

TUTORIAL

By Peter Wilson and Eric Presland 1974/2021

1 M

Ah! Good morning, Mr Kealey, sit down, sit down, sit down. Welcome to St Rupert's. [*Looks at his watch*] Tutorials are meant to start at 11 o'clock, you know. Here at St Rupert's we like to start early. We may be a new college, but we follow the old traditions. And as our blessed founder put it so eloquently, 'It's the early bird who catches the leveraged buy-out.' I'm sure you'll get used to it.

You're tired? Well, I'm sorry we have interrupted your rest. Yes, I can understand that pulling down statues must be exhausting. Who was it this time? The Venerable Bede? A symbol of old white male privilege, I see. Well, serves him right for being Venerable, I suppose.

Would you like a sherry? The college has an excellent *amontillado* from our own vineyards. Or is that too privileged for you? Excellent. Crabtree! Two large sherries, please. Crabtree has been my Scout man and boy since we opened in 2014.

Now, Mr Kealey, I was very interested in your little essay, which I have here, on the gay love poetry of Samuel Taylor Coleridge, but – forgive me – I wasn't exactly aware - until I read your intriguing thesis, that there was – ah! – any.

You do have proof of authenticity? Yes, I read about the interesting graffito you discovered on the wall of the Bodleian Library, 'Kubla Khan is khinky' – 'khinky' with an aitch, very droll – but is this exactly - ah! – conclusive? You brought in Lucy Worsley to verify it? Well, Lucy Worsley will verify anything

as long as she can wear a mob cap and a bustle, so I don't see that as...

Well, your word against mine, Mr Kealey. No need to take it like that. Mr Kealey, you can put that chair down.

Well, shall we have a look at it? The essay, Mr Kealey. You can put that away. Ah yes, here we are. Beautifully laid out, by the way. If your degree course was in Photoshop you'd be off to a flying start. But it isn't. So let's start with your first discovery.

"There was a young dyke, highly strung,
Had a lover whose praises she'd sung.
She said, 'I love doing –
What's that thing when you're wooing? –
Hell, it's just on the tip of my tongue.'"

Now, the thing is, I don't detect much of the genuine Coleridgean flavour in this interesting piece of verse. Poetry? Depends really on your point of view. Let's have a look at another one.

"A gay man from near Marble Arch
Disappointed a man on a march.
Though he took it in hand
Wouldn't stand up as planned,
Though he dipped it in plenty of starch."

Yes, well, of course I can see the pattern, the simplistic rhyme scheme of the elementary quintain building – as it were – up. But – is this the Coleridge we've come to know and love? Can we, we much ask ourselves, see him in Dove Cottage, leaning over the dinner table, delicately trailing his lace cuff in

the nettle gravy which Dorothy has so carefully prepared, and saying with his inimitable bravado to his breathless host:

“Willie, get onto the table,
Throw your knickers onto the ground,
I’ll give you the best what I’m able
And I’ll whip you all night for a pound.”

I gather you found this written on the back of a bill for ‘12 bottles. Brandy’ from a Signor Aldi, and entitled ‘Epistolary Ode to Mr W.W.’ You say that this gives a certain credence to the supposed homoerotic relationship between Wordsworth and Coleridge – ‘WW’ – well I hardly supposed it was to Willy Wonka, Mr Kealey. I’m not stupid. But – just examine the syntax! “The best what I am able”. Now it’s hardly what we’ve come to expect of the finest prose grammarian of the nineteenth century. Fits the mood of the piece? You may have a point there.

However, despite my reservation, I was very interested in your discovery of an early gay draft of ‘Kubla Khan’. How does it go?

“In Xanadu did Kukbla Khan
A kinky pleasure dome decree
Where he could meet young men on the side
And Mrs Khan couldn’t see.”

I felt that had a certain primitive force. Yes. I was less happy, however, with what you claim is the original version of ‘The Ancient Mariner’.

“It is a hunky Mariner
And it cruiseth one in three
With thy breeches tight on thy meaty thighs
Now wherefore cruisest thou me?
The bridegroom’s door is open wide
And I am next of kin
But come into the privy here
And we can get a quick one in.”

I’m afraid I shall take some convincing about that one!

No, I’m sorry, but I can’t give you more than Beta Triple Minus for this one. Alpha-minus? Certainly not. Beta double minus? Beta Minus? No, don’t start crying again, please Mr. Kealey. Oh all right. Beta plus then. Beta plus-query plus? Sold. And a gold star? And a Kit Kat? You try me too far. Now, what are you going to do for me next week?

The sado-masochistic novels of Jane Austen? Well, of course I’ve heard of them. What do you take me for? A complete idiot?

Next!