in the blinding reflection of such epic events, Dora and Sara's lives were eclipsed by their fathers and neither daughter left anything but the most fleeting of reputations. Certainly both women would have been surprised at finding themselves subjects of a book, and not wholly pleased. Both had seen at first-hand the damage a biographer's pen could wreak. Yet the stories of their lives and their friendship are every bit as fascinating as the stories of their fathers. This is an attempt to finally tell those of Dora Wordsworth and Sara Coleridge in their own right.

Virginia Woolf – herself the daughter of a great man – once wrote a biographical essay about Sara Coleridge, describing her as a 'continuation' of her father's mind. Her 'years were lived in the light of his sunset, so that, like other children of great men, she is a chequered dappled figure flitting between a vanished radiance and the light of every day. And, like so many of her father's works, Sara Coleridge remains unfinished.'[1] She might as well have been writing about Dora.

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fn1 The point about Coleridge and Wordsworth is that they made their greatest poetry together – more or less as a joint enterprise – particularly duing their '*annus mirabilis*' of 1797–8 which culminated in the publication of the *Lyrical Ballads.* Harold Bloom once wrote that 'it remains the most important volume of verse in English since the Renaissance, for it began modern poetry, the poetry of the inner growing self' (*The Oxford Anthology of English Literature*, edited by Harold Bloom and Lionel Trilling, Oxford University Press, 1973, II, p. 125.)

PROLOGUE

In early January 1804, two poets set out to climb a mountain. Samuel Taylor Coleridge and William Wordsworth left Wordsworth's Cumberland cottage and, some hours later, the pair reached 'the highest and outermost of Grasmere' from where they could see the Lakelands they loved spread out before them.[fn1], [1] Wordsworth had moved to the village of Grasmere at the end of 1799 and Coleridge had followed him north in 1800. Since then the men had been living half a day's walk away from one another. Now Coleridge had left his home in the village of Keswick to stay with Wordsworth for a month. It had been a visit filled with symbolic last moments: each knew a chapter in their lives was ending. Coleridge was about to leave the country to go anywhere at all as long as it was far away. He hoped for a lengthy absence in an unknown place: 'Cornwall, perhaps, – Ireland perhaps – . . . or Madeira, or Teneriffe. I don't see any likelihood of our going to the Moon, or to either of the Planets, or fixed Stars.'[2] He was keen to seek out Indian Bhang (cannabis); he was desperate to escape. His stay with Wordsworth had gone some way towards repairing a once great and now increasingly strained friendship, but it had not been easy – Coleridge was dependent on opium and brandy and his wild way of living had vexed and harried the whole household. Yet before Coleridge left, Wordsworth wanted him to know he had taken up the challenge his friend had set him some five years earlier, when things had been easier. Looking down at the view, Wordsworth read Coleridge 'the second Part of his divine Self-biography'.

In 1798, Wordsworth had promised he would complete a project which Coleridge had entrusted to him: he would write verses to save mankind. It was to be an epic, ‘the *first* and *only* true Phil[osophical] Poem’, and it would be called ‘The Recluse’.[3] The lines Wordsworth read Coleridge, as the men looked down on Grasmere, were the latest instalment of its prelude. Their theory was that since the French Revolution had failed, people would have to turn to poetry for salvation.[fn2] ‘The Recluse’ would give pictures of ‘Nature, Man, and Society’ and lead man to a new state of enlightened being. Coleridge thought Wordsworth was, quite simply, the greatest poet since Milton and so, although the vision for the poem was his, and he promised to provide the structure, he decided Wordsworth should do the actual writing. In retrospect it was not a good arrangement. Wordsworth began in 1798 and reckoned it would take ‘at least a year and a half to come’. It was an ambitious target given that he had said: ‘I know not anything which will not come within the scope of my plan.’ [4] Five years on Coleridge was disappointed that Wordsworth had merely succeeded in working on the ‘preamble’ and wished that his friend would progress faster. Inspired by the walk, Wordsworth once again vowed to live up to Coleridge’s ambitions for him. It was as solemn a promise as any wedding vow and on the eve of Coleridge’s departure, when neither man could be sure he would see the other again, it was their pledge to the power of poetry and the mind to change the world.

From the heights above Grasmere the poets walked home and into very different futures. While Wordsworth would stay put in the Lakes until the end of his life, Coleridge would depart several days later – for Malta, as it turned out, rather than the moon. He would leave his wife and their three children, including a baby girl named Sara, and not return for several years. Mrs Coleridge and her children would remain at their home, Greta Hall in the village of Keswick. When Wordsworth descended the hill it was to a baby son

and a house full of women, including his wife Mary, who was pregnant with a daughter who would be named after her aunt Dorothy and known to all as Dora.

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fn1 Adam Sisman suggests they may have climbed to Hause Riggs which is a couple of miles from Grasmere and the last point from which Grasmere Lake can be seen (in *The Friendship: Wordsworth and Coleridge*, London: Viking Books, 2007, p. 368). Duncan Wu suggests it may have been Easedale (*A Companion to Wordsworth*, Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2001, p. 187).

fn2 STC wrote to tell WW, 'My dear friend, I do entreat you go on with "The Recluse"; and I wish you would write a poem, in blank verse, addressed to those, who, in consequence of the complete failure of the French Revolution, have thrown up all hopes of the amelioration of mankind, and are sinking into an almost epicurean selfishness, disguising the same under the soft titles of domestic attachment and contempt for visionary philosophes. It would do great good, and might form a part of "The Recluse", for in my present mood I am wholly against the publication of any small poems. STC to WW, 10 September 1799; *STCCL*, I, p. 527.

PART ONE

CHAPTER 1

‘THE SHADOW OF A SHADE’

1808

‘What Phantoms Hover Round’

ON 7 SEPTEMBER 1808, a carriage wound its way to the top of a hill just outside the village of Grasmere in Cumberland. The horses pulled up in front of a large white house and two men and a little girl descended, stretching their cramped legs. It had taken them several hours to travel the thirteen miles from Keswick. The first man, William Wordsworth, was tall and wiry; the second, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, always known as STC, was shorter and heavy with a pale, bloated face and thick dry lips.[fn1] The girl was sprite-like, with blonde hair and enormous blue eyes.

Sara Coleridge, aged five and three quarters, stood and regarded her friend Dora Wordsworth’s new house, Allan Bank. Behind her, at the bottom of the hill, was Grasmere Lake; in front of her, the house, large and white, beneath a craggy fell. Her father had promised she would be happy staying here: Allan Bank was his home now. When the men were ready, she took her father’s hand and walked towards the front door. A shriek of joyful recognition pierced the air and John Wordsworth, five and a quarter, bounded out of the house and into the garden. Sara knew the Wordsworth

children – John, Dora and two-year-old Thomas – well, but as they approached John disappeared back inside, suddenly shy. Dora's two spinster aunts, and finally Dora herself, emerged to greet the travellers. As the adults embraced, the girls made a striking contrast to one another. Sara wore her best lace cap over blonde curls and a frilly dress. Dora, just turned four, was a stocky, ruddy-cheeked child in a simple dress, already nearly as tall as her older playmate.

Wordsworth rushed into the house and up the stairs to where his wife Mary had the day before given birth to a girl. The baby, whom they would christen Catherine, and usually call Cate, brought the number of little Wordsworths to four. Meanwhile John had fled into the house and hidden under the kitchen table as Sara approached. When she came near, he 'peeped out at her, then all red with Blushes crept back again, laughing half convulsive yet faintly – at length he came out, & throwing his pinafore over his face with both hands upon that, he ran and kissed her thro' the pinafore'. The adults laughed, delighted. By the end of the day the young sweethearts were engaged and John had pledged to carry her all the way to the church and back – just to be sure.[1] Sara danced, spun and twirled, basking in his admiration. Dora's Aunt Dorothy, watching Sara on such an occasion, said 'the exquisite grace of her motions, her half Lady, half spirit form, and her interesting countenance made her an object of pure delight'.[2] Dora was not so much of a one for twirling.

Until six months before, Wordsworth had lived with his family at Town End Cottage, Grasmere (now known as Dove Cottage).[fn2] He and his sister Dorothy, separated in childhood, had established a household together in the beloved Lakeland District of their youth in December 1799. Though more stable than STC's, Wordsworth's had not been a conventional household. To outsiders it seemed highly eccentric. From the start, Dorothy and Wordsworth and their friends and relations kept strange hours and wandered the

hills and vales appreciating what we now see as the picture-postcard-pretty landscape, but which was then mostly viewed as a place of poverty and isolation. His family despaired – they had hoped he would become a lawyer or a clergyman.

Then, in 1802, Wordsworth married Mary Hutchinson, a childhood friend whom he had met again with STC in 1799. Wordsworth's marriage was a difficult change in circumstance for Dorothy and speculations about conflict and incest remain to this day. Frances Wilson's *The Ballad of Dorothy Wordsworth* provides the most subtle and intelligent reading of their relationship: the bond between brother and sister was extraordinarily close and soon adapted itself into a bond between husband, wife and sister that was almost as close again. Mary moved into Town End Cottage and in the July before STC and Wordsworth's *Recluse* walk, she had given birth to her first child, John. Town End's – and later Allan Bank's – domestic tasks, including bringing up the children, were shared by Mary, Dorothy and, when she was there – which was often – Mary's sister Aunt Sara Hutchinson.[fn3]

Since Sara's father, STC, had returned to England from Malta in 1806, he had lived mostly with the Wordsworths rather than returning to his own family. Now he was bringing Sara for a visit, her first to Allan Bank, the Wordsworths' new house. She quickly decided she didn't like it. Her own home was refined by comparison to this cold smoky place and she was homesick. She was also nonplussed to find there were no nurseries, no routines and no discipline. 'We children sometimes left our beds at 4'O clock and roamed about the kitchen before there was anyone to dress us,' Sara remembered years later. They drew on the walls and 'were chid and cuffed freely enough, yet far from kept in good order'. The Wordsworths had two servants to help – Fanny and a 'backward girl' called Sally, who was little more than a child herself – but disorder still reigned.[fn4] Sara found

bath-time particularly upsetting – it was carried out ‘in a tub in the kitchen, in an exposed sort of way’ and frequently ‘some men or man came in during the operation’.[3] Allan Bank house was cold as ‘a well & made us shiver’ even in summer, but it was almost impossible to heat. Whenever they lit a fire, the downwind from the fell filled the rooms with ‘horrid smoke’ or blew it out of the grate altogether.[4] Sometimes the women were forced to cook in the study, the room with the best chimney – but even then they could barely see one another through the smoke.[5] At other times Aunt Dorothy’s bedroom was the only chimney which drew and they would be forced to huddle together there. The walls were black to the touch and soot soon covered Sara’s pretty dresses.[6]

Her own childhood world was the cheerfully ordered chaos of her uncle Robert Southey and his large family. They lived at Greta Hall, twelve miles over the Dunmail Raise from Allan Bank and on the edge of the town of Keswick. Uncle Southey considered no house complete unless it contained ‘a child rising six years, and a kitten rising six months’, and Sara and the others lived in a place of fairy-tale and fantasy. The names they gave their cats give some idea of the landscape of their imagination and the books which created it: Madame Bianchi, Ovid and Virgil, Pulcheria, Zombi and Rumpelstiltskin wandered around house and garden.[7] To the end of her life Sara would look back on the mountains and lakes of Keswick as an Edenic landscape to which she could never return lest it not live up to her memories, but she yearned for it all the same.[8] At Allan Bank, she was away from her mother for the first time and, especially at night, the dark corners of the house were frightening. The presence of her father only made things stranger.

Little Sara idolised STC but she hardly knew him; he was separated (though not divorced) from her mother and had been mostly absent from her life.[fn5] When, in 1804, after STC and Wordsworth’s solemn walk, Coleridge had fled from

his wife and family and travelled to Malta, Sara had just turned one. He remained abroad for several years and Sara just remembered him reappearing at her house when she was almost four.[fn6] She also recalled, following that, tears and blazing rows between her parents. Mrs STC had tried her hardest – she nursed her husband when he was sick and loved him more than ever; yet the harder she tried, the more STC felt she was making 'an exact and copious Recipe' for '"How to make a Husband completely miserable"'. Eventually he decided his long-suffering wife had failed him: 'Ill-tempered speeches sent after me when I went out of the house . . . Ill-tempered Speeches on my return, my friends received with freezing looks, the least opposition or contradiction occasioning screams of passion.'[9] He had complained bitterly to the Wordsworths and they sympathised with him and persuaded him to leave Greta Hall, his wife and his children. And so Sara's father left again, first for the south of England and later to move in with Dora's family.[fn7] The Allan Bank household, particularly Dora's Aunt Dorothy, who had never liked Mrs STC, was confident they could provide him with the love and stability his wife could not. Sara's uncle, Robert Southey, was furious. The Wordsworths, he said, had 'always humoured . . . [Coleridge] in all his follies, – and listened to his complaints of his wife, – & when he has complained of the itch, helped him to scratch, instead of covering him with brimstone ointment, & shutting himself up by himself'.[10] Thus the lines of opposition were drawn up: Greta Hall with Mrs STC and the Southeys vs. the Wordsworths with STC at Allan Bank.

Sara didn't understand all the complex and unexpressed adult tensions at Allan Bank, but she was nevertheless conscious of them. What she could not know was that STC's relationships were influenced by the great quantity of opium he took. His way of behaving with all the Wordsworth family was confusing, but most strange was the way he acted

around Dora's Aunt Sara. Little Sara would later discover that shortly after marrying, STC had inconveniently fallen in love with Aunt Sara. His love for Wordsworth's sister-in-law was almost an extension of the love he felt for Wordsworth; in his poems she became the immortal 'Asra', the object of a series of exquisite love poems.fn8

Nearly ten years later, STC's ardour for his Asra showed no sign of cooling. In the midst of his opium addiction, she was the unattainable and therefore infallible object of his adoration. STC believed himself to be passionately in love. Young Sara would later learn that, at her own birth, one of the few signs of interest her father showed was in the spelling of her name. He 'bore her sex bravely' and insisted on naming her 'Sara' like his beloved, not 'Sarah' like his wife.11 Aunt Sara Hutchinson's name was spelled either 'Sarah' or 'Sara' by her family, but Coleridge always addressed her as Sara, i.e. with a long first 'a'. His wife was always Sarah. In every sense, Aunt Sara was Mrs STC's rival. Yet even without knowing any of their history, Sara took strongly against Aunt Sara during her 1808 stay. She experienced her antipathy in the terms of a five-year-old: the woman was objectionable, plain and dumpy. Meanwhile STC waxed lyrical about Aunt Sara's kind eyes and soft hair. Begrudgingly the little girl acknowledged Aunt Sara had beautiful hair.12 The image is strange – a father extolling the virtues of his would-be lover to his infant daughter who forms her own, very different opinions. It is particularly poignant given that Sara's mother wore a wig because her (once beautiful) hair had fallen out after the death of her second child, Berkeley, in 1799, when STC was absent in Malta.

Sara could see her father already had good relationships with the Wordsworth children, particularly Dora. The fact they all found it easy to hug and kiss him made Sara profoundly anxious. She could not do the same. Dora was STC's great pet – he called her his 'beautiful Cat of the

Mountain' – and together they would romp and shriek on the stairs, in defiance of Aunt Dorothy and Dora's father who pleaded quiet for their headaches and poetry respectively.[13] The naughtier Dora was, the prettier STC thought she became.[14] Sara was unable to love her father as he wanted, since 'truly nothing does so freeze affection as the breath of Jealousy'.[15] When he approached her, she instinctively recoiled. STC reproached her and told her to be more like Dora with her ready caresses. She slunk away and hid in the wood behind the house. John was the only one to find and comfort her. Years later, recalling that September stay, she vowed never to say to her children: '. . . "Alas – why don't you love me?" . . . for love is an emotion and cannot be compelled.'[16] She knew, in the way children do, that there was something off-kilter about her father's desire to win his daughter's affirmation. As an adult, she could see that in the war between STC and his estranged wife that autumn, Coleridge's motives 'at bottom must have been a wish to fasten my affections on him'. At the time, it only served to intensify her loneliness at being separated from her home and her mother.

Wordsworth was no easier to please. Early one evening Sara was playing with Dora in the garden. Wordsworth, looking proudly at his daughter, exclaimed at how lovely simple sleeveless dresses looked on little girls: their bare arms lent any scene an air of rustic simplicity. Sara was wearing a grand long-sleeved lace-trimmed dress and smart scarlet socks. The barb of the comment still stung forty years later – the feeling she always got things wrong. Wordsworth was not entirely consistent, but he had strong and often pioneering theories on the subjects of children's health, appearance and education.[fn9] He believed in the importance of allowing children to roam the countryside 'wild and free' in order to grow and learn. He had strong opinions about what wild and free children looked like. They should appear picturesque – a romantic version of the

peasant children who peopled the *Lyrical Ballads*. Wordsworth favoured Prussian Blue for dresses. Coleridge broadly agreed with him but preferred simple white smocks. Neither was in keeping with Sara's elegantly fussy clothes. At home, Mrs STC dressed her children with a 'taste for the grand'.

Dora's Aunt Dorothy endorsed all the Allan Bank views. Children ought to not only appear wild and free but also be sturdy and healthy. Sara felt she was constantly letting her father down. By comparison with Dora, she was 'timid' with a 'little fair delicate face muffled up in a lace border and muslin'. Sara was brought up to see herself as weak and fragile, despite being a perfectly healthy child. Her mother raised her on the story that, as a toddler, she had fallen into a river and been sickly ever since. At Allan Bank she continued to make the wrong impression. With the scarlet socks, grand clothes and lace cap her mother had sent her in, she irked her father. STC was so under the Allan Bank spell that he could only see Sara through their eyes, and he was not above using her as a conduit through which to express his antipathy towards his wife. One day, wearing a smart new 'stuff frock', she ran to meet him: 'he took me up and set me down without a caress. I thought I had displeased him.'[17] Only later did it occur to her that it was her clothes he had disliked.

Everyone favoured and admired Dora for her long golden ringlets, never cut and kept in curling papers which were – as Sara later noted – slightly against the poetic philosophy of the household. Wordsworth described her as having 'angelic hair'.[18] Early in Sara's stay, STC, wanting to endear himself to his host, asked Sara if she did not think Dora and her locks beautiful. Sara refused to perform. 'No,' she said bluntly. For this, she 'met with a rebuff which made me feel as if I was a culprit'. The Wordsworths and her father 'boasted that [Sara] was rosier after a month's stay at

Grasmere' but being moulded into someone else's idea of a good shape is never a comfortable experience.

New insights into the adult world apart, it was the painful feeling of extreme homesickness that Sara remembered most from her visit. She missed her mother and found the dark terrifying. Her father was only partially helpful. When he came to bed at midnight or one in the morning, he would wake her up and tell her fairy-tales. The imagination that created the Ancient Mariner and his slimy things and the flashing eyes and floating hair of Kubla Khan's poet-narrator is not the one most of us would choose for bedtime stories and gave her nightmares. She hadn't yet heard of 'goblins, demons, devils, boggles, burglarists, elves and witches', so instead she dreamed about lions, the ghost in Hamlet and 'the picture of Death at Hellgate in an old edition of Paradise Lost' which she'd found in the library at home.[19] As an adult, Sara's inner world would both torture and fascinate her. At five, this strongly felt conflict between inner and outer world – fear and calm – was mostly the contrast between night and day. Adults saw a pretty little thing, charming all she met, wide-eyed and curious, who repeated fairy-tales to the servants and played with John and Dora in the garden of Allan Bank. But at night she suffered from nightmares and sleeplessness. As Sara grew up the split between the light and dark remained just as intense and became a constant theme in her writing.

How gladsome is the child, and how perfect is his mirth
How brilliant to his eye are the daylight shows of earth!
But Oh! how black and strange are the shadows of his sight,
What phantoms hover round him in the darkness of the night![20]

Sara wrote her poem almost thirty years later; by then the phantoms were different but she would never make the common adult mistake of downplaying children's feelings. She always recognised that though pleasures and horrors may change their childhood forms, they retain their impact. In the autumn of 1808, though Sara was not yet six, she was already aware of a darker world hovering beyond her own. Later, she saw in her time at Allan Bank 'the shadow of a shade'. By the start of October, Sara had had enough; when her mother arrived to collect her, she clung to Mrs STC's skirts and wept for she had experienced a 'good deal of misera'lity'.[21] Her father, of course, was furious at this unWordsworthian performance.

'Mild Offspring of Infirm Humanity'

What must Dora, just turned four, have made of Sara who was twenty months – and half a lifetime older? Unlike Sara who left a memoir of this period, Dora left no record of her thoughts. She was, in any case, almost too young to be able to form opinions based upon experience. Psychologists make a distinction between the kind of friendships made before and after the age of five. Before five it seems that friends are quickly made and forgotten. A convenient, amenable playmate is a friend, while strong antipathy is felt towards those who disrupt the child's world in any way – and Sara was disruptive of Dora's world.

Before Sara arrived in September 1808, Dora was the only girl at Allan Bank and beloved of mother, father, aunts and STC. Now Sara was a rival for the attention of these heroes. Sara slept in STC's bed and it seemed to be her reaction he looked for when he played with them. When STC settled down to tell the children a 'wild tale', it was the sight of Sara's 'large eyes [which] grew almost as large again with wonderment' which pleased him.[22] John was apparently

going to marry her. Meanwhile, Dora's parents and aunts turned their attention towards the new baby girl, Cate.

Dora's first four years had been spent, as all who visited could see, as 'the apple of her father's eyes'.[23] She was born on 16 August 1804 in Town End Cottage. Sara and her mother and brothers were staying at the house at the time, so Sara and Dora's relationship had begun at birth. Town End, Dora's home until the move to Allan Bank, is nestled in the hills above Grasmere in Cumbria. It has been skilfully preserved by the Wordsworth Trust and appears today much as it did then, a tiny whitewashed cottage, with exquisite views over Rydal Water and a small tumbling garden. As far as Wordsworth was concerned, it was 'sweet paradise' until 1805, when the view was ruined by a new building called Allan Bank. Afterwards, the view from his cottage included 'staring you in the face, upon that beautiful ridge that elbows out in to the vale (behind the church and towering above its steeple) a temple of abomination'.[24] The abominable Allan Bank did not conform nearly so well to the rustic idyll of the *Lyrical Ballads.* It was a sad irony that within three years the need for a larger affordable house had driven Wordsworth to live in the abhorrent temple.

Despite the view, Town End, – a 'little white cottage gleaming from the midst of trees' – charmed Wordsworth just as it charms tourists today. The main room had a single 'perfect and unpretending cottage window, with little diamond panes, embowered . . . with roses; and, in the summer and autumn, with a profusion of jessamine and other fragrant shrubs'.[25] But the cottage was small – considering the number of people living in it – and, even when the sun shone, dark. The kitchen was dank and gloomy and the sleeping arrangements crowded. The house had six rooms, four upstairs and two downstairs, plus the back kitchen. Normally Aunt Dorothy had a downstairs bedroom and William and Mary the main one upstairs. The children shared a tiny room which Aunt Dorothy had lined