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A STUDY OF COLERIDGE'S

"DEJECTION: AN ODE"

by

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A Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School

of Loyola University in Partial Fulfilment of

the Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Arts

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1958

LIFE

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

To most readers of English literature, Samuel Taylor Coleridge is known as the author of "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner," the problematical "Christabel," and "Kubla Khan." These are his three greatest poems, and are found in most large anthologies. Those who are interested in the more theoretical side of Coleridge's writings will recall him as the great speculator in the field of poetics, whose musings have furnished grist for the dozens of books on modern aesthetics and literary criticism which have appeared in the last half century.

If the general reader were to look beyond the anthologies for the fourth or fifth best poems of Coleridge, and if the theorist were to look for poetic expression of Coleridge's thought, both would probably turn to the poem which is the subject of this study. For "Dejection: An Ode" rates high on the list of Coleridge's best poems, and it is also an imaginative recasting of the great philosopher's poetics.

It must be immediately evident from the above comments that "Dejection" is by no means a simple poem. Since it is not one of the more popular of Coleridge's works, less attention has been given to unravelling its mysteries than has been given to the three great poems--which, the scholarship shows,

are themselves full of many problems. The fact that Coleridge's philosophy of poetry is developed in "Dejection" adds to the difficulty of the poem.

There are, however, many advantages to be gained from a close study of such a poem. Coleridge's prose is noted for its frequent non sequiturs, gaps in the structure of thought, and meanderings across the whole broad field of philosophy and literature. One could hope for some lights on Coleridge's meaning when he expresses it in a different medium--poetry--and as applied to a particular case--the unique background of "Dejection."

The purpose of this thesis is to shed light on some difficult parts of this poem by examining the elements that went into its production.

"Dejection" is a central ode among Coleridge's poems. When we have broken through to its riches, we will know much about the man himself and his poetry. We will know much about his life, about his personal set of symbols, and about the ideas that made up his intellectual life. We will begin with a study of the poem itself and then ask some questions about it which will guide the research for the rest of the thesis. A third chapter will deal with the poet's biography and with the first draft of "Dejection" for illumination on the meaning of the poem. In the fourth chapter we will find the answer to some questions of structure in the standard version by comparing it with the original version. In this chapter we will also try to discover the meanings of some of Coleridge's personal symbols. Chapter five is in a way the most difficult and yet the most necessary part. In it we will look at the most basic level of meaning that is found in "Dejection"--the idea-

content. A final chapter contains some concluding remarks.

CHAPTER II

"DEJECTION": EXPLICATION AND PROBLEMS

The most familiar text of "Dejection: An Ode," by Coleridge, is that published by his grandson, Ernest Hartley Coleridge, in the standard edition of his works.¹ In the critical apparatus accompanying "Dejection," Mr. E. H. Coleridge states that the poem was written on April 4, 1802; first published in the Morning Post, October 4, 1802 (there addressed to William Wordsworth on the occasion of his marriage to Mary Hutchinson); transcribed by Coleridge in several letters to friends; and, finally, published in 1817 by Coleridge in the collection of his poems called Sibylline Leaves.

There are only small differences in these versions; the main one is the person addressed in each poem. However, there is a still earlier version of the poem which has come to light since the publication of the standard edition in 1912. This earlier version is longer and more personal; there are many differences between it and the one published by Mr. E. H. Coleridge. This study will deal with Mr. E. H. Coleridge's version and with the first version.

¹Samuel Taylor Coleridge, The Complete Poetical Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge, ed. Ernest Hartley Coleridge (Oxford, 1912), I, 362-368. Quotations from "Dejection" will be identified in the course of the thesis simply by line numbers in parentheses after the quotation.

It will be good to present a short summary of "Dejection" before beginning the detailed explication. The reader is directed at this point to the full text of the standard version in Appendix I at the end of the thesis.

The ode is divided into eight stanzas. The number of lines in each stanza and the number of syllables in a line is irregular, though the iambic pattern is consistent. The general movement of the poem is as follows. A storm threatens which will have some powerful effect on the poet's suffering soul. He is suffering from a depression in which he cannot respond to natural beauty. Poetic inspiration, which is given to those who have joy, now fails the poet. All he can do is to attempt to distract his mind from these feelings by "abstruse research" (89). He banishes these thoughts as the storm begins to break, bringing nightmare visions with it. The storm passes and, on this sleepless midnight hour, the poet wishes pleasant sleep and joyful inspiration for the mysterious "Lady" to whom the poem is addressed.

This is, in a very general way, the movement of the 139-line poem. The unity of the poem is achieved by a process of association rather than by strict logical progression. The moon and the storm are associated; the storm has power over the poet's soul; the poet's lack of inspiration and his sadness are connected; sadness leads to abstract speculation and is fostered by it; sadness and the storm combine to give a nightmare vision; the hopelessness of the situation turns him to an altruistic wish that another might have just the opposite experience.

The whole poem is worked out against a double background. First of all

there is Nature. It is the Nature usually associated with the romantic poets: the semi-wild, unspoiled things of country life. The nouns used throughout the poem are mostly concerned with this concept of Nature: the moon, the storm, the birds and sky, the stars, the lake, even the primitive Eolian Harp. These are the materials with which the poet's imagination builds.

The second element in the background of "Dejection" is a person. Perhaps it would be more accurate to say that the impression grows upon the reader that there is a person--shadowy but nonetheless real--lurking in the background of the poem but in the foreground of the poet's mind. The impression can be justified. What is more shadowy or vague than a person addressed simply as "Lady"? Yet this is the only name she is given in the poem (25, 47, 64, 67, 138). She seems more Spirit or Ideal than human. And yet through the poem one is aware that she is closely connected with the thoughts of grief in the poet's mind. And the final stanza convinces the reader that this is no Spirit or Ideal, but a flesh and blood person for whom the poet can make the benevolent wishes found there.

The more deeply one reads into the poem, the more imperative it becomes to find out who or what the Lady is. She holds a central position in the poem. One feels the mystery must be solved in order to understand the poem. This necessity will become more evident in a closer reading of the poem.

"Dejection: An Ode" is headed by a stanza from the "Ballad of Sir Patrick Spens." The lines he quotes are the following:

Late, late yestreen I saw the new Moon,
 With the old Moon in her arms;
 And I fear, I fear, my Master dear!
 We shall have a deadly storm.

Immediately we are introduced to two symbols which are important in the whole body of Coleridge's poetry, and are particularly important in the present poem: the moon and the storm. Moreover, the symbols are connected--this strange lunar phenomenon presages the deadly storm.

The strange description of "the new Moon / With the old Moon in her arms" is not too uncommon a sight. The small, bright crescent of the new moon reflects the light of the sun onto the earth. The light is then reflected back and vaguely illuminates the rest of the moon. A biographer of Coleridge, Maurice Carpenter, freights the lines with a bit more symbolism: "He saw the heavy bluish belly of the old moon lying in the arms of a slim silver youthful girl."² As we look closer into the poem this paraphrase will not appear to over-interpret Coleridge's lines.

^{x the first} In Stanza I of "Dejection," the poet comments on these lines and says that, if the balladeer was a good weather forecaster, this present evening will end with a storm too. (The reader will recall how disastrous the storm was for Sir Patrick Spens. But at present the night is calm. The wind gently molds the clouds in flake-like patches against the moonlit sky; it evokes only a low moaning sound as it passes across the strings of the Aeolian harp which

²Maurice Carpenter, The Indifferent Horseman (London, 1954), p. 189.

Coleridge says, "better far were mute" (8). An Aeolian harp is a box fitted with strings and placed in the window. It makes a low moaning sound as the wind sweeps across it.

Although the night is calm now, it will not pass unroused by "winds that ply a busier trade" (4). (The poet, achieving a sense of intimacy by his exclamation "And oh!" (15), desires the coming of the storm.) He has seen the same signs in the evening sky that the sailor in "Sir Patrick Spens" saw. This first stanza is concluded by a prayer that this driving "night Shower" (16), whose sounds on previous occasions "have raised me, whilst they awed, / And sent my soul abroad" (17-18), might now give the same impulse, "Might startle this dull pain, and make it move and live." (20)

This important first stanza has several interesting points in it. What might be called the problem of the poem, one element of the "tension", that arises here. The poet suffers some dull pain. The storm has the power to stir him out of this state. The symbolic pattern of storm, wind, and moon are definitely established as bearing directly on the poet's soul. Even the harp rises beyond a mere musical instrument to the status of a symbol--else why would it be far better mute? (8).

The first stanza leaves us with two questions. First, how can the storm, wind, and moon influence the poet's soul? Second, what does the Aeolian harp symbolize? These questions cannot be answered from the text except by conjecture. Yet they must be answered for an understanding of the poem beyond its most superficial level. We will return to them later.

Stanza II elaborates the last few lines of Stanza I. The poet analyzes more deeply the "dull pain" of line 20. It is

A grief without a pang, void, dark, and drear,
 A stifled, drowsy, unimpassioned grief,
 Which finds no natural outlet, no relief,
 In word, or sigh, or tear-- (21-24)

The third of these lines introduces us to the special poignancy of this dejection for the poet. It is a grief which is closely connected with the loss of his poetic inspiration. The sadness is not of the impassioned kind that can find relief in self-expression.

In this "wan and heartless mood" (25), he calls out to the Lady. (Is she the Virgin to be prayed to? Or is she a Beatrice towards whom the poet aspires as an Ideal?) She seems, in this stanza, too idealized to be another human being actually on the scene with him, watching the same natural beauties he now begins to enumerate. (This is her first appearance in the poem. She becomes a significant presence throughout the remainder of it.)

The remaining lines of the stanza contrast the beauties which surround the poet and his inability to respond to them. There is a breach between them. The throstle actually "woos" (26) him to other thoughts. He gazes at the twilight sky, but his eye is blank. He sees in detail the beauty of the evening, yet he cannot respond to it. (Here is the paradox of those works in which the poets lament their passing inspiration--that the very lament should contain such beautiful lines as these:

And those thin clouds above, in flakes and bars,
 And give away their motion to the stars;
 Those stars, that glide behind them or between,

Now sparkling, now bedimmed, now unseen:
 Yon crescent Moon, as fixed as if it grew
 In its own cloudless, starless lake of blue;
 I see them all so excellently fair,
 I see, not feel, how beautiful they are! (31-38)

There are two problems in this stanza. First of all, who is the Lady, and what is her significance in the poem? Secondly, what is the grief that the poet mentions? Why is it so closely connected with the loss of poetic inspiration? Let us remark here that the grief of the poem seems deeper than the loss of poetic inspiration. It is something that cannot be alleviated nor even expressed by poetry, as the poet says in lines 22-24. These questions too will be taken up later.)

The short Stanza III gives a somewhat deeper analysis of the poet's dejection. The opposition is continued between the "outside" world and the "inside" of the poet. He cannot respond to external beauty because his "genial spirits fail." (39) When interior inspiration fails, what can "these" (the beautiful things mentioned in the previous stanza) do to "lift the smothering weight from off my breast?" (41)

The main forward step taken in this stanza seems to be the introduction of the idea that inspiration is an interior thing, not coming from outside the poet. External things remain the same in all the poet's moods. The "fountains are within" (46) which give "passion and life" (45) to the beautiful things created by the poet. No amount of mere gazing will restore his poetic inspiration. (42-43) This is an important idea in Coleridge's philosophy of poetry--a poem is created entirely within the poet's imagination.

The idea is a theme in "Dejection," and we will return to it later.

Stanza IV develops this explanation of the poet's source of inspiration. It is a development of the last statement of the preceding stanza--the fountains of creative activity are within. Coleridge is here maintaining the subjective aspect of beauty. We give the objects of Nature all "life" they may have for us. "In our life alone does Nature live" (48). That which we receive from contemplating Nature, we ourselves have somehow previously given to Nature (47). Whether she wears the festive wedding garment or the melancholy shroud, Nature has received it from us; it is "Ours" (49).

Coleridge then contrasts two different ways of perceiving Nature. The "poor loveless ever-anxious crowd" (52) perceives merely a world that is "inanimate," while the poetic soul perceives value of higher worth by its own creative activity. This same world is now bathed in "a light, a glory, a fair luminous cloud / Enveloping the Earth" (54-55). This power, which is sent forth from the soul itself, is "a sweet and potent voice. . . / Of all sweet sounds the life and element (57-58). (One is struck again by the poetic beauty with which the author laments the passing of his poetic powers. Coleridge here defines in poetic terms what he states elsewhere in prose, the function of the poet's power. A study of his meaning will be made later.)

One other thing to be noted in this stanza is the introductory direct address, "O Lady!" (47). She is never far in the background of the poem, and here she is brought into an especially close connection with the functioning of the poetic powers by the very fact that the stanza is directed ex-

plicitly to her. It seems to be a sort of appeal to her.

This lady is given further specification and qualification in the next part of the poem, Stanza V. She becomes not simply "O Lady," but "O pure of heart" and "virtuous Lady" (59 and 64).

Besides the continued development of the functions of the poetic power, a new element is added in this stanza. The one atmosphere or mood in which the poet's power can work is that of "joy" (59-64). One sees why the epithets "pure of heart" and "virtuous" have been given to the Lady at this point, for the poetry-fostering joy is given only "to the pure, and in their purest hour" (65). Should you ask:

What, and wherein . . . doth exist,
This light, this glory, this fair luminous mist,
This beautiful and beauty-making power (61-63)

he would simply reply, "Joy" (64).

This Joy is given only to the pure, and in their hour of greatest purity. It is the life whose fountains are within (66 and 46). It is the "fair luminous cloud enveloping the earth" (66 and 54). It is not only the "Life," but "Life's effluence"; not only the "cloud," but "cloud at once and shower" (66). When we draw all these metaphors together, Coleridge's meaning seems to be that Joy is not only the beautiful power in the poet's soul, but also the actual beauty-making activity of that soul, or the beauty bestowed on Nature by that Power. Just what is Coleridge trying to express here? This is another question for later consideration.

One wonders, at this point, whether there is any connection between this cloud and the shower--symbolizing the poetic power--and the storm mentioned

earlier (15-20) as affecting the creative activity of the poet's soul. The "fair luminous cloud" and its shower, however, do not seem to be in the same category as the "slant night shower driving loud and fast" (16) and the storm as described in a later part of the poem, Stanza VII.

The effects of Joy are described in the remaining lines of Stanza V:

Joy, Lady! is the spirit and the power,
Which wedding Nature to us gives in dower
A new Earth and new Heaven,
Undreamt of by the sensual and the proud--
Joy is the sweet voice, Joy the luminous cloud--
We in ourselves rejoice!
And thence flows all that charms or ear or sight,
All melodies the echoes of that voice,
All colours a suffusion from that light. (67-75)

In the second of these lines we find a difficulty arising from ambiguous syntax. How explain "wedding Nature" and "to us"? Do Joy and Nature wed and give a dower to us? This is a possible reading. However, the dower is usually brought by the bride to the groom. The reading seems to be rather that Joy is the spirit and the power which unites Nature to us. And with this union of ourselves and Nature we are given a "new Earth and new Heaven" (69). Joy bridges the gap and unites us to Nature, giving us a new world of beauty. Here again we have the connection between the creative power and the moods of joy and dejection.

In Stanza VI the poet reflects on his past experiences with this feeling of dejection. He has felt dejected before, but never has it had the effect of dulling his poetic powers as it has now. Analyzing the two situations, he finds the difference between them. In the past he has still kept his hope, even in the midst of distress and misfortune. In fact, by this hope, the

suffering was turned into the stuff of poetry (76-80). Joy was able to sport playfully with distress (77), and Fancy created dreams of happiness (79).

Now, however, the poet's afflictions have a deadening effect on him. Not only do they bow him down to earth, but he cannot even find within himself any concern that he is robbed of his joy (83-4). But he is aware that each visitation of this new type of grief despoils him further of his poet's birthright, his "shaping spirit of imagination." (86) —

Why is there a difference between the grief of the past which could coexist with poetic inspiration, and the present grief which deadens it? Coleridge develops the idea in the following lines:

For not to think of what I needs must feel,
 But to be still and patient, all I can;
 And haply by abstruse research to steal
 From my own nature all the natural man--
 This was my sole resource, my only plan. (87-91)

There is something deeply felt about which Coleridge does not wish to think. Is it that he feels the esthetic effect of beautiful objects, but he must not think of them? No, this contradicts what he said in lines 37-38. He sees them as beautiful; they have not affected his mood. Rather it seems that he would turn his thoughts, not from beauty felt, but from grief felt. There is something lying deep in his soul, which he cannot shake, and which has deadened the poetic power. But this partial and mystifying explanation is all the poet gives us in this version of the poem. One feels cheated; here at the center of the poem one wonders what deep sadness has so completely despoiled him of his dearest possession. One is left without an answer if

he does not look beyond the standard version of the poem. Further inquiry into this question is left for a later chapter.

The poet prescribes a remedy for dejection--besides stillness and patience (88)--and it seems a strange one for a poet. He turns his mind from thoughts of "what I needs must feel" to the work of "abstruse research" (89). He does this even though he is aware that it may weaken the poetic spirit. The speculative work steals his poet's nature from him. However, this is all he could do, his "sole resource" (91). The result is that the philosophizing natural to only a part of a man--his intellect--has infected the whole. Speculation, undertaken after the loss of poetic power, has filled in the gap left by it and become almost the sole activity of his soul. (92-93) What is it that could drive a poet from his proper work and force him to that which he considers completely against his nature?

In Stanza VII the whole movement of the Dejection poem changes. The poem has been building up in a fairly straight line. The causes and effects of dejection and consequent loss of poetic inspiration have been imaginatively developed. (At this point the poet breaks off. "Hence, viper thoughts, that coil around my mind" (94). (This stanza is perhaps the most difficult to understand both in itself and in its relation to the rest of the poem. The storm reappears; it has broken, ~~as the moon foretold, but with a ferocity unexpected by the reader.~~ The wind raves and the lute screams, and two nightmare visions appear to the poet. The storm has stirred his soul, as he prayed in line 20, but the effect is to whip him into the ~~frenzied~~, possessed type of the mad poet. One feels he should weave a circle thrice around the

poet and cry, Beware! Beware!

Coleridge opens the stanza by dismissing the thoughts of the previous stanza--the "abstruse research" (91). They do not constitute reality; they are only "reality's dark dream" (95). They are the poisonous "viper" thoughts that "coil around my mind," killing the natural man and infecting his whole soul. (94) The viper thoughts may also refer, more generally, to the deeper problems that have driven him to abstruse research.

During the course of his meditations on poetic inspiration and its relation to Joy, the storm has actually broken and begun to grow in intensity. Now, for the first time, he notices how the wind raves. (96-97) It is no longer the "dull sobbing draft, that moans and rakes / Upon the strings of this Aeolian lute" (6-7). Rather the wind draws from the lute "a scream / Of agony by torture lengthened out" (97-98). Again we notice some symbolic meaning almost demanded for the lute.

He addresses this awful power, the Wind, directly. He says that some

Bare crag, or mountain-tarn, or blasted tree,
Or pine-grove whither woodman never clomb,
Or lonely house, long held the witches' home (100-102)

would be a more appropriate instrument for the "Mad Lutanist" than the Aeolian harp in the casement. But the Wind makes Devil's Yule among the slight new foliage of "this month of showers." (104) The reader will recall that "Dejection: An Ode" was composed on April 4, 1802.³ The poet is certainly not unaffected by this upheaval of Nature. The storm, too, must have some sym-

³See the note under the title of "Dejection" in Poems, I, 362.

bolic meaning.

Coleridge calls the Wind an "Actor" (108) who is perfect in the rantings of the tragedy (109), and a "mighty Poet" so bold that one would think him insane--the original meaning of "frenzied" (110). What is it that this poet-actor tells? It is a double tale, one less terrible than the other and yet each with its own tragedy.

The first tale--so vivid one could call it a vision--is like a battle scene from the Iliad. It is of an army being routed, with all the slaughter and carnage found in Homer. Soldiers are trampled, wounds smart, men groan with pain and shudder with the cold. Then all at once there is a stillness almost worse than the battle sounds--a stillness of the death left in the battle's wake. "All is over" (111-116).

The second tale is one "of less affright, / And tempered with delight" (118-119)--but only slightly tempered, for it too is a sad one. Othway himself has told the tender story. (120) Thomas Otway (1652-1685) was a popular Restoration dramatist distinguished by his sentimental tendency towards pathos.⁴ That Coleridge is familiar with the dramas of Otway is obvious from the frequent quotations and misquotations he takes from him in his prose works. Although he refers the story of the wandering child to Otway at this point, one need not take him too seriously. In an earlier draft of the poem, written in a letter to William Sotheby, July 19, 1802, he substitutes "thou

⁴George Sherburn, "The Restoration and 18th Century" in A Literary History of England, ed. Albert C. Baugh (New York, 1948), p. 758.

thymself"--as though Sotheby had written the story.⁵ And in the version addressed to Wordsworth in the Morning Post for October 4, 1802, we find that the tale of the lost girl had been written by "Edmund's self."⁶ "Edmund" is the name he gives Wordsworth throughout this version of the poem.

This last assignment of authorship seems the most natural. Wordsworth's "Lucy Gray" had been published two years earlier in 1800. And it is the story "of a little child / Upon a lonesome wild, / Not far from home, but she hath lost her way."⁷ A plausible reason for changing the authorship to the dramatist, Thomas Otway, was the quarrel between Coleridge and Wordsworth which had occurred between the time of the Morning Post version and the printing of the standard version we are following.

In view of the tone of deep sadness found throughout the poem, juxtaposed with the frenzied vision of this stanza, the last two lines seem to have added significance:

And now the child moans low in bitter grief and fear,
And now screams loud, and hopes to make her mother hear. (124-125)

The poet almost seems to identify his bitter grief and loneliness and fear

⁵Collected Letters of Samuel Taylor Coleridge, ed. Earl Leslie Griggs (Oxford, 1956), II, 818.

⁶See the critical notes for line 120 in Poems, I, 368.

⁷The quotation is from "Dejection" (121-123). Wordsworth's poem, "Lucy Gray," may be found in The Poetical Works of William Wordsworth, ed. E. De Selincourt (Oxford, 1940), I, 234-236). The poem tells of a little girl who wanders off on an errand and is lost in a snowstorm and never found again. Wordsworth wrote the poem in 1799 and published it the following year.

with the child's. And again one catches undertones of meaning that never become quite explicit. Surely this whole stanza implies more than it says explicitly. There is power and grief without sufficient explanation.

In Stanza VIII, the last stanza, the nightmare vision has passed. The tone abruptly changes from fury to peace. The poem ends by bringing us back to the here and the now of Stanza I. In Stanza I Coleridge has established a set of concrete, external circumstances: the clouds, the wind, the moon. Then, gradually, he admits us to his inner thoughts on grief and poetic power. He shares his nightmare vision with us. And finally he has brought us back to the same external circumstances as he utters his concluding wishes.

The time is late at night; but the poet has little thought of sleep-- little wonder, with the fury of Stanza VII still echoing in his ears. He has, however, gained sufficient peace and calm to turn his thoughts from introspection to altruism. He wishes all good things for the Lady.

The reappearance of the Lady is to be noted in this concluding stanza. She is closer now than before. The poet not only speaks lovingly about her (127-128); he even speaks directly to her in affectionate terms. (138-139) She seems more real and human here than before. She does not seem idealized here as in Stanza II. She is not some vague Goddess or Power. She is a being of flesh and blood for whom the poet can be solicitous. For the Lady he wishes peaceful sleep (128) and, above all, Joy. (134-136)

Joy lift her spirits, joy attune her voice;
To her may all things live, from pole to pole,
Their life the eddying of her living soul! (134-136)

It is strange that, in the poet's mind, the storm has not been just his own personal experience. It is somehow connected with the Lady, too. He hopes that she may not be too much affected by it, that it may have beneficial effects on her. One line, "And may this storm be but a mountain-birth" (129), is rather difficult to interpret. And the fact that it is placed between wishes for the welfare of the Lady adds to the difficulty. He is not wishing a good effect from the storm for himself, but for her.

The meaning of the line is possibly that he wishes the destructive force of the storm, as it rages about the mountains, to be changed into a force that is fruitful and creative--a mountain birth.

But an alternate or perhaps complementary meaning is suggested by a similar line from Horace, the famous "Parturient montes, nascetur ridiculus mus," from the Ars Poetica, line 139. This would make Coleridge's line mean something like the following: may the terrible and destructive forces of Stanza VII turn out to be, after all, only something very slight, something that will not disturb the peace and the sleep of the Lady.⁸

At any rate, one is left wondering why the Lady's happiness is involved in the poet's, especially if his only sorrow is loss of poetic powers. Can the storm, with the effects attributed to it upon him and the Lady, be merely the loss of this inspiration? Or is there some other sorrow involving them both and causing the loss of inspiration?

⁸This interpretation is suggested by Humphry House, Coleridge (London, 1953), pp. 165-166.

A case cannot possibly be made out for interpreting "Dejection" as merely the poet's conventional lament for the loss of poetic inspiration. The grief in the poem is deeply personal--not at all conventional. And yet the central point of the poem seems to be missing. What has caused the dejection which deadens these poetic powers?

The last thing to be noted about this last stanza is the presence again of Coleridge's theory of poetry, rephrased slightly from the way it was stated in Stanzas III, IV, and V. The poet desires Sleep to restore Joy to the Lady. "Joy lift up her spirit, Joy attune her voice." (134) Restating his previous remarks about the poet's power to vitalize natural objects and make them beautiful, he says:

To her may all things live, from pole to pole,
Their life the eddying of her living soul! (135-136)

Let us leave the explanation of this metaphor to a later chapter where we shall discuss more at length the ideas that Coleridge proposes in "Dejection."

In the course of the preceding explication several problems have been pointed out and several questions asked which the standard version leaves unanswered. It is now time to collect all these problems and look for some order in which they can be conveniently handled.

The first thing the reader wonders about is the storm and the other images clustered about it. The storm in Stanza I is connected with the moon; it works directly on the Aeolian harp; and in Stanza VII it becomes the wild wind. Even at the beginning of the poem it takes on the aspect of a symbol. This is more than a storm, for it works directly on the poet's soul. And

especially in Stanza VII it is by no means simply a weather phenomenon connected with evaporation and condensation, high and low pressure areas. It is more than a storm; it is something. But what?

Then too one wonders what the Aeolian harp stands for. It is not a mere wind-lyre. If it were, why is it far better if it is mute? What is the significance of the later line where the lute begins to scream as if in agony?

Another disturbing element in the text is a certain lack of coherence which a careful reading discloses. Herbert Read has said, comparing the standard version of "Dejection" with the first version: "In its ruthlessly lopped state the poem is no longer a continuous train of thought, and is therefore divided into eight numbered and rearranged divisions."⁹ The earlier version had no such divisions.

The most disturbing example of this is perhaps Stanza VII. It seems to have dropped into the poem from nowhere. It is not a natural climax gradually arrived at, but a leap into a passionate outburst. It is wild, whereas what precedes and what follows is peaceful. The frenzied action of the wind is certainly not expected from what is said previously in the poem. Moreover, it is not at all easy to make sense out of "what the wind said" in the total context of "Dejection." Humphry House has analyzed the problem of the stanza's opening lines so well that it is worthwhile at this point to quote him

⁹Herbert Read, The True Voice of Feeling (London, 1953), p. 31.

at length:

In the received text [standard version], the opening of Stanza VII especially, and its placing and relevance, are serious obstacles to accepting the poem as a whole. The stanza opens with a sudden twist of thought, in very awkward language:

Hence, viper thoughts, that coil around my mind,
Reality's dark dream!

I turn from you and listen to the wind,
Which long has raved unnoticed. (94-97)

And the "viper thoughts" against which this revulsion occurs are the famous meditative stanza about the loss of his "shaping spirit of imagination," ending with the lines:

Till that which suits a part infects the whole,
And now is almost grown the habit of my soul. (92-93)

The phrase "reality's dark dream" then applies to the firm, sad honesty of self-analysis which make [sic] the greatness of the stanza.¹⁰

One notices other places too where the poem does not hold together. For example, in line 26, the poet says: "To other thoughts by yonder throstle wooed." He has never given us his first thoughts, but simply the statement that he is in a "wan and heartless mood." (25)

Line 87 also seems unrelated in thought and sentence structure to what precedes it. The "For" in this line seems to mean "because." And yet cause does not seem to be the correct relation between what goes before and what follows it.

Rather minor points as some of these might seem, they become more interesting and significant when the reader realizes that there is an earlier and quite different version. Herbert Read says: "The original version of

¹⁰House, p. 134.

the poem has a closer sequence or continuity, and is only broken by an organic paragraphing, demanded by the transitions of thought. In the final version the excisions require an arrangement of the fragments in numbered stanzas, which makes a virtue of the necessary gaps in thought. I do not suppose that anyone who remained ignorant of the original continuity of the poem would complain of this division of the poem into separate 'movements.'¹¹

In a similar vein, there is the disturbing feeling that one experiences in reading the poem that something is missing from it. One begins to suspect that what is unsaid is more important than what is said. Who is the Lady who seems at one point goddess, and at another point so human and so close to the poet's affections? Then too, why does the poet experience such depths of dejection, such a deadening sense of sorrow? It is not merely the loss of poetic inspiration which causes the dejection; there is some sorrow that lies even deeper, which actually causes the loss of imagination and the feeling of dejection. There is some

grief without a pang, void, dark, and drear,
A stifled, drowsy, unimpassioned grief,
Which finds no natural outlet, no relief,
In word, or sigh, or tear-- (21-24)

which is made no more explicit than this in the poem.

Coleridge's concept of joy as it arises in the poem is another subject the reader might ponder. What precise connection does it have with poetic

¹¹Read, p. 34.

inspiration, and why is it necessary to the poet's creativity? Edgar Allen Poe, a younger contemporary of Coleridge, held just the opposite theory. For Poe the melancholy mood--the mood of the poet of "Dejection"--is the greatest stimulus to poetic creativity. Commenting on the steps he took in composing "The Raven," Poe remarks: "Regarding, then, Beauty as my province, my next question referred to the tone of its highest manifestation; and all experience has shown that this tone is one of sadness. Beauty of whatever kind, in its supreme development, invariably excites the sensitive soul to tears. Melancholy is thus the most legitimate of all the poetical tones."¹² So the opinions on the ideal poetic mood are divided. Why did Coleridge believe joy to be so important?

Then too, why does the poet contrast the joyful mood of poetic creation with dejection and "abstruse research" of line 87? Poets as classical as Milton and as modern as Yeats seem to have thrived on research into the abstruse and the occult. For them "abstruse research" was the gate to the garden of poetry. Why does Coleridge place the two in opposition?

This discussion of joy leads to another level in the poem, where we find the poet's ideas on the making of poetry. Coleridge's famous philosophy of poetry finds a clearer expression in "Dejection" than in any other of his poetic works. Throughout the poem we have noticed several characteristics

¹²The Works of Edgar Allen Poe, eds. Edmund Clarence Stedman and George Edward Woodberry (New York, 1903), VI, 36. The quotation is from Poe's essay, "The Philosophy of Composition."

of this philosophy. Most outstanding is the idea that poetic beauty is a subjective thing. This idea is repeated several times and expressed in several different ways. Collecting and analyzing them and interpreting them in the light of Coleridge's other writings on the same subject will help one to appreciate more fully the large part of "Dejection" which deals with the poetic power.

These problems, left over from our explication of the poem, will have to be investigated in the following chapters in order to give completeness to the explanation. The problems fall naturally under three headings. Chapter three will discuss questions concerning the Lady, the cause of dejection, and the earlier version of the poem; Chapter four, the logic of the poem and its symbolic structure; Chapter five, the meaning of "joy" and the philosophic structure of "Dejection."

CHAPTER III

BIOGRAPHICAL BACKGROUND

What is it in a poet's life and experience that can make him write with such poignant beauty the laments of "Dejection"? What is it that can wring from him the phrases that belie their own meaning? In this poem, Coleridge has paradoxically mourned the loss of poetic power in lines of peculiarly powerful poetry.

There is a convention in Western poetry that allows the poet to mourn the death of his muse in living, inspired lines. It is found in Horace and in the "Pervigilium Veneris" of the early Christian Era. It is found in Milton's sonnet, "On His Blindness." But one is convinced that Coleridge, like Milton, was not following a mere poetic convention when he wrote "Dejection." There is more to the poem than convention. The grief is personal, intense, and crushing; this much is clear from the poem. Yet one of the great mysteries of "Dejection" lies in the fact that there is little or no indication of what that grief was.

Any inquiry into Coleridge's life at this point must always take into account his physical state. Coleridge was a sick man. He was afflicted with chronic rheumatism and gout. The history of this sickness Coleridge dates back to early childhood. One day, after quarreling with a brother, he ran

out of the house into the misty October fields. He fell asleep there and was not found until morning. The experience of spending the night on the damp, chilly ground permanently affected his health. Coleridge told the incident to a friend, Thomas Poole, and added: "I was weakly and subject to the ague for many years after."¹³

An adolescent escapade involved swimming across a river fully clothed, and neglecting to change into dry clothes immediately. This resulted in a long bout with jaundice and rheumatic fever. Rheumatism also had an early start with Coleridge. He attributed it to an apartment of drafty rooms he occupied at Cambridge.¹⁴

As he grew older, his bodily infirmities increased. By 1796 he was taking laudanum, under doctor's prescription, for constant physical and nervous disorders. By his own admission, many of the letters sent to Poole during this year were written under its influence. The following selection, though written in a humorous vein, allows a view into the life of suffering he was almost continually leading. Coleridge writes: "I am very poorly; not to say ill. My face monstrously swoln; my recondite Eye sits quaintly behind the flesh-hill; and looks as little, as a Tomtit's. And I have a sore throat that prevents me from eating aught but spoon-meat without great

¹³Letters, I, 352-353; To Thomas Poole, October 16, 1797.

¹⁴H. M. Margoliouth, Wordsworth and Coleridge: 1795-1834 (Oxford, 1953), p. 86.

pain--& I have a rheumatic complaint in the back part of my head and Shoulders."¹⁵

The journals of Dorothy Wordsworth of this time and the letters sent among the Coleridge-Wordsworth circle show that Coleridge's disabling sicknesses were with him, except for short intervals of health, until 1802--the year he wrote "Dejection"--and continued long after.

In general, though, his sickness had a beneficial effect on his poetry. Sickness seems to have sharpened his sensibilities. He writes in his notebook for 1799 a paragraph which shows that ill-health did not bring the depression described in "Dejection." Rather the opposite is true. Sickness helped his poetic imagination. This paragraph is important not only because it bears out the above statement, but--more important in the present context--it is strikingly similar to the circumstances described in "Dejection."

He wrote:

Novemb. 20th.--Midnight.-- O after what a day of distempered Sleeps, out of which I woke, all sense of Time & Circumstance utterly lost / of fever, rheumatic pain, & loads of stomach-sickness.-- I get up / I am calm, like one lownded--/ as I lifted up the Sash, & looked out at the Sky, for the first minute I thought it all dark, a starless Sky; the wind, all the summer swell lost, & the winter Hollowness & Whistle not yet come, mixed its sea-like solemn roars with the Rustle from the yet remaining half dry Leaves on all the Trees.¹⁶

¹⁵Letters, I, 288; To Thomas Poole, December 18, 1796. The spelling, punctuation, and capitalization are Coleridge's.

¹⁶The Notebook of Samuel Taylor Coleridge, ed. Kathleen Coburn (New York, 1957), I, entry 1674 (no page numbers). Typography, including virgules, is Coleridge's.

Could it be that the striking experience which Coleridge has here recorded was recalled in all its clarity at the time he composed "Dejection"-- a short two and a half years later? It seems possible. The point to be noted here, however, is that Coleridge's sickness is not the grief he alludes to in "Dejection." Sickness did not hamper his poetic talent, but seems to have sharpened his perception of beauty in things.

A look into the biographies of Samuel Taylor Coleridge gives the clue to a deeper source of sorrow. The Coleridge scholar, E. De Selincourt, states that as much as a year before "Dejection" was written Coleridge was already a slave to the opium habit.¹⁷ Besides the reference made in the letters of 1796 which we have already noticed, there are indications of the effects of opium on Coleridge's imagination as early as the writings of "Kubla Khan," which Coleridge states he wrote in the summer of 1797.¹⁸

This slavery to dope occasioned great remorse for Coleridge, a man with an acute moral sense. He wrote in 1814: "The terrors of the Almighty have been around and against me, and tho' driven up and down for several dreadful days, by restless Pain, like a Leopard in a den, yet the anguish and Remorse of mind was worse than the pain of the whole Body. O I have had a new world

¹⁷ Ernest De Selincourt, Wordsworthian and Other Essays, (Oxford, 1947), p. 62.

¹⁸ Poems, I, 295-296.

opened to me, in the infinity of my own Spirit!"¹⁹ Here is a deep-seated grief indeed, sufficient to bring upon a man like Coleridge the dejection described in his ode. The only difficulty with the theory seems to be that the letter was written twelve years after the "Dejection" ode was written. However, the habit which was then tormenting him so much had probably been growing on him, with much the same effect on his conscience, during the "Dejection" period. Elisabeth Schneider conjectures that the poem, "The Pains of Sleep," represents the physical and mental anguish undergone by one trying to break the opium habit. The poem is apparently the only one written in 1803, the year following "Dejection." The letters of the period testify that the poem is not merely the work of imagination; Coleridge was suffering something that is for the addict what delirium tremens is for the alcoholic.²⁰

Coleridge's moral revulsion at his own weakness for opium could well be taken as a sufficient cause for the sorrow and sadness of "Dejection." But when one looks more closely at the biography of this period of his life and compare with it the references to the woman that remains even in the standard text of "Dejection," a further illumination of Coleridge's complex mood is received. The heart too had its reasons for sorrow and dejection. There is a problem even more immediately responsible for the sadness of "Dejection"

¹⁹ Unpublished Letters of Samuel Taylor Coleridge, ed. Earl Leslie Griggs (London, 1932), II, 127.

²⁰ Elisabeth Schneider, "The 'Dream' of 'Kubla Khan,'" PMLA, LX (September 1945), 793.

than the opium habit. The conflict arising from an uncongenial home life and "outside interests" is a significant fact in the biography of the period.

Coleridge had married Sarah Fricker about seven years before the "Dejection" year, almost on the rebound from a disappointing love affair. Mary Evans had been Coleridge's first love during the school years. Coleridge and some friends were enthusiastic for some time about beginning a Pantisocratic Society in the wilds of America. Standard equipment for all the members was a wife. Each member was to be married before the group left England to start the communal life on the banks of the Susquehanna in Pennsylvania. Coleridge proposed to Mary Evans. She demurred. Since matrimony was essential, his impulsiveness took a tragic turn. He became engaged to Sarah²¹ Fricker of Bristol, sister to the fiancée of another member of the proposed group. Samuel Chew assigns the poem, "On a Discovery Made too Late," to this event.²² All this happened in 1795, some seven years before the time of our poem.

Herbert Read remarks, "Coleridge had married in haste and repented at

²¹All the Sarahs in Coleridge's life--Sarah Hutchinson and Sarah Fricker --were "Sara" to him. We have retained the more conventional "Sarah" except when quoting from Coleridge or referring to the "Sara" poems.

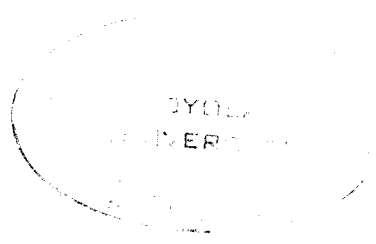
²²Samuel C. Chew, "The Nineteenth Century and After," in A Literary History of England, ed. Albert C. Baugh (New York, 1948), p. 1151. The poem may be found in Poems, I, 72. Ironically, we have a poem of Coleridge's written in his fifteenth year, "Nil Pejus est Caelibe Vita" (Poems, I, 4-5), in which he sings of the comfort and companionship the poor bachelor misses by not marrying.

leisure."²³ But there is ample evidence that Coleridge was really in love with Sarah Fricker when he married her. The poem, "Eolian Harp," was composed about a month before his marriage.²⁴ It is a picture of marital bliss, though it seems too much a rocking-chair-and-cane-in-the-golden-sunset-of-life type of thing for a lad of twenty-three years old. However, Sarah here is "My Love" and "O beloved Woman" and "heart-honour'd Maid." (34, 50, 64) The birth of two sons, Hartley and Berkeley, within the next few years helped to put off for a while a mutual realization of incompatibility.

However, the idyllic picture in "The Eolian Harp" proved only an episode. Coleridge needed sympathy and companionship, and of the type suited to his poetic-philosopher's personality. He did not find that companionship in his wife. Dorothy Wordsworth, in a letter to Mary Hutchinson, records her impression of Mrs. Coleridge. William and Dorothy had been visiting the sick Coleridge; Dorothy wrote: "[T]he same cause which makes us uncomfortable at Keswick prevents him [Coleridge] from having all the good from us that he otherwise would have. Mrs. C. is in excellent health. She is indeed a bad nurse for C., but she has several great merits. She is much, very much to be pitied, for when one party is ill matched the other must be so too. She would have made a very good wife to many another man, but for Coleridge!!

²³Read, p. 31.

²⁴Poems, I, 100.



Her radical fault is want of sensibility, and what can such a woman be to Coleridge?"²⁵

And Coleridge himself confessed in several places this inability to find in his wife the helpmate he needed. One of the most significant of these confessions occurred in a letter to his friend and benefactor, Thomas Wedgewood, dated October, 1802, just six months after the first draft of "Dejection." Coleridge wrote:

After my return to Keswick I was, if possible, more miserable than before. Scarce a day passed without such a scene of discord between me and Mrs. Coleridge, as quite incapacitated me from any worthy exertion of my faculties by degrading me in my own estimation. I found my temper impaired, and daily more so; the good and pleasurable thoughts, which had been the support of my moral character, departed from my solitude. I determined to go abroad--but alas! the less I loved my wife, the more dear and necessary did my children seem to me. I found no comfort except in the driest speculations If any woman wanted an exact and copious Recipe, "How to make a Husband completely miserable," I could furnish her with one--with a Probatum est tacked to it. 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, and the sentiments which I held most base, ostentatiously avowed. . . .²⁶

One may see that the blame was to be laid with Coleridge certainly as much as with his wife; also one may well find it difficult to sympathize with Coleridge's almost whining self-pity. The importance of this letter, however, is that it gives ample reason for the sentiments expressed in "Dejection."

²⁵The Early Letters of William and Dorothy Wordsworth, ed. Ernest De Selincourt (Oxford, 1935), p. 273; April 27, 1801.

²⁶Unpublished Letters, I, 215-216.

One more document is important at this point. There were periodical suspensions of hostilities, but they could not last long between such poorly-matched people as Coleridge and his wife. A couple of months after the above letter, Coleridge wrote to another friend, Thomas Poole, December 17, 1802:

"However, Mrs. C and I go on with less

--of those Habitual Ills
That wear out Life when two unequal minds
Meet in one house, & two discordant wills--"²⁷

Coleridge here quotes from the first version of "Dejection." The subsequent history of the Coleridges is beyond the scope of the present work, and may be found in any of the several biographies.²⁸

The sympathy and companionship that Coleridge did not find at home, yet which he needed, he found in full measure in the Wordsworth circle. Coleridge and William Wordsworth had first met at some yet-determined date in the summer of 1795. The association ripened to friendship late that year and proved a source of inspiration to both poets. So much so that in 1798, the Lyrical Ballads resulted from their collaboration.

A year later, in 1799, Coleridge met Sarah Hutchinson in the Wordsworth home. Sarah was the sister of William Wordsworth's fiancée, Mary Hutchinson, and she was to be of supreme importance in Coleridge's poetry and life for

²⁷Collected Letters, II, 901.

²⁸See, for example, Coleridge: A Biographical Study, Edmund K. Chambers (Oxford, 1938).

the next ten years.²⁹ The meeting took place four years after Coleridge's marriage to Sarah Fricker. It was certainly the right psychological moment for such a meeting. The Coleridges were both becoming increasingly aware of their incompatibility. Sarah Hutchinson, on the other hand, was a member of the circle Coleridge loved and in which he was warmly received; and Sarah Hutchinson was herself more responsive and sympathetic to the poet's personality.

Coleridge's long absences from home gradually developed into a permanent and conscious separation from his wife. His new family, with whom he spent most of his time between 1801 and 1810--except for the period of over a year which he spent in Malta (1804-1805)--consisted of William Wordsworth, his sister Dorothy, his wife, Mary, and his sister-in-law Sarah Hutchinson. Notice that the association began in 1801, the year before "Dejection" was written.

Coleridge's love for Sarah Hutchinson grew through the years until it finally ended with the general break-up between Coleridge and the Wordsworths in 1810, because of a misunderstanding involving a mutual acquaintance, Basil Montague.

Thomas M. Raysor traces the course of Coleridge's love for Sarah in an

²⁹ Thomas M Raysor has charted the course of this love through Coleridge's letters, poems, and notebook entries in an article written several years ago, before the Collected Letters (ed. Griggs), The Notebooks (ed. Kathleen Coburn), or the first version of the Ode appeared. See "Coleridge and 'Asra,'" Studies in Philology, XXVI (July, 1929), 305-324.

article, "Coleridge and 'Asra,'" based on the notebooks of Coleridge which were as yet unpublished when the article appeared in 1929. It is with delicacy and understanding that Mr. Raysor published the pertinent passages and his own commentary. Some of the notebook entries may be quoted here to give in Coleridge's own words the biographical background to "Dejection," as well as to furnish examples of some of his finest prose.

At one of their early meetings at the Wordsworth house the following incident is recorded: "November 24, 1799. Conundrums and puns, and stories and laughter with Jack Hutchinson. Stood up round the fire, et Sara manum a tergo longum in tempus prensatam, and tunc temporis, tunc primum amor me levi spiculo, venenato eheu et insanabili--"³⁰

While Coleridge was in Malta and separated from Sarah, he wrote the following in his notebook under the date, April 19, 1804:

Soother of absence! O that I had the language of music, the power of infinitely varying the expression, (and in developing it even as it is). My heart plays an incessant music for which I need an outward interpreter--words, still over and over again--and each time I feel differently, tho' children of one family.

Whatever change of place, country, climate, company, situation, health and spirits, flowers, trees, moving seasons, ever is that one feeling at my heart--felt like a faint pain, a spot which it seems I could lay my finger on. I talk loud or eager, or I read and meditate the abstruse research, or I laugh, jest, tell tales of mirth, and ever as it were within me and behind, I think and image you, and while I am talking of government or war, or chemistry, there comes ever into my bodily eye some tree beneath which we have rested, some rock where we have stood on the projecting walk edging high above the Crumnock Lake, where we sate beneath the Rock, and those dear lips

³⁰ Raysor, 307.

pressed my forehead.³¹

To his notebook he protested the purity of his love of Sarah: "O the cruel, cruel misconception of that which is purest in me, and which alone is indeed pure--my love of Asra."³²

Coleridge came to depend upon Sarah Hutchinson. She is the muse behind his periodical, The Friend (published from June, 1809, to March, 1810). All of them--the Wordsworths, Sarah, and Coleridge--were living in the same house at Allan Bank at this time.

But was this love purely platonic? The unpleasant question intrudes at this point, and perhaps it is not entirely without bearing on the present subject, the feelings behind "Dejection." Coleridge protested that the love was the purest thing in him. The Wordsworths mightily feared the opposite. And even Coleridge had confided statements to his notebooks, one at least even before the date of "Dejection," which support the Wordsworths' concern.³³ Platonic or not, the important thing for the present study is the realization of the struggle in Coleridge's mind between the conscience which recognized the lawfully wedded wife and the heart which wanted another. Coleridge, as we have said, had a very strong moral sense.

Professor Raysor has given evidence that "Dejection" and several other

³¹Ibid., 311.

³²Ibid., 313-314.

³³See, for example, Coburn, notebook entry number 979. (No page numbers.)

poems of the period 1801-1810 were either written directly to Sarah or inspired by the poet's love for her. They are thinly disguised by the use of "Σαρα" or "Asra" instead of "Sara" when speaking to or of her. For this reason they have been called the "Asra Poems."³⁴

This then is the poet behind "Dejection" - a man crucified by ill health, a slave to the opium habit, and torn between an unhappy marriage and a genuine love he did not feel free to pursue. The conscience of the sensitive man certainly adds to the grief of "Dejection."

This general pattern of suffering behind "Dejection" is sufficient to explain Coleridge's mood when he wrote the poem. However, there is another and most important link between the man at this time and the standard text of "Dejection." The link is the earlier version of the poem. E. H. Coleridge gave no indication of its existence in the collected poems of his grandfather when he published them in 1912, and it remained for the Wordsworth and Coleridge scholar, Ernest De Selincourt, to publish it for the first time.³⁵

Professor De Selincourt begins his introduction of the poem by quoting a passage from Dorothy Wordsworth's Journal which had puzzled many students of Coleridge's poetry. Dorothy had written in her journal for April 21, 1802: "William and I sauntered in the garden. Coleridge came to us and repeated the verses he wrote to Sara. I was affected with them, and in miserable

³⁴ Raysor, 323-324.

³⁵ Essays and Studies by Members of the English Association, 1936, "Dejection: An Ode," Ernest De Selincourt (Oxford, 1937).

spirits. The sunshine, the green fields and the fair sky made me sadder; even the little happy sporting lambs seemed but sorrowful to me. . . . I went to bed after dinner, could not sleep."³⁶ The lines refer, of course, to the earliest version of "Dejection," which De Selincourt reproduces in full for the first time in print.

The earliest version of "Dejection" (let us call it the "S. H. version") is more than twice the length of the "standard version." The S. H. version is 340 lines; the standard version is only 139 lines.³⁷

The standard version has been depersonalized and objectified as Coleridge would understandably consider necessary before he could publish it. However, it is a fact worth remarking that all but a few lines of the standard version are taken directly from the S. H. version. The effect achieved by cutting lines and rearranging sections.³⁸

The S. H. version was addressed directly to Sarah Hutchinson as a letter. This is not obvious from the standard version, but is necessary to a fuller understanding of it. The S. H. version is not in the form of an ode with eight sections, as is the standard version, but is rather an amorphous

³⁶ Journals of Dorothy Wordsworth, ed. Ernest De Selincourt (New York, 1941), I, 136.

³⁷ The full text of the first version, addressed to Sarah Hutchinson, may be found in Appendix II at the end of this thesis.

³⁸ Appendix III at the end of this thesis contains a table comparing the two versions of "Dejection." There one may see what sections were cut, rearranged, or added for the final version.

poem in which the thoughts are cut out into separate paragraphs. The main differences between the two poems lie, as has already been suggested, in the amount of personal and biographical references present in the first version but lacking in the final. This accords, not only with the requirements of propriety, but with Coleridge's own theories too. He states in the Biographia Literaria, published seventeen years later, that a poem to be good must be objective. He is speaking about Shakespeare when he says: "A second promise of genius is the choice of subjects very remote from the private interests and circumstances of the writer himself. At least I have found, that where the subject is taken immediately from the author's personal sensations and experiences, the excellence of a particular poem is but an equivocal mark, and often a fallacious pledge, of genuine poetic power."³⁹ Herbert Read comments: "I think there is no doubt that Coleridge had this particular poem of his own in mind when making such a statement."⁴⁰

At any rate, the earlier version is extremely personal. Coleridge allows us a glimpse of his soul torn by his incompatibility with his wife and his attraction for the other Sarah. He describes the home life which, by this time, had grown unbearable for both parties:

I speak not now of these habitual Ills
That wear out Life, when two unequal Minds

³⁹Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Biographia Literaria, ed. J. Shawcross (Oxford, 1907), II, 14-15.

⁴⁰Read, p. 34-35.

Meet in one House and two discordant Wills--
 This leaves me, where it finds,
 Past Cure, and past Complaint,--a fate austere
 Too fix'd and hopeless to partake of Fear! (S. H., 243-248)

The following lines must have been very painful to those friends (Sarah Hutchinson, Mary Hutchinson, William and Dorothy Wordsworth) to whom it was read a few days after it was composed:

. . . O Friends, most dear! most true!
 Methinks to weep with you
 Were better far than to rejoice alone--
 But that my coarse domestic Life has known
 No Habits of heart-nursing Sympathy,
 No Griefs but such as dull and deaden me,
 No mutual mild Enjoyments of it's [sic] own,
 No Hopes of its own Vintage, None O! none--
 Whence when I mourn'd for you, My Heart might borrow
 Fair forms and living Motions for it's [sic] Sorrow. (S. H., 255-264)

We have already seen the letter in which he mentioned his great love for his children and the pain caused by separation from them. They too find a place in the poem. For example:

My little Children are a Joy, a Love,
 A good Gift from above!
 But what is Bliss, that still calls up a Woe,
 And makes it doubly keen
 Compelling me to feel, as well as know,
 What a most blessed Lot mine might have been.
 Those little Angel Children (woe is me!)
 There have been hours when feeling how they bind
 And pluck out the Wing-feathers of my Mind,
 Turning my Error into Necessity,
 I have half-wish'd they never had been born!
That seldom! but sad Thoughts they always bring,
 And like the Poet's Philomel, I sing
 My Love-song, with my breast against a Thorn. (S. H., 272-285)

From the "coarse domestic Life," Coleridge turned elsewhere for the warm family circle he needed. It is to the other Sarah that he turns from this

"sore Evil, which I dread the most, / And oft'nest suffer." (S. H., 23-24)
 She it is who becomes "O Sister, O Beloved!" (S. H., 94), and the "best
 belov'd who lovest me the best." (S. H., 120) He turns to the Wordsworths
 and to her to find domestic bliss. Such pictures as the following appeal to
 him:

It was as calm as this, that happy night
 When Mary, thou, and I together were,
 The low decaying Fire our only Light,
 And listen'd to the Stillness of the Air!
 O that affectionate and blameless Maid,
 Dear Mary! on her Lap my head she lay'd--
 Her Hand was on my Brow,
 Even as my own is now;
 And on my Cheek I felt the eye-lash play.
 Such joy I had, that I may truly say,
 My spirit was awe-stricken with the Excess
 And trance-like Depth of it's brief Happiness. (S. H., 99-110)

In the Wordsworth circle he finds fulfillment of an even more deeply
 personal need:

But thou, dear Sara! (dear indeed thou art,
 My Comforter, a Heart within my Heart!)
 Thou, and the Few, we love, tho' few ye be
 Make up a World of Hopes and Fears for me. (S. H., 249-252)

And yet he feels, not without foundation, that his presence in the group
 brings pain to them. He is a blight on their domestic peace and happiness:

Wherefore, O wherefore! should I wish to be
 A wither'd branch upon a blossoming Tree? (S. H., 167-168)

But if he stays away, he is full of fears for any suffering the Beloved might
 experience unknown to him:

But (let me say it! for I vainly strive
 To beat away the Thought), but if thou pin'd
 Whate'er the Cause, in body or in mind,

I were the miserablest Man alive
 To know it and be absent! Thy Delights
 Far off, or near, alike I may partake--
 But O! to mourn for thee, and to forsake
 All power, all hope, of giving comfort to thee--
 To know that thou are weak and worn with pain,
 And not to hear thee, Sara! not to view thee--
 Not sit beside thy Bed,
 Not press thy aching Head,
 Not bring thee Health again--
 At least to hope, to try--
 By this Voice, which thou lov'st, and by this earnest Eye--
 Nay, wherefore did I let it haunt my Mind
 The dark distressful Dream! (S. H., 169-185)

Coleridge ends the poem with a rhapsody of praise for this "Lady," nested as she is in the warmth and joy of a happy family. Some of the concluding lines, it will be noticed, were retained in the standard version:

Sister and Friend of my devoutest Choice
 Thou being innocent and full of love,
 And nested with the Darlings of thy Love,
 And feeling in thy Soul, Heart, Lips, and Arms
 Even what the conjugal and mother Dove,
 That borrows congenial Warmth from those, she warms,
 Feels in the thrill'd wings, blessedly outspread--
 Thou free'd awhile from Cares and human Dread
 By the Immenseness of the Good and the Fair
 Which thou seest everywhere--
 Thus, thus, should'st thou rejoice!
 To thee would all things live from Pole to Pole;
 Their Life the Eddying of thy living Soul--
 O dear! O Innocent! O full of Love!
 A very Friend! A Sister of my Choice--
 O dear, as Light and Impulse from above,
 Thus may'st thou ever, evermore rejoice! (S. H., 324-340)

The S. H. version of "Dejection" fills in a necessary background for the poem, as we have seen; but the first version can also be used to resolve many of the questions asked about the standard version. More in particular, the many gaps can be at least partially filled in by a comparison of the two

versions. This will be the task of the first part of the following chapter.

CHAPTER IV

CRITICAL BACKGROUND

The content of the present chapter falls under the category of "literary criticism" in its strictest sense. We shall investigate the continuity of the poem, "Dejection: An Ode," and try to determine the meaning of some of the symbols used and their function in the poem.

With regard to the first problem--the unity or continuity of the poem--we have already seen, in Chapter II, the opinions of some of the experts on this matter. Several instances of gaps in the flow of thought and of obscure references and antecedents were pointed out. The first part of this present chapter will seek some illumination for these cloudy parts. One would naturally expect the earlier version of "Dejection" to help us at this point, for it is the raw material from which the final version was forged.

The earlier version--not meant for public eyes, but only for those of Sarah Hutchinson--is a spontaneous confession piece. "Dejection" in its first version is a wild stream plunging uncontrolled and unchecked through a virgin forest. In the later version much of the spontaneity and passion have been kept. But much of the confession has been dropped. Significant facts are omitted. The reader is bewildered. The stream now flows through a

formal park. Its channel is directed. Weeds and embarrassing underbrush have been cleared away. Everything is set in order for the public.⁴¹

A comparison of the two versions will help us determine more clearly the meaning of the standard version. And perhaps the first problem encountered in reading this standard version is solved when we find out who the Lady is. The French detective's adage for getting to the core of the mystery proves true again: "Cherchez la femme." This is significant: where we find "Lady" in the standard version we find "Sara" in the S. H. version. And once we know about Sarah Hutchinson and her place in Coleridge's life, and the "coarse domestic life" which made her love so necessary to the poet, the veil drops from the mysterious Lady of the standard version. She becomes poignantly real in the poet's life and in the present poem. And when "Dejection" is put in the context of the other poems "To Asra," we have an immediately intelligible setting for the poem and a completeness of meaning which is not accessible to the purist critic who insists that a poem is a "thing" that must stand or fall independently of anything not contained within the poem itself.

At this point, before looking into the individual questions asked above concerning the poem's logical flow, it will be good to look at Appendix III at the end of the thesis. There one will find a line and section comparison

⁴¹The metaphor is from Read, p. 35.

of the two versions. Running the eye down the right-hand column, the reader will quickly notice an interesting fact. Coleridge has directly transferred the first fifty-one lines of the S. H. version to the standard version, with an unimportant omission and a significant addition. But after that the picture changes. The poet then omits large narrative passages, inserts a line here and there, and--of great importance--he drastically rearranges the sections taken from the S. H. version. Actually, one would be rather surprised to find a complete unity after such a mixing up of parts.

Setting aside for the moment the enigmatic Stanza VII, let us take up a couple of minor difficulties concerning the unity of "Dejection." The first one noticed came in line 26. After adverting in only the vaguest terms to his "grief," the poet suddenly turns to "other thoughts"--as though the first thoughts had been much more real and vivid than the statement he has actually made of them.

Turning to the S. H. version we find details which have been dropped in the later version--understandably so, but leaving the meaning quite obscured. Between line 25 and 26 of the standard version the following lines have been dropped:

This, Sara! well thou know'st,
Is that sore evil which I dread the most,
And Oft'nest suffer. . . . (S. H., 21-23)

The lines state one of the main topics which is developed at length through the narrative portions of the poem. There is no vagueness about the grief in the S. H. version of the poem.

A rather serious gap in the standard text is that between lines 86 and 87. The thought up to line 86 is this: my powers of poetry can no longer overcome afflictions and continue working. At line 87 he says: because all I can do is be patient and turn to abstruse research. The causal "For" is an odd way to connect the two parts of this stanza. One would be hard put to it to explain the sequence of thought. Fortunately there is the S. H. version to fall back on for enlightenment. There, a long section of twenty-two lines has been dropped from the standard version. One wonders that the stanzas have any coherence with such an omission. This is the famous passage of "confessional pathos," as Sir Herbert Read calls it.⁴² Here Coleridge complains of his homelife and confesses his love for Sarah Hutchinson. The lines are in the S. H. version (243-264) and have been quoted above.⁴³

The continuity of thought becomes clear. In the past Hope made sorrow and the poetic power compatible (S. H., 232-237; Standard 76-81). Now, however, sorrow robs me of the poetic power (S. H., 238-242; Standard 82-86). And the omitted lines explain the new sorrow. Two discordant wills and minds wear one another down (S. H., 243-245). The poet is dulled by sorrow "past Cure, and past Complaint" (S. H., 247). All his warm human sentiments are with Sarah Hutchinson and the Wordsworths. If any sorrows befall this second family of his, he does not complain that he mourns--for sorrow with them is

⁴²Read, p. 35.

⁴³See above, pp. 44-46, or Appendix II.

better than solitary rejoicing (S. H., 253-257). Rather he complains that his own "coarse domestic life" (S. H., 258) lends his sorrow no "Fair forms and living motions" (S. H., 264). In other words, Coleridge finds that his home life so dulls and deadens him that he cannot respond to any other emotional situation (S. H., 260).

Why is this? Here we resume the text of the standard version. Coleridge finds that he can respond to no emotional situation because he has had to force his attention away from the only place where his feelings really lie (S. H., 265; Standard 87). He has had to smother natural responses by means of what is--for him--an unnatural activity, abstruse research (S. H., 266-268; Standard 89-90). It was all he could do, the only course open to him. And yet, even that proved harmful. The scientific inquiry, which is suitable for one part of a man's soul, has infected the whole man and become habitual (S. H., 270-271; Standard 92-93).

In this way--by comparison of the two texts--we find what Coleridge had in mind when he redid Stanza VI, and how the non sequitur in line 87 can be explained. We are by no means arguing here that the earlier version is better than the later. One finds even in this single omitted passage two or three sentence structures whose meaning is very difficult to unravel. Coleridge did well to reject such lines. The point here is rather that light is shed by this passage on the one gap in the flow of this stanza of the standard version.

The problem of Stanza VII is many-sided, as was explained in Chapter II.

The first line does not follow logically from the end of the preceding stanza. The mood of the whole stanza is different from what comes before it and what follows it. And its actual function in the poem--though it strikes the reader as a climax of some sort--is difficult to determine. Perhaps the S. H. version will shed some light on these problems too.

As we asked above, how can Coleridge call the lines of the previous stanza "Viper thoughts . . . / Reality's dark dream"? The names are applied to the "firm sad honesty of self-analysis" which makes the greatness of Stanza VI. On looking into the S. H. version we see how this mix-up came about. The lines which make up the climactic Stanza VII are in the middle of the original version, not almost at the end as in the standard version (S. H., 187-215). "Reality's dark dream" in line 90 of the official version is a rephrasing of "the dark distressful dream" of the S. H. version, line 185. In the S. H. version the dream from which the poet turns is the thought of his misery if Sarah were ill in mind or body and he, necessarily absent, were unable to comfort her. The "Dark distressful dream" then does not refer at all to the passage about the shaping spirit of imagination. Rather it refers to a momentary horrible thought inspired by the uncertainty of the relationship between Sarah Hutchinson and Coleridge.

But even after we have seen that the passage makes sense in the original version, we still have difficulty defending the meaning of the passage as consistent with the rest of the standard version of the poem. What precedes it is calm and what follows it is calm. This stanza is far from calm. There

is, however, some preparation for the disturbances in the first part of the poem. One may even say it is predicted in the lines from "Sir Patrick Spens" which head the poem. Coleridge himself seemed to fear the disturbance.

This night, so tranquil now, will not go hence
Unroused by winds, that ply a busier trade
Than those which mould yon cloud in lazy flakos. (3-5)

I see the old Moon in her lap, foretelling
The coming-on of rain and squally blast.
And Oh! that even now the gust were swelling
And the slant night-shower driving loud and fast! (13-16)

The further question arises, however. Why does nature act so violently in this stanza? Here we shall have to tip our hand and tell the reader about what will come in the next section of this chapter. Here it is merely stated; there it will be shown with more explanation and evidence. The wind symbolizes nature--or, more preferably for the Romantic Poet, Nature--and the lute or harp symbolizes the poet's soul. This identification brings much greater clarity to the present discussion. The wind (Nature) has gone mad, and so the lute (soul) is tortured with agony.

The meaning in general of Stanza VII, then, is that the soul of the poet is at odds with Nature. Actually we are ready for such a statement at this point in the poem. Nature has gone mad as far as the poet is concerned. There is no intellectual or aesthetic contact. His soul is in agony. Lacking the joy his poetic powers need, he is out of harmony with Nature. This does not explain the details of Stanza VII, but it is a key thread that leads us through the whole tangle.

E. H. Coleridge speaks of Coleridge's idea of joy in the following way:

"He called it joy, meaning thereby not mirth or high spirits, or even happiness, but a consciousness of entire and therefore well being [sic], when the emotional and intellectual faculties are in equipoise."⁴⁴ The poet's soul is here certainly not in equipoise. The balance is thrown over by the clash with the wind. Even in the next stanza he will speak only of the Lady as being in harmony with the things of Nature: "[T]heir life the eddying of her living soul." (136) The eddy, as I. A. Richards points out, "is a conspicuous example of the balance of forces."⁴⁵

When wind and lute are out of harmony with one another, the result is terrible. The raving of this Mad Lutanist (the wind) is so terrifying that Coleridge felt it necessary to justify his description in a note added to the text. He says, in part, that "[t]his address to the Storm-wind, will not appear extravagant to those who have heard it at night and in a mountainous country."⁴⁶

But why does the poet represent Nature acting so violently at this point? Why did Coleridge feel it necessary to clip this passage from the original poem and put it into the standard text? And, more particularly, why did he take it from the middle of the earlier version and put it towards the end of

⁴⁴Quoted in I. A. Richards, Coleridge on Imagination (New York, 1935), p. 150 from E. H. Coleridge, "The Lake Poets in Somerset," Transactions of the Royal Society of Literature, XX.

⁴⁵Ibid., (Richards) p. 152.

⁴⁶Poems, I, 367, note for line 100.

the final version? We have mentioned before the obviously climactic quality of the stanza. In the very first reading one senses the dramatic placement of this stanza in the poem, even before the entire meaning of the poem is comprehended. It seems to the present writer that Coleridge did this designedly. He composed the standard version after he had had time to back away from the immediacy of the original emotional situation. He was choosing the building blocks for this poem from the original pieces which were more spontaneous outbursts of passion, not directed by the full reflective power of the poet. He had a function for this Mad Lutanist keeping his Devil's Yule, for the tragic actor with his tales of slaughter and melancholy. Viewing the tranquility that follows, one senses that there is a catharsis of some sort intended in Stanza VII; the reader himself feels it as he reads through the poem. And the poet has changed the wildly emotional mood to one of quiet peacefulness. It almost seems as though the melancholy lament that is "Dejection" has eased the burden of dejection from his soul and allowed him to shake that particular burden off his back, at least temporarily.

The dreamlike quality of much of Coleridge's poetry has often been noticed. Certainly it is remarkable in the more fanciful compositions such as "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner" and "Kubla Khan." It is also present in "Dejection," especially in Stanza VII. Certainly the violence, the fading from one scene into another, and the eerie vision of the lost child are experiences usually encountered only in a nightmare.

The point of the dreamlike quality of Stanza VII would be relatively

unimportant and of only passing interest except for the following fact: the passage closely resembles another poem, "The Pains of Sleep."⁴⁷ This poem was written a year after "Dejection," after a nightmare resulting from his opium habit. Elisabeth Schneider, in her article on "Kubla Khan,"⁴⁸ points out that nightmares, hallucinations, and delirium are the result of attempting to break the habit, whereas only relief from pain and perhaps a slight euphoria result when the addict takes opium. Coleridge would have been making one of his many attempts to break the habit at the time he wrote "Pains of Sleep," the only poem of 1803.

In "Pains of Sleep" are the following lines:

But yester-night I prayed aloud
 In anguish and in agony,
 Up-starting from the fiendish crowd
 Of shapes and thoughts that tortured me. (14-17)

The third night, when my own loud scream
 Had waked me from the fiendish dream,
 O'ercome with sufferings strange and wild,
 I Wept as I had been a child;
 And having thus by tears subdued
 My anguish to a milder mood,
 Such punishments, I said, were due
 To natures deepliest stained with sin. (36-43)

There are obvious parallels between these lines from "Pains of Sleep" and the lines, images, and sentiment of Stanza VII of "Dejection." If we may argue from similar poetic expression to similar experience, it seems that

⁴⁷Poems, I, 389.

⁴⁸Schneider, p. 792.

Coleridge's opium habit had reached another crisis point at the time he was composing "Dejection." The moral shame and physical torture add more to our understanding of the problem of the man behind the poem.

The second critical problem, and therefore the second part of this chapter, arises from the presence of symbols in "Dejection." Perhaps the easiest way to distinguish symbols is to determine whether they are objective or subjective, depending on whether their meaning--the thing symbolized--is generally recognized rather easily from the symbol, or whether the meaning is arbitrarily determined by the author and knowable only by close examination of his writings or by the speculations of commentators. An example of the objective type of symbol is the clock one would see on the sign over the shop of a watch repairman. An example of the subjective symbol is the "Aeolian harp" found in several of Coleridge's poems, the present one included. One finds it hard to recall any other poet who uses the Aeolian harp as a symbol; and it would be even more difficult to determine a priori, as it were, the real significance of the harp as a symbol.

We need not be concerned with further subdivisions of symbols, for the symbolism of "Dejection"--at least that which one finds at all puzzling--belongs to the subjective class.

Let us look more closely at the symbol of the Aeolian harp as it appears in "Dejection." There are two passages concerned with it:

The dull sobbing draft, that moans and rakes
Upon the strings of this Aeolian lute,
Which better far were mute. (Standard, 6-8)

I turn from you, and listen to the wind,
 Which long has raved unnoticed. What a scream
 Of agony by torture lengthened out
 That lute sent forth! (Standard, 96-99)

The lute in these passages is not, cannot be, a simple image with only one meaning. It must stand for something else too. It is influenced by the wind and storm just as the poet is. Why does he say, "Which better far were mute," if the lute is simply a wind instrument placed in the casement? Why give the harp almost human qualities in the second passage, where it is tortured and screams in agony? There is some further significance to it. It is a symbol and stands for something else.

H. M. Margoliouth in his book, Wordsworth and Coleridge: 1795-1834, treats "Dejection" briefly. But in the course of the treatment he refers us to the poem written several years earlier, "The Eolian Harp."⁴⁹ The poem is a honeymoon piece of nuptial bliss. Margoliouth seems to imply that the Eolian Harp has, by the time of "Dejection," become a symbol of happy domestic life for Coleridge. The meaning of Stanza VII, then is, that it would be better not to feel the ties to the home where there are the children he loves and the wife he cannot get along with. The thought of home tortures Coleridge.

Though this association of harp and home does explain why it would be better if the harp were silent and why the scream of agony is tortured from it, still there seems to be more to it than that. Coleridge could certainly associate the harp and happy domestic life in "Dejection," because he has done

⁴⁹Margoliouth, p. 105.

so in "The Eolian Harp." But even in this latter poem the symbol has a further significance. In "The Eolian Harp" we find the following lines:

And that simplest Lute,
Placed length-ways in the clasping casement, hark!
How by the desultory breeze caress'd,
Like some coy maid half yielding to her lover,
It pours such sweet upbraiding, as must needs
Tempt to repeat the wrong! And now, its strings
Boldlier swept, the long sequacious notes
Over delicious surges sink and rise,
Such a soft floating witchery of sound
As twilight Elfins make, when they at eve
Voyage on gentle gales from Fairy-Land. (12-22)

And what if all of animated nature
Be but organic Harps diversely fram'd,
That tremble into thought, as o'er them sweeps
Plastic and vast, one intellectual breeze,
At once the Soul of each, and God of all? (44-48)⁵⁰

Another area of meaning is opened in this second passage. Coleridge is defining his own symbols. Every being in the world is a harp with its own unique structure, "diversely fram'd." They "tremble into thought" as the wind passes across them. And this wind is some "intellectual breeze, / At once the Soul of each, and God of all," undoubtedly some pantheistic weltgeist, the nature of which will have to be examined in the next chapter. Here we have two of Coleridge's symbols identified for us: the harp is the soul and the wind is the divinity.

We have said in the explanation of "Dejection" that the storm-wind image in Stanzas I and VII would have to be explained as symbols, that they were not

⁵⁰"The Eolian Harp," Poems, I, 100-102.

meaningful in the poem as simple one-meaning images. The fact that the wind and harp are related to one another in these two poems, and in other poems also,⁵¹ would argue to similar meaning for the symbols in the poems. In "Dejection" the same proportion must be set up: the wind is to the grass-harp as the world-soul or Nature is to the human soul.

The meaning of the two symbols is apparent in the "Aeolian Harp" poem, but in extending the same meaning to the symbols when they appear in "Dejection," we are happy to see a critic no less redoubtable than I. A. Richards in complete agreement here. He says: "'Dejection' begins with the same Wind Harp which gives its title and imagery to the other poem. The two are in fact complementaries."⁵² He then goes on to point out the parallel meanings of wind and harp in each poem. When we have collected the meanings of the remaining symbols in "Dejection," we shall be ready to discuss the significance of them all in the total context of the poem.

The third symbol is the moon--an interesting image. The moon provides atmosphere for the descriptive parts of the poem, Stanzas I, II, and VIII. What the poet sees is bathed in moonlight. The moon is also the precursor of the storm that will affect the soul so vigorously. If we do not understand the meaning and function of the moon in "Dejection," we shall not perhaps miss the sense of the poem, but we are deprived of a richness that spreads

⁵¹See, for example, "The Nightingale," Poems, I, 264-267, lines 77-82.

⁵²Richards, pp. 150-151.

throughout the whole poem.

That the moon is connected with poetic illumination and inspiration has become a commonplace in the criticism of Coleridge since the publication of Robert Penn Warren's famous essay in 1946.⁵³ Mr. Warren speaks mainly, of course, of the meaning of the symbols in "The Ancient Mariner." However application to the other poems can easily be made, as will be seen, but with some reservations.

Warren points out that the moon and moonlight pervade Coleridge's poetry, and are usually associated with the mood of poetic creativity. The moon is called the "Mother of wildly-working visions," in his "Sonnet to the Autumnal Moon," written in 1788.⁵⁴ She is the "Mother of wildly-working dreams" in the "Songs of the Pixies," written in 1793.⁵⁵

Mr. Warren discerns what he calls a "symbolic cluster" in "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner." Wind, albatros, and Moon seem to influence the protagonist in the same way; all are connected with the imaginative side of man's activity. Warren concludes: "And so we have the creative wind, the friendly bird, the moonlight of imagination, all together in one symbolic cluster."⁵⁶

⁵³The Rime of the Ancient Mariner, illustrated by Alexander Calder with an essay by Robert Penn Warren (New York, 1946).

⁵⁴Poems, I, 5.

⁵⁵Poems, I, 40-44.

⁵⁶Warren, p. 91.

Warren's essay develops the symbols to much greater length, and in the context of "The Ancient Mariner." Obviously a summary of the rest of the essay would not be to the point here. What has been said so far is pertinent though. And we need not take it merely at the word of the expert. Besides the two poems quoted above that show the connection between the moon and the imagination, there are other places in Coleridge that make this obvious too. A good example is the following few lines from "The Nightingale":

the moon
Emerging, hath awakened earth and sky
With one sensation, and those wakeful birds
Have all burst forth in choral minstrelsy,
As if some sudden hale had swept at once
A hundred airy harps! (77-82)⁵⁷

Here we have a fortunate "cluster" for the poem "Dejection." We find the moon awakening sensation (always the creative, spiritual thing to the romantic) and likened in its action to the wind humming through the harp.

The preceding effect to determine the content of Coleridge's personal symbols may seem a bit involved. However, it has also been seen as necessary to a full appreciation of the poem. When an author writes in the context of a slowly and consistently developing set of ideas and symbols, there is no alternative to searching before and after a given poem in order to fill in the meaning of symbols only partially identifiable within the limits of the poem itself.

⁵⁷ Poems, I, 264-266.

Briefly then, and in review, the main symbols used in "Dejection" may be identified thus: the moonlight which pervades the descriptive passages is the atmosphere in which the creative imagination is able to work; the wind-storm is the almost-Pantheistic Nature spirit of the romantics; and the Aeolian harp is animate nature, or here more specifically, the poet's soul, with the possible association with scenes of happy domestic life.

Applying this to "Dejection," we find that the moon is given prominence right at the beginning. It is the main object spoken of in the key-note quotation from "Sir Patrick Spens." The poem will be about the poet's power of creative imagination. But already there is an element of something eerie setting the tone of the poem. The moon, in one of its rarer modes of manifestation, becomes a portent of some disturbance to come: "I fear a deadly storm."

As the poem opens, interest is immediately focused on the harp and the wind. Nature evokes rather sad and discordant response from the poet's soul (Standard, 6-7). Better the soul were not touched by Nature at all, than only half respond to it, and with such dejection of spirit. It "better far were mute."

The poet wishes for the wind-storm to rise, for Nature to stir his soul from its lethargy. He seems to fear "The slant night-shower driving loud and fast" (16). And yet he wishes for its salutary effects too. He seems to desire the catharsis of Stanza VII. Nature has moved the soul before; a great deal of the poem is a lament that this is no longer so. He misses the "wonted

impulse" (19) that gives motion and life to his soul.

Stanza II is something of a recapitulation of Stanza I. The idea of being out of vital contact with nature is given a more concrete expression. The sky, however is still calm and clear; there is no indication of the storm (30-36). Stanzas III to VI explain that the soul itself must have the necessary condition of Joy in order to respond to the Nature-spirit. But Joy is not present in the poet's soul.

The symbols return in the mysterious Stanza VII. There is a positive clash between the wind-storm and the harp; between the soul and Nature. The wind in its frenzy wrings a "scream of agony" from the harp. Nature seems to run wild in his imagination. It is a mad poet and a tragic actor. It tells a tale of violence and one of pathos. The poet cannot calmly, joyfully, come into harmony with Nature.

If we accept the poem as an integral piece and the function of Stanza VII as performing a kind of catharsis in the poet's soul, the next stanza brings the poem to a close which, while not entirely satisfactory, at least is a calm, peaceful ending.

The sky has cleared:

May all the stars hang bright above her dwelling,
Silent as though they watched the sleeping Earth. (130-131)

And good things are hoped for, prayed for, from the violent clash between soul and Nature.

The symbols in "Dejection" provide a tight network of meaning which help to bind the poem into a unified whole. They do not exactly add a new meaning

to the poem. If this were so the validity of the meanings assigned them could be questioned. Rather they serve to add richness to the meaning we have already found there. A new depth is given to "Dejection" by placing it in the context of Coleridge's personal thought and imagery.

Coleridge was a Romantic in his poetry and in his philosophy. Nature was all-important to him. Some great disturbance which throws his soul out of harmony with Nature has sent him into the depths of dejection. We have already seen the complexity of elements which created this disturbance, which removed the necessary Joy from his soul.

We can and must go still deeper into the thought of the poem before we can feel that we have satisfactorily understood the basic ideas underlying it. There are some questions still remaining. What does Coleridge mean by Joy? What is behind his idea that the soul of the poet must be in harmony with Nature before the poet can work at peace? Why does he stress the idea that the power of making poetry is something deep within the poet's soul? Where did he get these ideas and what do they really mean for the poem, "Dejection"? These questions touch on ideas that are basic and habitual to the thought of Coleridge; they will be taken up in the following chapter.

CHAPTER V

THE PHILOSOPHY OF "DEJECTION"

The purpose of this thesis is to work towards a fuller understanding of the difficult poem, "Dejection: An Ode." We have already investigated the images and logic of the poem itself. But this is not sufficient for an understanding of Coleridge's poem. The man himself, deeply afflicted in his personal life, yet unwilling to release the full details of this conflict to the public, casts a shadow over the entire poem which is not dispelled except by an examination of the pertinent biographical facts of the "Dejection" period. A treatment of these facts has led us also to an examination of the first version of the poem--only recently set before the public and never meant by Coleridge to be read by others than his own circle of intimate friends.

Coleridge's private set of symbols has been discussed, and an attempt has been made to decipher them and their significance in "Dejection" by discovering their meaning in other poems by the same author.

The final step remains. We must now look at some of the basic ideas in the poem, the strictly intellectual content of "Dejection." We are not trying to reconstruct the whole philosophy of Coleridge, or even his whole poetics. Our object is "Dejection." We are looking for the strong steel beams deep

within the structure, upon which the rest is built.

Coleridge was a philosopher, a fact which has been stated and proved many times. John Stuart Mill did not hesitate to name him and Bentham as the two seminal minds of the period.⁵⁸ However, it is often difficult to state what exactly his philosophy is. Many attempts have been made to discover a consistent set of conclusions or a logical progression of thought in the informal philosophizing of Coleridge.⁵⁹ The main problem seems to lie in discovering the philosophical traditions or, better, the framework of thought within which Coleridge was expressing himself. The isolated utterances of the thinker often have meaning for us only when we understand what is behind the statement and what the terms he uses mean in the tradition in which he is writing.

Coleridge's statements in "Dejection" are more clearly understood when we are aware of the thought patterns or philosophical traditions which influenced him. Understanding on this most basic level will be seen to penetrate upwards into the other levels of the poem and solve problems that were left unanswered in the previous chapters of this thesis.

⁵⁸John Stuart Mill, Dissertations and Discussions (1859), I, quoted in John H. Muirhead's Coleridge As Philosopher (London, 1930), pp. 32-33.

⁵⁹See, for example, Gordon McKenzie, Organic Unity in Coleridge (Berkeley, California; 1939), a thesis defending the unity of Coleridge's thought. F. R. Leavis, on the other hand, holds that there is really no continuity to Coleridge's thought in "Coleridge," The Importance of Scrutiny (New York, 1948), pp. 76-87.

Philosophers and philosophies were a lifelong interest with Coleridge. A perusal of the letters from every period of his life, as well as of his literary autobiography, shows this interest was born early and remained with him for life. The fact is a part of the man and his poetry. "No man," he said in the Biographia Literaria, "was ever yet a great poet, without being at the same time a profound philosopher."⁶⁰

Moreover he was a philosopher in the tradition of Hamlet, Schelling, Kierkagaard, and Brand--a philosopher whose speculation started from a deeply personal experience, from tensions and guilt-feelings within his own soul, driving him to speculate on the larger truths of man's existence. "Dejection" is a document in the tradition. A study of the poem cannot neglect this fact.

The biographies of Coleridge take us part of the way along the road of inquiry into his intellectual life. We find that as a young man he was interested in the British sensist, David Hartley. Then he did a mental about-face when he sailed for Germany and a study of the German Romantics in 1798. Finally, the philosopher and mystic of the early Christian era, Plotinus, exerted a strong but intermittent influence on Coleridge.

These were not the only philosophers to engage the wide and often desultory interest of Coleridge. "His extremely receptive and restless mind passed through many changes, submitting itself at one time or another to the influence

⁶⁰Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Biographia Literaria, ed. J. Shawcross (Oxford, 1907), II, 19.

of Hartley, Berkeley, Spinoza, Plato, Plotinus, Kant, Schelling, and others."⁶¹ But for the present purpose the influence of Hartley, Kant, and Plotinus are most important, symbolizing as they do the convergence of three diverse streams of thought in one person. British sensism, German romanticism, and Neoplatonic mysticism all converge in Coleridge. A brief survey of what the eclectic Coleridge took from each for the fashioning of the "Dejection" experience will put us well on the road to a deeper appreciation of the poem.⁶²

David Hartley (1705-1757) is known primarily as a necessitarian. Building on Sir Isaac Newton's psychology, he explained the association of ideas by the vibrations of an ether contained in the sensorial organs, the nerves, and the brain. Muirhead summarizes: "What concerns us is the theory of mind which in the first place reduces the action to the subconscious one of mechanical association, to the total exclusion of selective attention or imaginative construction, and in the second place explains consciousness as a surface play of material movements."⁶³ The result, of course, is a denial of the freedom of the will, which is replaced by a purely mechanical operation necessitating all action. Hartley was really describing the IBM brain.

⁶¹Dr. Rudolf Metz, A Hundred Years of British Philosophy, tr. J. W. Harvey, T. E. Hessop, and Henry Stuart (London, 1938), p. 240.

⁶²The German philosopher Schelling also exerted a tremendous influence on Coleridge. The influence, however, seems to have come considerably later than the "Dejection" period, and therefore it would not be proper to consider Schelling as influencing the poem. See Shawcross, Introduction to Biog. Lit., I, xlvii.

⁶³Muirhead, p. 41.

Coleridge had renounced all adherence to Hartley by the year 1801 when he writes in a letter to Thomas Poole: "I have not only completely extricated the notions of time and space, but have overthrown the doctrine of association as taught by Hartley and with it all the irreligious metaphysics of modern infidels--especially the doctrine of necessity."⁶⁴ The romantic could not but react, ultimately, against a doctrine which denied the spirit and the creative work of the imagination.

Hartley nevertheless had made a profound impression on Coleridge, so much so that the first child of his unhappy marriage was named David Hartley Coleridge (born 1796).⁶⁵ The important part of Hartley's doctrine which seems to have been a seminal idea in the mind of Coleridge is the doctrine of vibrating particles permeating all of man's cognitive faculties, becoming almost a part of a man, and making possible the association of ideas. Professor Fairchild sees the influence of this Hartlean doctrine of vibrations, and vibratiuncles in the symbol of the Aeolian harp as it is stirred by the wind.⁶⁶ The symbol of the harp could have originated with Coleridge's interest in Hartley; but, as we shall see shortly, one of the other philosophers in Coleridge's life seems more closely connected with the symbol.

The second philosophical stream that converged in Coleridge is that of

⁶⁴Letters, I, 348.

⁶⁵See Coleridge's reference to this in Biog. Lit., I, 121.

⁶⁶Hoxie Neale Fairchild, Religious Trends in English Poetry (New York, 1949), III, 280.

the German romantic tradition. It too finds expression in the "Dejection" poem. Of primary importance for the present thesis is Coleridge's conception of the imagination or poetic power which he developed partly from the German philosophers for use in his own theory of poetry.

It is axiomatic among Coleridge scholars that the Germans are important in understanding Coleridge's theory of imagination. Our problem is to find out what light these philosophers can shed on "Dejection."

In the spring of 1801, the year before the writing of "Dejection," Coleridge entered upon a period of great intellectual excitement. He had just returned from the continent with a load of books on German philosophy. In March of that year he wrote to Thomas Poole the letter quoted above.⁶⁷ When he says there that he has "completely extricated the notions of time and space," he can be referring to only one person, Immanuel Kant.

The a priori ideas are perhaps the most characteristic part of Kant's philosophy. Knowledge is constructed and organized within the mind from the mass of impressions received. Kant's theory of imagination appealed to the poet, Coleridge. A short quotation from Kant is the best summary of his position:

The imagination (as a productive faculty of cognition) is a powerful agent for creating, as it were, a second nature out of the material supplied to it by actual nature. It affords us entertainment where experience proves too commonplace; and we even use it to remodel experience. . . . By this means we get a sense of our freedom from the law

⁶⁷See above, p. 69.

of association (which attaches to the empirical employment of the imagination), with the result that the material can be borrowed by us from nature in accordance with that law, but be worked up by us into something else--namely, that which surpasses nature.⁶⁸

Let us compare this with Coleridge's own statement on the imagination made thirteen years after "Dejection" in the Biographia Literaria:

The IMAGINATION then, I consider either as primary, or secondary. The primary IMAGINATION I hold to be the living Power and prime Agent of all human Perception, and as a repetition in the finite mind of the infinite I AM. The secondary Imagination I consider as an echo of the former, co-existing with the conscious will, yet still as identical with the primary in the kind of its agency, and differing only in degree, and in the mode of its operation. It dissolves, diffuses, dissipates, in order to recreate; or where this process is rendered impossible, yet still at all events it struggles to idealize and to unify. It is essentially vital,⁶⁹ even as all objects (as objects) are essentially fixed and dead.

The poet's imagination strives to unify, to vivify and idealize. Things are dead. The poet gives them life: "the imagination is essentially vital."

This idea, Coleridge's own but certainly influenced by his enthusiastic study of Kant, is found in "Dejection." It is the background which adds fuller understanding to the statements in "Dejection" concerning the creativity of the imagination, its power of imposing forms of its own on external things. Granted that both Kant and Coleridge are given rather summary treatment here, the discussion, however, seems sufficient in the present context and for the present purpose.

⁶⁸ Immanuel Kant, Critique of Aesthetic Judgment, Tr. James Creed Meredith (Oxford, 1911), p. 86.

⁶⁹ Biographia Literaria, I, 202. The typography is Coleridge's.

The third philosopher who added greatly to the formation of Coleridge's mind up to the time of the "Dejection" ode is the pantheistic philosopher of the early Christian era, Plotinus. Plotinus is the mystical metaphysician who explains the universe as "one flowing continuity of being." It is a monistic explanation of all things as emanating from the One. The attraction this doctrine has for the romantic with philosophical leanings is so apparent it need only be stated.

More particularly, what did Coleridge take from Plotinus? The answer is found in his writings, especially in the Biographia Literaria where he shows a familiarity with the writings of Plotinus and a sympathy with them. Charles Lamb recalls Coleridge even as a schoolboy interested in the philosophy of Plotinus. Reminiscing in his wonderfully inimitable way, Lamb says:

Come back into memory, like as thou wert in the dayspring of thy fancies, with hope like a fiery column before thee--the dark pillar not yet turned--Samuel Taylor Coleridge--Logician, Metaphysician, Bard!--How have I seen the casual passer through the Cloisters stand still, intranced with admiration (while he weighed the disproportion between the speech and the garb of the young Mirandula), to hear thee unfold, in thy deep and sweet intonations, the mysteries of Jamblichus, or Plotinus (for even in those years thou waxedst not pale at such philosophic draughts), or reciting Homer in his Greek, or Pindar--while the walls of the old Grey Friars re-echoed to the accents of the inspired charity-boy!⁷⁰

Coleridge himself refers, in the Biographia, to the "early study of Plato and Plotinus."⁷¹

⁷⁰Charles Lamb, "Christ's hospital Five and Thirty Years Ago," in The Works of Charles Lamb, ed. E. V. Lucas (New York, 1913), II, 24-25.

⁷¹Biographia Literaria, I, 94.

Coleridge quotes frequently from Plotinus in the course of the Biographia Literaria and the essays on esthetics. He quotes from the Enneads III, 8, 4, where Plotinus explains the creation of material things by Nature's act of contemplation.⁷² Nature contemplates and by that very act things begin to exist. Plotinus adds that "this then is how the material thing becomes beautiful, by communicating in the thought that flows from the Divine."⁷³ This thought is developed a bit later when he says: "The beauty in things of a lower order--actions and pursuits for instance--comes by operation of the shaping Soul which is also the author of the beauty found in the world of sense. For the Soul, a divine thing, a fragment as it were of the Primal Beauty, makes beautiful to the fullness of their capacity all things whatsoever that it grasps and molds."⁷⁴

Coleridge, with Plotinus, was convinced that human intelligence shared this divine ability to create beauty. He speaks, in The Friend, of conscious human perception as "the productive power, which in nature acts as nature, is essentially one (that is, of one kind) with the intelligence, which is in the human mind above nature."⁷⁵

⁷²Ibid., I, 173.

⁷³Plotinus, The Six Enneads, trs. Stephen MacKenna and B. S. Page (Chicago, 1952), p. 22.

⁷⁴Ibid., p. 24.

⁷⁵Quoted by Margaret Sherwood, Coleridge's Imaginative Conception of the Imagination (Wellesley, Mass.; 1937), p. 13.

A passage from Plotinus which particularly interested Coleridge and which he himself shows as parallel to the ideas in "Dejection" is found in the First Ennead, Book Six. He quotes from it in the essay, "On the Principles of Genial Criticism," of 1814, published by Shawcross at the end of the Biographia Literaria.⁷⁶ It would perhaps be unwise to infer that Coleridge here is giving us observations that he could have made thirteen years previously at the time of "Dejection," if it were not for the facts that Coleridge was an avid disciple of Plotinus even at an early age, and that he himself says that he had re-presented Plotinus' ideas in this very poem.⁷⁷ Plotinus' central concept was of a unity embracing the inner and outer worlds, deriving from the One above all, and beyond the reach of thought. By successive stages, through emanation from the One, the divine was conceived as forever flowing down through all appearance, and through the soul of man. Nature and the soul of man are therefore fundamentally divine, and one in the unity of their source. Between them is the deep relationship of a common origin.⁷⁸

Because of this Oneness, Plotinus can make the statement which Coleridge quotes: "Undoubtedly this principle [which bestows beauty on natural things] exists; it is something that is perceived at the first glance, something which

⁷⁶Biog. Lit., II, 219-246.

⁷⁷Ibid., II, 240.

⁷⁸This brief summary of Plotinus' central concept is adapted from Margaret Sherwood, p. 10.

the soul names as from an ancient knowledge and, recognising, welcomes it, enters into unison with it. But let the soul fall in with the Ugly and at once it shrinks within itself, denies the thing, turns away from it, not accordant, resenting it."⁷⁹ The passage which Coleridge refers to as especially similar to the ideas in "Dejection" is the following: "So with the perceptive faculty: discerning in certain objects the Ideal-Form which has bound and controlled shapeless matter, opposed in nature to Idea, seeing further stamped upon the common shapes some shape excellent above the common, it gathers into a unity what still remains fragmentary, catches it up and carries it within, no longer a thing of parts, and presents it to the Ideal-Principle as something concordant and congenial, a natural friend."⁸⁰ Here certainly we find a very natural and meaningful context for those ideas frequently expressed in the course of "Dejection" about the poetic power "whose fountains are within."

There is, however, an even closer relationship between Plotinus and the intellectual content of "Dejection." Plotinus develops the thoughts quoted above into an ethical system in the same chapter of the Enneads. Immediately following the first quotation above, he says that the soul, united with this beauty-making principle, "when it sees anything of that kin, or any trace of that kinship, thrills with an immediate delight, takes its own to itself, and thus stirs anew to the sense of its nature and of all its affinity."⁸¹ And

⁷⁹Quoted in Biog. Lit., II, 243, from Enneads, I, iv, 2, p. 22.

⁸⁰Quoted in Biog. Lit., II, 240, from Enneads, I, iv, 3, p. 22.

⁸¹Enneads, I, iv, 2, p. 22.

immediately after the second quotation he says: "the joy here [in imaginative creation] is like that of a good man who discerns in a youth the early signs of a virtue consonant with the achieved perfection within his own soul."⁸² When the soul creates beauty, or impresses forms on external dead things-- which it can do because it is united with the first creative principle--it finds a happiness, a "joy." Here is that word which we found somewhat puzzling in "Dejection."

Plotinus holds that matter is evil. When the soul sinks into evil, it is because it has sunk into inert matter; it becomes ugly. This destroys the unity of the soul with the one Principle of the universe from whence beauty comes. With this divorce from the One comes stress, unhappiness, a lack of "joy."

In the philosophy of Plotinus, then, there are two phases in which Coleridge was interested. The first is the theory that the human imagination as part of the divine imagination shares in the power of creating within itself beauty. The second phase is the ethical proposition that beauty or lack of beauty in the soul becomes the grounds for distinguishing between happiness (joy) or a lack of happiness.

The quotations and the above discussion about Plotinus are important for understanding "Dejection." If Hartley is one source of the meaning behind the Aeolian harp symbol, the influence of Plotinus is certainly another, and

⁸² Enneads, I, iv, 3, p. 22.

perhaps a stronger, source. Immediately after describing how the breeze caresses the Aeolian harp in the poem of the same name, he has these lines:

O! the one Life within us and abroad,
Which meets all motion and becomes its soul,
A light in sound, a sound-like power in light,
Rhythm in all thought, and joyance everywhere--(26-29)

The monism of Plotinus is evident here. More specifically he says a little later on in the poem:

And what if all of animated nature
Be but organic Harps diversely fram'd,
That tremble into thought, as o'er them sweeps
Plastic and vast, one intellectual breeze,
At once the soul of each, and God of all? (44-48)

Certainly the terminology and thought is that of Plotinus. The meaning of the harp symbol can be determined here with little trouble. The harp is the human soul; the wind is the God of the neo-Platonic philosophers and all of their romantic successors.

Coleridge's meaning in "Dejection" becomes obvious too. Here however there is no harmony between harp and wind, between the soul and the divine creative spirit. The reason we must take from Plotinus' ethics developed in the section familiar to Coleridge. The sorrow and guilt feelings accounted for in a previous chapter have cut the poet off from a union with this Nature-spirit. He is afraid, in "Dejection," even to come into contact with it:

This night, so tranquil now, will not go hence
Unroused by winds that ply a busier trade
Than those which mould yon cloud in lazy flakes,
Or the dull sobbing draft, that moans and rakes
Upon the strings of this Aeolian lute,
Which better far were mute. (3-8)

Because the two things--human spirit and divine spirit--are out of harmony, there is a terrific clash--the clash between Good and Evil--when they meet.

What a scream
Of agony by torture lengthened out
That lute sent forth! (97-99)

The wind, whose raging presence he cannot ignore, torments him with nightmare suffering--the suffering described in the problematical Stanza VII.

Because the poet feels guilt, feels that his soul is ugly and evil because immersed in evil, he has driven harmony and happiness out of his soul. His own term in the poem, and Plotinus' too, is joy. The divine power within him is suspended:

But O! each visitation [of sorrow]
Suspends what nature gave me at my birth,
My shaping spirit of Imagination. (83-85)

No longer is it able to diffuse its light upon created things and make them beautiful, as he says the poet's imagination should:

O Lady! we receive but what we give,
And in our life alone does Nature live:
Ours is her wedding gown, ours her shroud!
And would we aught behold of higher worth,
Than that inanimate cold world allowed
To the poor loveless ever-anxious crowd,
Ah! from the soul itself must issue forth
A light, a glory, a fair luminous cloud
Enveloping the earth--(47-55)

And what, according to Coleridge, is the source of this power? Coleridge answers the question much the same as Plotinus would have if he had written poetry instead of prose.

Joy, virtuous Lady! Joy that ne'er was given,
 Save to the pure, and in their purest hour,
 Life, and Life's effluence, cloud at once and shower,
 Joy, Lady! is the spirit and the power,
 Which wedding Nature gives to us in dower
 A new Earth and a new Heaven,
 Undreamt of by the sensual and the proud--
 Joy is the sweet voice, Joy the luminous cloud--
 We in ourselves rejoice!
 And thence flows all that charms or ear or sight,
 All melodies the echoes of that voice,
 All colours a suffusion from that light. (64-75)

The pure of heart is one whose soul is not immersed in matter, in evil. He it is who shares the creative power of the One.

But intense sorrow too can hold sway in the frail human soul only so long. The critical moment of sorrow is passed in Stanza VII, and the wearied spirit turns in Stanza VIII to thoughts of sleep and the idealized joy of the loved one.

The road through this chapter has been long and perhaps arduous--but, we feel, necessary. When one is confronted with wind harps and storms, luminous clouds and shaping spirits of imagination, one alternative is to take them at face value and settle for a general feeling of what the poet is talking about. We have chosen the other alternative, to investigate the intellectual context within which Coleridge was working. Only this way can we discover the thought structure which the powerful mind of Coleridge employed to bind together the thoughts and images of "Dejection" into an intelligible whole.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

Charles Lamb wrote of Coleridge after his death: "Never saw I his likeness, nor probably the world can see again."⁸³ Undoubtedly time and the advantage of historical perspective have dimmed the luster of the Coleridge of Lamb and Mill. The fact remains, however, that the influence of Coleridge is still being felt in modern criticism and the poetic experiences he has recorded are still being explored.

"Dejection: An Ode," more than any other of the more famous poems of Samuel Taylor Coleridge, gives us a personal view of this great poet. In it we come to grips with the man himself, in the richness of his personality and at a critical point in his life. We are not held back from the man's inner feelings by a fantastically unreal story and a complicated (to say the least) symbolism and allegory. One has the feeling that such is not so in his three other famous poems, "The Ancient Mariner," "Christabel," and "Kubla Khan."

It is historically true that "Dejection" is the last of the great poems

⁸³E. V. Lucas, The Life of Charles Lamb, (New York, 1915), II, 266.

of Coleridge. Maurice Carpenter interprets "Dejection" as the swan song of Coleridge the poet, the Götterdämmerung of his poetic muses.⁸⁴ His biography of Coleridge is divided chronologically on the basis of this insight. And it is true; after this came the deluge of furious activity: series of lectures in philosophy, art, and literature; publications of books and periodicals; tentative plans of great works drawn up, which the will-o'-the-wisp interest of the man never allowed to mature; translations from the German poets and playwrights. But never again came the greatness achieved in the poetry of the earlier years up to "Dejection."

In our progress through this last great poetic statement of Coleridge, we have encountered the man on many levels. Perhaps the most interesting aspect is the biographical. But the other topics treated in the foregoing pages are nonetheless important for knowing what the man was and how he worked. One must inspect all the grist that went into the mill which turned out "Dejection."

And as one turns from a study of "Dejection," he must say: This is truly a human document! Does it not put the mirror up to a man's soul in its hour of greatest crisis? It mirrors the face-to-face encounter of a man with the evil he finds in his soul, as apparently an irremediable part of the soul itself. It is the picture of a tortured soul, whose suffering is increased be-

⁸⁴Carpenter, p. 188.

cause of the sensitive cultivation of its own rich resources. It is a poetic record which sounds out in the soul of the reader his capacity for pity and horror. "Never saw I his likeness, nor probably the world can see again."

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APPENDIX I

"DEJECTION: AN ODE"--THE STANDARD VERSION⁸⁵

Late, late yestreen I saw the new Moon,
With the old Moon in her arms;
And I fear, I fear, my Master dear!
We shall have a deadly storm.

Ballad of Sir Patrick Spence.

I

Well! If the Bard was weather-wise, who made
The grand old Ballad of Sir Patrick Spence,
This night, so tranquil now, will not go hence
Unroused by winds, that ply a busier trade
Than those which mould yon cloud in lazy flakes,
Or the dull sobbing draft, that moans and rakes
Upon the strings of this AEolian Lute,
Which better far were mute.

For lo! the New-moon winter-bright!
And overspread with phantom light, 10
(With swimming phantom light o'erspread
But rimmed and circled by a silver thread)
I see the old Moon in her lap, foretelling
The coming-on of rain and squally blast.
And oh! that even now the gust were swelling,
And the slant night-shower driving loud and fast!
Those sounds which oft have raised me, whilst they awed,
And sent my soul abroad,
Might now perhaps their wonted impulse give,
Might startle this dull pain, and make it move and live! 20

⁸⁵The text is the standard version of "Dejection" which Coleridge revised for publication. It may be found in Poems, I, 362-368.

II

A grief without a pang, void, dark, and drear,
 A stifled, drowsy, unimpassioned grief,
 Which finds no natural outlet, no relief,
 In word, or sigh, or tear--

O Lady! in this wan and heartless mood,
 To other thoughts by yonder throistle woo'd,
 All this long eve, so balmy and serene,
 Have I been gazing on the western sky,
 And its peculiar tint of yellow green:
 And still I gaze--and with how blank an eye!
 And those thin clouds above, in flakes and bars,
 That give away their motion to the stars;
 Those stars, that glide behind them or between,
 Now sparkling, now bedimmed, but always seen:
 Yon crescent Moon, as fixed as if it grew
 In its own cloudless, starless lake of blue;
 I see them all so excellently fair,
 I see, not feel, how beautiful they are!

30

III

My genial spirits fail;
 And what can these avail
 To lift the smothering weight from off my breast?
 It were a vain endeavour,
 Though I should gaze for ever
 On that green light that lingers in the west:
 I may not hope from outward forms to win
 The passion and the life, whose fountains are within.

40

IV

O Lady! we receive but what we give,
 And in our life alone does Nature live:
 Ours is her wedding garment, ours her shroud!
 And would we aught behold, of higher worth,
 Than that inanimate cold world allowed
 To the poor loveless ever-anxious crowd,
 Ah! from the soul itself must issue forth
 A light, a glory, a fair luminous cloud
 Enveloping the Earth--
 And from the soul itself must there be sent
 A sweet and potent voice, of its own birth,
 Of all sweet sounds the life and element!

50

V

O pure of heart! thou need'st not ask of me
 What this strong music in the soul may be! 60
 What, and wherein it doth exist,
 This light, this glory, this fair luminous mist,
 This beautiful and beauty-making power.

Joy, virtuous Lady! Joy that ne'er was given,
 Save to the pure, and in their purest hour,
 Life, and Life's effluence, cloud at once and shower,
 Joy, Lady! is the spirit and the power,
 Which wedding Nature to us gives in dower

A new Earth and new Heaven,
 Undreamt of by the sensual and the proud-- 70
 Joy is the sweet voice, Joy the luminous cloud--
 We in ourselves rejoice!
 And thence flows all that charms or ear or sight,
 All melodies the echoes of that voice,
 All colours a suffusion from that light.

VI

There was a time when, though my path was rough,
 This joy within me dallied with distress,
 And all misfortunes were but as the stuff
 Whence Fancy made me dreams of happiness:
 For hope grew round me, like the twining vine, 80
 And fruits, and foliage, not my own, seemed mine.
 But now afflictions bow me down to earth:
 Nor care I that they rob me of my mirth;

But oh! each visitation
 Suspends what nature gave me at my birth,
 My shaping spirit of Imagination.
 For not to think of what I needs must feel,
 But to be still and patient, all I can;
 And haply by abstruse research to steal

From my won nature all the natural man-- 90
 This was my sole resource, my only plan;
 Till that which suits a part infects the whole,
 And now is almost grown the habit of my soul.

VII

Hence, viper thoughts, that coil around my mind,
 Reality's dark dream!

I turn from you, and listen to the wind,
 Which long has raved unnoticed. What a scream
 Of agony by torture lengthened out
 That lute sent forth! Thou Wind, that rav'st without,
 Bare crag, or mountain-tarn, or blasted tree, 100
 Or pine-grove whither woodman never clomb,
 Or lonely house, long held the witches' home,
 Methinks were fitter instruments for thee,
 Mad Lutanist! who in this month of showers,
 Of dark-brown gardens, and of peeping flowers,
 Mak'st Devils' yule, with worse than wintry song,
 The blossoms, buds, and timorous leaves among.
 Thou Actor, perfect in all tragic sounds!
 Thou mighty Poet, e'en to frenzy bold!
 What tell'st thou now about? 110
 'Tis of the rushing of an host in rout,
 With groans, of trampled men, with smarting wounds--
 At once they groan with pain, and shudder with the cold!
 But hush! there is a pause of deepest silence!
 And all that noise, as of a rushing crowd,
 With groans, and tremulous shudderings--all is over--
 It tells another tale, with sounds less deep and loud!
 A tale of less affright,
 And tempered with delight,
 As Othway's self had framed the tender lay,-- 120
 'Tis of a little child
 Upon a lonesome wild,
 Not far from home, but she hath lost her way:
 And now moans low in bitter grief and fear,
 And now screams loud, and hopes to make her mother hear.

VIII

'Tis midnight, but small thoughts have I of sleep:
 Full seldom may my friend such vigils keep!
 Visit her, gentle Sleep! with wings of healing,
 And may this storm be but a mountain-birth,
 May all the stars hang bright above her dwelling, 130
 Silent as though they watched the sleeping Earth!
 With light heart may she rise,
 Gay fancy, cheerful eyes,
 Joy lift her spirit, joy attune her voice;
 To her may all things live, from pole to pole,
 Their life the eddying of her living soul!
 O simple spirit, guided from above,
 Dear Lady! friend devoutest of my choice,

Thus mayest thou ever, evermore rejoice.

APPENDIX II

"DEJECTION: AN ODE"--THE S. H. VERSION⁸⁶

A LETTER TO--

April 4, 1802.

Sunday Evening

Well! if the Bard was weatherwise, who made
The grand old Ballad of Sir Patrick Spence,
This Night, so tranquil now, will not go hence
Unrous'd by winds, that ply a busier trade
Than that, which moulds yon clouds in lazy flakes,
Or the dull sobbing Draft, that drones and rakes
Upon the strings of this Eolian lute,
Which better far were mute.

For, lo! the New Moon, winter-bright!

And overspread with phantom Light

10

(With swimming phantom Light o'erspread
But rimm'd and circled with a silver Thread)

I see the Old Moon in her Lap, foretelling

The coming-on of Rain and squally Blast--

O! Sara! that the Gust ev'n now were swelling,
And the slant Night-shower driving loud and fast!

A Grief without a pang, void, dark and drear,

A stifling, drowsy, unimpassion'd Grief

That finds no natural outlet, no Relief

In word, or sigh, or tear--

20

This, Sara! well thou know'st

Is that sore Evil, which I dread the most,

And oft'nest suffer! In this heartless Mood

⁸⁶The following text is the earliest version of the poem, the one sent to Sarah Hutchinson. It may be found in Essays and Studies by Members of the English Association, 1936, pp. 12-25.

To other thoughts by yonder Throstle woo'd,
 That pipes within the Larch tree, not unseen,
 (The Larch, which pushes out in tassels green
 It's bundled Leafits) woo'd to mild Delights
 By all the tender Sounds and gentle Sights
 Of this sweet Primrose-month--and vainly woo'd
 O dearest Sara! in this heartless Mood 30
 All this long Eve, so balmy and serene,
 Have I been gazing on the western Sky
 And its peculiar Tint of Yellow Green--
 And still I gaze--and with how blank an eye!
 And those thin Clouds above, in flakes and bars,
 That give away their Motion to the Stars;
 Those Stars, that glide behind them, or between,
 Now sparkling, now bedimm'd, but always seen;
 Yon crescent Moon, as fix'd as if it grew
 In it's own cloudless, starless Lake of Blue-- 40
 A boat becalm'd! dear William's Sky Canoe!
 --I see them all, so excellently fair!
 I see, not feel, how beautiful they are.

My genial Spirits fail--
 And what can these avail
 To lift the smoth'ring Weight from off my Breast.
 It were a vain Endeavor,
 Tho' I should gaze for ever
 On that Green Light that lingers in the West!
 I may not hope from outward Forms to win 50
 The Passion and the Life, whose Fountains are within!

These lifeless Shapes, around, below, Above,
 O what can they impart?
 When even the gentle Thought, that thou, my Love!
 Art gazing, now, like me,
 And see'st the Heaven, I see--
 Sweet Thought it is--yet feebly stirs my Heart!

Feebly! O feebly!--Yet
 (I well remember it)
 In my first Dawn of Youth that Fancy stole 60
 With many secret Yearnings on my Soul.
 At eve, sky-gazing in "ecstatic fit"
 (Alas! for cloister'd in a city School
 The Sky was all, I knew, of Beautiful)
 At the barr'd window often did I sit,
 And often the leaded School-roof lay,
 And to myself would say--

There does not live the Man so stripp'd of good affections
 As not to love to see a Maiden's quiet Eyes
 Uprais'd, and linking on sweet Dreams by dim Connections 70
 To Moon, or Evening Star, or glorious western Skies--
 While yet a Boy, this Thought would so pursue me,
 That often it became a kind of Vision to me!

Sweet Thought! and dear of old
 To Hearts of Finer Mould!
 Ten thousand times by Friends and Lovers blest!
 I spake with rash Despair,
 And ere I was aware,
 The Weight was somewhat lifted from my Breast!
 O Sara! in the weather-fended Wood, 80
 Thy lov'd haunt! where the Stock-doves coo at Noon
 I guess, that thou hast stood
 And watch'd yon Crescent, and it's ghost-like Moon.
 And yet, far rather in my present Mood
 I would, that thou'dst been sitting all this while
 Upon the sod-built Seat of Camomile--
 And tho' thy Robin may have ceas'd to sing,
 Yet needs for my sake must thou love to hear
 The Bee-hive murmuring near,
 That ever-busy and most quiet Thing 90
 Which I have heard at Midnight murmuring.

I feel my spirit moved.
 And whereso'er thou be,
 O Sister! O Beloved!
 Those dear mild Eyes, that see
 Even now the Heaven, I see--
 There is a Prayer in them! It is for me--
 And I, dear Sara, I am blessing thee!

It was as calm as this, that happy night
 When Mary, thou, and I together were 100
 The low decaying Fire our only Light,
 And listen'd to the Stillness of the Air!
 O that affectionate and blameless Maid,
 Dear Mary! on her Lap my head she lay'd--
 Her Hand was on my Brow,
 Even as my own is now;
 And on my Cheek I felt the eye-lash play,
 And such joy I had, that I may truly say,
 My spirit was awe-stricken with the Excess
 And trance-like Depth of it's brief Happiness. 110

Ah fair Remembrances, that so revive
 The Heart, and fill it with a living Power,
 Where were they, Sara?--or did I not strive
 To win them to me?--on the fretting Hour
 Then when I wrote thee that complaining Scroll
 Which even to bodily Sickness bruis'd thy Soul!
 And yet thou blam'st thyself alone! And yet
 Forbidd'st me all Regret!

And must I not regret, that I distress'd
 Thee, best belov'd who lovest me the best? 120
 My better mind had fled, I know not whither,
 For O! was this an absent Friend's Employ
 To send from far both Pain and Sorrow, thither
 Where still his Blessings should have call'd down Joy!
 I read thy guileless Letter o'er again--
 I hear thee of thy blameless Self complain--
 And only this I learn--and this, alas! I know--
 That thou art weak and pale with Sickness, Grief, and Pain--
 And I,--I made thee so!

O for my own sake I regret perforce 130
 Whatever turns thee, Sara! from the course
 Of calm Well-being and a Heart at Rest!
 When thou, and with thee those, whom thou lov'st best
 Shall dwell together in one happy Home,
 One House, the dear abiding Home of All,
 I too will crown me with a Coronal--
 Nor shall this Heart in idle Wishes roam
 Morbidly soft!

No! let me trust, that I shall wear away
 In no inglorious Toils the manly Day, 140
 And only now and then, and not too oft,
 Some dear and memorable Eve will bless
 Dreaming of all your Loves and Quietness.
 Be happy, and I need thee not in sight.
 Peace in thy Heart, and Quiet in thy Dwelling,
 Health in thy Limbs, and in thine eyes the Light
 Of Love and Hope and honorable Feeling--
 Where e'er I am, I shall be well content!
 Not near thee, haply shall be more content!
 To all things I prefer the Permanent. 150
 And better seems it, for a Heart, like mine,
 Always to know, than sometimes to behold,
Their happiness and thine--

For change doth trouble me with pangs untold!
 To see thee, hear thee, feel thee--then to part

Oh! it weighs down the heart!
 To visit those, I love, as I love thee,
 Mary, and William, and dear Dorothy,
 It is but a temptation to repine--
 The transientness is Poison in the Wine, 160
 Eats out the pith of Joy, makes all Joy hollow,
 All Pleasure a dim Dream of Pain to follow!
 My own peculiar Lot, my house-hold Life
 It is, and will remain, Indifference or Strife.
 While Ye are well and happy, 'twould but wrong you
 If I should fondly yearn to be among you--
 Wherefore, O wherefore! should I wish to be
 A wither'd branch upon a blossoming Tree?

But (let me say it! for I vainly strive
 To beat away the Thought), but if thou pin'd 170
 Whate'er the Cause, in body or in mind,
 I were the miserablest Man alive
 To know it and be absent! Thy Delights
 Far off, or near, alike I may partake--
 But O! to mourn for thee, and to forsake
 All power, all hope, of giving comfort to thee--
 To know that thou art weak and worn with pain,
 And not to hear thee, Sara! not to view thee--

Not sit beside thy Bed,
 Not press thy aching Head, 180
 Not bring thee Health again--
 At least to hope, to try--

By this Voice, which thou lov'st, and by this earnest Eye--
 Nay, wherefore did I let it haunt my Mind

The dark distressful Dream!
 I turn from it, and listen to the Wind
 Which long has rav'd unnotic'd! What a scream
 Of agony, by Torture lengthen'd out
 That Lute sent forth! O thou wild Storm without!
 Jagg'd Rock, or mountain Pond, or blasted Tree, 190
 Or Pine-Grove, whither Woodman never clomb,
 Or lonely House, long held the Witches' Home,
 Methinks were fitter Instruments for Thee,
 Mad Lutanist! that in this month of Showers,
 Of dark brown Gardens and of peeping Flowers,
 Mak'st Devil's Yule with worse than wintry Song
 The Blossoms, Buds, and timorous Leaves among!
 Thou Actor, perfect in all tragic Sounds!
 Thou mighty Poet, even to frenzy bold!
 What tell'st thou now about? 200

'Tis of the Rushing of an Host in Rout.

And many groans for men with smarting Wounds--
 At once they groan with smart, and shudder with the cold!
 'Tis hush'd there is a Trance of deepest Silence,
 Again! but all that Sound, as of a rushing Crowd,
 And Groans and tremulous Shudderings, all are over.
 And it has other Sounds, and all less deep, less loud!
 A Tale of less Affright,
 And tempered with Delight,
 As William's self had made the tender Lay-- 210
 'Tis of a little Child
 Upon a heathy Wild,
 Not far from home, but it has lost it's way--
 And now moans low in utter grief and fear--
 And now screams loud, and hopes to make it's Mother hear!

'Tis Midnight! and small thoughts have I of Sleep.
 Full seldom may my Friend such Vigils keep--
 O breathe She softly in her gentle Sleep!
 Cover her, gentle sleep! with wings of Healing.
 And be this Tempest but a Mountain Birth! 220
 May all the Stars hang bright above her Dwelling,
 Silent, as though they watch'd the sleeping Earth!
 Healthful and light, my Darling! may'st thou rise
 With clear and cheerful Eyes--
 And of the same good Tidings to me send!
 For oh! beloved Friend!
 I am not the buoyant Thing I was of yore
 When like an own Child, I to Joy belong'd:
 For others mourning oft, myself oft sorely wrong'd,
 Yet bearing all things then, as if I nothing bore! 230

Yes, dearest Sara, yes!
 There was a time when tho' my path was rough,
 The Joy within me dallied with Distress;
 And all Misfortunes were but as the Stuff
 Whence Fancy made me Dreams of Happiness;
 For Hope grew round me, like the climbing Vine,
 And Leaves and Fruitage, not my own, seem'd mine!
 But now Ill Tidings bow me down to earth,
 Nor care I that they rob me of my Mirth--
 But Oh! each Visitation 240
 Suspends what nature gave me at my Birth,
 My Shaping spirit of Imagination!

I speak not now of those habitual Ills
 That wear out Life, when two unequal Minds
 Meet in one House, and two discordant Wills--

This leaves me, where it finds,
 Past Cure, and past Complaint,--a fate austere
 Too fix'd and hopeless to partake of Fear!
 But thou, dear Sara! (dear indeed thou art,
 My Comforter, a Heart within my Heart!)
 Thou, and the Few, we love, tho' few ye be,
 Make up a World of Hopes and Fears for me.
 And if Affliction, or distemp'ring Pain.
 Or wayward Chance befall you, I complain
 Not that I mourn--O Friends, most dear! most true!

250

Methinks to weep with you
 Were better far than to rejoice alone--
 But that my coarse domestic Life has known
 No Habits of heart-nursing Sympathy,
 No Griefs but such as dull and deaden me,
 No mutual mild Enjoyments of it's own,
 No Hopes of its own Vintage, None O! none--
 Whence when I mourn'd for you, my Heart might borrow
 Fair forms and living Motions for it's Sorrow.
 For not to think of what I needs must feel,
 But to be still and patient all I can;
 And haply by abstruse Research to steal
 From my own Nature, all the Natural man--
 This was my sole Resource, my wisest plan!
 And that, which suits a part, infects the whole,
 And now is almost grown the Temper of my Soul.

260

270

My little Children are a Joy, a Love,
 A good Gift from above!
 But what is Bliss, that still calls up a Woe,
 And makes it doubly keen
 Compelling me to feel, as well as know,
 What a most blessed Lot mine might have been.
 Those little Angel Children (woe is me!)
 There have been hours when feeling how they bind
 And pluck out the Wing-feathers of my Mind,
 Turning my Error to Necessity,
 I have half-wished they never had been born!
That seldom! but sad Thoughts they always bring,
 And like the Poet's Philomel, I sing
 My Love-song, with my breast against a Thorn.

280

With no unthankful Spirit I confess,
 This clinging Grief, too, in it's turn, awakes
 That Love, and Father's Joy; but O! it makes
 The love the greater, and the Joy far less.
 These Mountains too, these Vales, these Woods, these Lakes,

290

Scenes full of Beauty and of Loftiness
 Where all my Life I fondly hop'd to live--
 I were sunk low indeed, did they no solace give;
 But oft I seem to feel, and evermore I fear,
 They are not to me now the Things, which once they were.

O Sara! we receive but what we give,
 And in our Life alone does Nature live
 Our's is her Wedding Garment, our's her Shroud--
 And would we aught behold of higher Worth
 Than that inanimate cold World allow'd
 To that poor loveless ever anxious Crowd,
 Ah! from the Soul itself must issue forth
 A light, a Glory, and a luminous Cloud
 Enveloping the Earth!

300

And from the Soul itself must there be sent
 A sweet and potent Voice, of it's own Birth,
 Of all sweet Sounds, the Life and Element.
 O pure of Heart! thou need'st not ask of me
 What this strong music in the Soul may be.
 What and wherein it doth exist,

310

This Light, this Glory, this fair luminous Mist,
 This beautiful and beauty-making Power!

Joy, innocent Sara! Joy, that ne'er was given
 Save to the pure, and in their purest Hour,
Joy, Sara! is the Spirit and the Power,
 That wedding Nature to us gives in Dower
 A new Earth and new Heaven,

Undreamt of by the Sensual and the Proud!
 Joy is that strong Voice, Joy that luminous Cloud--
 We, we ourselves rejoice!

320

And thence flows all that charms or ear or sight,
 All melodies, the Echoes of that Voice,
 All Colors a Suffusion of that Light.
 Sister and Friend of my devoutest Choice
 Thou being innocent and full of love,
 And nested with the Darlings of thy Love,
 And feeling in thy Soul, Heart, Lips, and Arms
 Even what the conjugal and mother Dove,
 That borrows genial Warmth from those, she warms,
 Feels in the Thrill'd wings, blessedly outspread--
 Thou free'd awhile from Cares and Human Dread
 By the Immenseness of the Good and Fair

330

Which thou seest everywhere--
 Thus, thus, should'st thou rejoice!
 To thee would all things live from Pole to Pole;
 Their Life the Eddying of thy living Soul!

O dear! O Innocent! O full of Love!
A very Friend! A Sister of my Choice--
O dear, as Light and Impulse from above,
Thus may'st thou ever, evermore rejoice!

340

S.T.C.

APPENIDX III

A COMPARISON OF THE TWO VERSIONS OF "DEJECTION: AN ODE"

| <u>Standard Version</u> | | <u>S. H. Version</u> | |
|-------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|--|
| Stanza | Lines | Lines | |
| I | 1-16 (17-22)* | 1-16 | |
| II | 21-24 25-38 | 17-20 (20-29) 30-43 | |
| III | 39-46 | 44-51 | |
| IV | 47-58 | 296-307 | |
| V | 59-65 (66) 67-75 | 308-314 315-323 (324) | |
| VI | 76-86 87-93 | 232-242 265-271 | |
| VII | (94) 95-125 | 185-215 | |
| VIII | 126-133 (134) 135-139 | 216-224 335-340 | |

Lines Missing in the Standard
Version, but Found in the
S. H. Version:

S. H. 20-29
52-184
225-231
243-264
272-295
324-334

*Those lines found in parentheses appear in one version of the poem but not in the other.

APPROVAL SHEET

The thesis submitted by **William Howard Shurr, S.J.,**

has been read and approved by three members of the Department of
English.

The final copies have been examined by the director of the thesis and the signature which appears below verifies the fact that any necessary changes have been incorporated, and that the thesis is now given final approval with reference to content, form, and mechanical accuracy.

The thesis is therefore accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

May 1, 1959
Date

Norman Weyand, S.J.
Signature of Adviser