

THE SHAPING SPIRIT OF IMAGINATION: A STUDY  
OF THE TWO VERSIONS OF SAMUEL TAYLOR COLERIDGE'S  
"DEJECTION: AN ODE"

by

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The Shaping Spirit of Imagination:

A Study of the Two Versions of

Samuel Taylor Coleridge's "Dejection:

An Ode."

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Abstract

This essay is a descriptive study of the two versions of Samuel Taylor Coleridge's "Dejection: An Ode." Because the ode was formed from a lengthy verse letter to Coleridge's beloved Sara Hutchinson, many critics argue that the ode cannot be understood without information from the early poem. Most of the commentaries on "Dejection" treat the two versions as competitors. Critics who favor the verse letter argue that excision obscures the meaning of the ode. Those who prefer the ode claim that the verse letter is disorganized and formless. Such readings make evaluations of one poem with standards taken from the other. The impulse to judgment has obscured an objective reading of either poem. This study argues that "Dejection: An Ode" and "A Letter to [Asra]" are two different poems. Although "Dejection" and "A Letter" derive from the same initial experience (dejection), these poems have different intentions, and therefore, present different renditions of the experience of dejection. It is more fruitful to view them without the competitive framework.

Close readings of "A Letter" and "Dejection" are given in order to discover the methods, procedures, and systems of organization of each poem. This study also describes the transitional phases of "Dejection: An Ode," observing the way in which "A Letter" became "Dejection." This study emphasizes the meaning of the final version, primarily for what it displays in itself, but reinforced by observations of the variant versions.

The results of a study of the procedures inherent in both

poems show that "Dejection" and "A Letter" have radically different systems of organization. The meaning of the poem changed when the context changed. "A Letter" is a personal, confessional love poem; its meaning resides in a context of private relationships. Its complex organization depends upon inter-related images of exclusion, disease, and pain; it proceeds organically by imitating the process of the poet's mind in the immediate experience of depression. "Dejection: An Ode" is a public, universal expression of the general condition of dejection. The organization of "Dejection" is more dependent upon odic conventions; it proceeds dialectically. Having gained perspective on the original experience of alienation in "A Letter," Coleridge turned to a structured, aesthetic reconciliation between himself and his world in "Dejection: An Ode" by emphasizing the mediating role of imagination.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

TITLE PAGE	i
APPROVAL PAGE	ii
ABSTRACT	iii
TABLE OF CONTENTS	v
INTRODUCTION	1
SECTION I	4
SECTION II	34
SECTION III	49
LIST OF REFERENCES	80
BIBLIOGRAPHY	88

On April 4, 1802 Samuel Taylor Coleridge sent a 340-line verse letter to his beloved Sara Hutchinson. "A Letter to Asra" underwent a series of revisions in order to appear in the Morning Post on Wordsworth's wedding day, October 4, 1802, as "Dejection: An Ode, written on April 4, 1802."<sup>1</sup> Between "A Letter to Asra" or "A Letter," and the final, revised "Dejection: An Ode" (1817), five other printed versions exist. Much of the criticism of the 1817 revised version that we have come to know as "Dejection: An Ode" has focused on its relation either to the initial verse letter to Sara, or to Wordsworth's "Ode: Intimations of Immortality," which was written during the same period, and which is also about dejection. Critics have examined the biographical and philosophical aspects of "Dejection," but have rarely studied the poem as an integral whole.<sup>2</sup> Most readings of "Dejection" suffer because judgments are made with standards adopted from "A Letter." For example, Humphrey House argues that because of "cuts" "Dejection" is not a whole poem.<sup>3</sup> Arguing that the revisions disguise the original content, David Pirie prefers "A Letter" on the grounds that it is more "sincere."<sup>4</sup> In short, many critics of "Dejection" have regarded it as an incomplete or truncated poem, for the standard method of assessment has been to read it versus "A Letter." Charles Bouslog's stance toward the issue is typical:

'Dejection' is one of the least self-contained of famous poems and it emerges into meaning only with the context and background we now have. Coleridge's last great ode cannot be well understood unless we examine his reasons for writing it and, in particular, the way in which he shaped the final poem out of a love letter of scribbled verses.<sup>5</sup>

It is my purpose to show that "Dejection" is self-contained and an integral whole. In addition, "A Letter" is not a collection of "scribbled verses." Just as critics reading one poem versus the other have complained about the omissions of "Dejection," critics also have complained in the opposite vein that "A Letter" is diffuse and formless.<sup>6</sup> "Dejection" and "A Letter" are two highly unified but very different poems. Although "A Letter" and "Dejection" derive from a common experience of dejection, they present two different renditions of that experience, each with its own procedures and principles of organization.

Coleridge described "A Letter" as "of a private nature" (Griggs, II, 445); it explores the immediate, personal experience of mental depression. Part one of the thesis will demonstrate how the procedures of "A Letter" record the collapse of the poet's relations to others and even to the world itself. The poet explores his broken relationships to others and to Nature, and in the process, he recognizes that the responsibility for bridging these gaps must come from himself. The form of "A Letter" reflects this long, difficult and fluctuating search.

The poem's procedures imitate the poet's mind moving through the experience as it occurs. The poem's unity is derived from the unity of feeling; it proceeds by associations. "A Letter" establishes a pattern whereby the poet escapes his dejection through memory, especially through memory of Sara. However, his memory of Sara and other joys from the past concurrently recalls his sense of isolation and loss, which then returns him to a de-



jected state. This cycle is repeated (A.L. 11. 54-120; 218-228; 272-295), indicating that the poet is enmeshed in the immediate experience of loss. Because the poet has no distance from or perspective on his present experience, he cannot sustain an imagined transcendence of his dejection.

Part two of the thesis will examine the revisions of "A Letter." The revisions not only eliminate embarrassing (because personal) detail, but, more importantly, they reflect Coleridge's search for a perspective that could free him from the confines of time and space. He may have seen the ode form as a way to mediate and reconcile the moral, spiritual and epistemological problem that first proposed the poem.

Part three of the thesis presents a detailed reading of "Dejection: An Ode," to demonstrate how the unifying principles of "Dejection" are different from those of "A Letter." Though "Dejection" relies to some extent on associations and feelings that are also present in "A Letter," the ode version employs a significantly different arrangement, thereby establishing a different content. The stanzas themselves are "shaped" into a dialectical examination of his experience. He creates an imaginative unity in the new poem by arranging the parts so that they build toward a dramatic climax in the storm symbol and toward resolution in the final blessing. While "A Letter" presents the experience of a person immersed in the collapse and fluctuations of his world, "Dejection" is the attempt to order the pieces of this world by building a structure that demonstrates an affirmative, imaginative vision. "In the face of a collapsed universe,

the romantic poet either creates another order, or structures what remains to him, the poem."<sup>7</sup> "Dejection: An Ode," a balanced and unified poem, transcends the boundaries of personal experience and participates in what Coleridge called the life of the universal. From his personal experience of dejection he moulds or "shapes" a universal and public work of art. He "elevates the mind by making its feelings the object of its reflection."<sup>8</sup>

The painful and costly interior journey toward salvation in the beloved is, in "Dejection," transmuted into a knowledge that the means of redemption lie in the powers of love and joy themselves.

## I

We can imagine how Coleridge must have felt that spring night as he looked out from his study in Greta Hall, Keswick, his thoughts travelling over the lake and mountains to Grasmere, to Sara Hutchinson, the woman he loved but could not marry. "A Letter to Asra" is a personal and moving record of those feelings. The poem's major themes are the problems Coleridge was encountering in his life: his troubled relations with Sara and the Wordsworths; his present lack of joy; his unhappy domestic situation; his loss of creative vision; and a deep sense of the isolation of his own diseased self from other, healthier forms of Nature. Coleridge makes a distinction in "A Letter" between two worlds: one for the pure and innocent, the joyous world of Sara and the Wordsworths; and one for the diseased, where all joy is "hollow." The poem traces his mind's journey between these oppositions,

between dejection and joy.

"A Letter" finds its unity in the tension of the conflicting elements of Coleridge's experience. A. Harris Fairbanks' view that "A Letter" lacks unity is common among critics who judge "A Letter" by standards adopted from the tighter, condensed version of "Dejection: An Ode." Fairbanks states that "A Letter" is "organized so illogically that it is difficult to say whether Coleridge realized as he was writing how long it was going to be, what was to be included, or how it was to be terminated."<sup>9</sup> This is misleading; "A Letter" is highly unified. The shape of the poem does, as Stephen Fogle suggests, "indicate the uncertainty from which it came."<sup>10</sup> This uncertainty, however, should not be confused with a lack of unity. Unity in "A Letter" is achieved through recurrent image clusters (such as birds and nature; maidens, heaven and blessing; wedding, families and home; and disease, sickness and healing), which link sections of the poem, and through mimesis, association, and accretion. With the exception of the transition between the first and second verse paragraphs, the lines proceed organically, imitating the process of the poet's thinking, similar to the method of the conversation poems.

In the first and second verse paragraphs of "A Letter" Coleridge presents the oppositions that recur throughout the poem: oppositions between activity and torpor, storm and calm, poet and Sara, life and death:

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, 5



lines 15 and 21.

This, Sara! well thou know'st,  
 Is that sore Evil, which I dread the most,  
 And oft'nest suffer! In this heartless Mood,  
 To other thoughts by yonder Throstle woo'd,  
 That pipes within the Larch tree, not unseen, 25  
 (The Larch, which pushes out in tassels green  
 It's bundled Leafits) woo'd to mild Delights  
 By all the tender Sounds & gentle Sights  
 Of this sweet Primrose-month--& vainly woo'd  
 O dearest Sara! in this heartless Mood 30  
 All this long Eve, so balmy & serene,  
 Have I been gazing on the western Sky  
 And it's peculiar Tint of Yellow Green--  
 And still I gaze--& with how blank an eye!  
 And those thin Clouds above, in flakes & bars, 35  
 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.

He explains that in this "heartless Mood" he is "vainly woo'd" by Nature, seeing the forms of nature but not feeling their beauty. There is, however, a tension produced in the reader because although the poet states that he cannot feel the beauty of Nature, the descriptions are so tender, gentle, and sweet that the reader feels Nature's presence. The images describe activities that are contrary to the poet's "heartless Mood" and "blank eye"; for example, the delights of fresh, new life in the Larch, which "pushes out in tassels green/ It's bundled Leafits," and the song of the Throstle that "pipes" in the tree. The stream of associations takes us in and out of a condition of alienation--from the "void, dark & drear," to the delights of Spring's generative activity, back into the blank gazing. The language makes us feel the presence of a vital Nature as well as the absence. Perhaps

Coleridge removed these lines in early revision because they make it difficult to sustain the distance and alienation suggested by the stars, moon and clouds imagery.

The unity is carried by repeating Sara's name and "heartless Mood," and by continuing the description of his empty condition: "And still I gaze--& with how blank an eye!" The clouds "give away their Motion"; the Moon is "as fixed as if it grew/ In it's own cloudless, starless Lake of Blue--/ A boat becalm'd." The transition between stanzas is carried by "smoth'ring Weight," which recalls the stifling, unrelieved grief of lines 17-19; "vain Endeavor," which reminds us of the "vainly woo'd"; and by the "gaze" on the "Green Light" lingering in the west, which recalls lines 31-34.

My genial Spirits fail--  
 And what can these avail 45  
 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, which lingers in the West!  
 I may not hope from outward Forms to win 50  
 The Passion & the Life, whose Fountains are within!  
 These lifeless Shapes, around, below, Above,  
 O what can they impart?

The poet claims that he has lost his creative, generative powers--his "genial Spirits." Nothing seems capable of lifting him out of his dejected state. He sees that the "outward Forms" of Nature, the "lifeless Shapes, around, below, Above," the stars, clouds, moon, etc., cannot give him "The Passion & the Life, whose Fountains are within."

There are many parallels between Coleridge's agony in "Dejection" and "A Letter" and the agony bodied forth in Milton's Samson Agonistes. The spiritual death and emptiness expressed

by the image of the "blank eye" and sightless "gazing" is anticipated in the plight of Milton's Samson:

Thou art become (O worst imprisonment!)  
 The Dungeon of thy self; thy soul  
 (Which Men enjoying sight oft without cause complain)  
 Imprison'd now indeed,  
 In real darkness of they body dwells,  
 Shut up from outward light  
 To incorporate with gloomy night;  
 For inward light alas  
 Puts forth no visual beam<sup>12</sup>

From the Notebooks we know that early in 1802 Coleridge was planning to write a poem in "the metres of Samson's choruses-- but with more rhymes,"<sup>11</sup> and certainly "A Letter" and "Dejection" echo Milton's opinion that any change in the state of mind must come from within. Imagery of blindness, imprisonment, darkness, and loss of strength is common to both Samson Agonistes and the two versions of "Dejection." Samson, too, reflects on the "present/ Times past, what once I was and what I am now" (SA. l. 22). He also finds himself in a death-in-life: "Scarce half I seem to live, dead more than half. / O dark, dark, dark, amid the blaze of noon,/ Irrecoverably dark, total Eclipse/ Without all hope of day!" (SA. ll. 79-83). He has griefs which "not only pain me/ As a lingering disease," but find "no redress, ferment and rage" (SA. ll. 616-619). Samson's despair is such that he feels a sense of "Heav'ns desertion" (SA. l. 632). His strength and power (which come from God) have been lost. He declares:

So much I feel my genial spirits droop,  
 My hopes all flat, nature within me seems  
 In all her fluctuations weary of herself (SA. ll. 593-596). The poet in "A Letter" compares his loss of inspiration from

Nature with his loss of inspiration from his beloved:

Oh what can they impart?  
 When even the gentle Thought, that thou, my Love!  
 Art gazing now, like me, 55-  
 And see'st the Heaven, I see--  
 Sweet Thought it is--yet feebly stirs my Heart!

The comparison of Nature's power to inspire the poet with "the gentle Thought" that Sara may be sharing the same moment stimulates him. The dashes surrounding "Sweet Thought it is" indicate that the idea is disconnected or parenthetical. The sweetness of the Thought occurs as an afterthought. The "yet" in "yet feebly stirs my heart," may be acting as an adverb of comparison (still, further) indicating that he is in a continued state of heartlessness, or it may be acting as a conjunction, indicating a change (but, nevertheless) to a quickened condition--his heart stirred, however feebly. The latter is emphasized by the next section of the poem:

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, 65  
 And oft upon 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!

By repeating "feebly" and then "Yet," and by adding a parenthetical remark "(I well remember it)," the poet indicates a slow but growing response to the thought of Sara gazing, and his heart



begins to stir.

The distinction between his present dejected state and his enraptured youth begins to break down as "that Fancy stole/ With many secret Yearnings on [his] Soul." He is seduced by his memory of past joyous "sky-gazing." The unifying elements are the eye gazing; the motif of imprisonment and release; and the moon, stars and sky imagery. The "cloister'd" boy at the "barr'd window" mirrors the poet's present situation, at "eve, sky-gazing." The poet's "blank eye" gazing in a trance-like fit is paralleled by the boy's "ecstatic fit." The boy's vision of the "Maiden's quiet Eyes/ Uprais'd" parallels the poet's thought of Sara "sky-gazing."

The memory has become a vision, which lifts the weight of his dejection (A.L. 1.79). The power of memory brings into play the elements which seemed hopelessly outside his experience only moments previously--the eyes gazing are "linking on sweet Dreams by dim Connections" to the moon, stars and glorious western skies.

Sweet Thought! and dear of old  
To Hearts of finer Mould!  
Ten thousand times by Friends & Lovers blest!  
I spake with rash Despair,  
And ere I was aware,  
The weight was somewhat lifted from my Breast!

75

He has discovered regenerative power in the memory of things past.

This section of the poem enacts a pattern that is repeated in "A Letter:" a present association stimulates a memory that blends elements of the present with knowledge from the past and leads the poet in moments of the repeated vision into a vital relationship with his surroundings:

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, & it's ghost-like Moon.  
 And yet, far rather in my present mood  
 I would, that thou'dst been sitting all this while 85  
 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 & most quiet Thing 90  
 Which I have heard at Midnight murmuring.

In this section of "A Letter" his feelings of relief enable him to transport himself (ekstasis) mentally to bless Sara with wishes that share a delight in Nature, such as "The Bee-hive murmuring near,/ That ever-busy & most quiet Thing." The unifying elements of lines 74-91 are: the repetition of "Sweet Thought;" "Hearts;" "mould;" "Sara;" the mention of a "weather-fended Wood," the "lov'd haunt," another "cloister," which is now protective rather than prison-like; the Crescent Moon; the bird imagery; and the unity of the poet's feelings of shared love and delight in Nature.

As in "This Lime-tree Bower My Prison," the poet frees himself from oppressive self-pity by imagining the delights of Nature shared by loved ones. In "A Letter," he moves himself into a blessed state by invoking elements of nature that he imagines Sara and he share:

I feel my spirit moved--  
 And wheresoe'er thou be,  
 O Sister! O Beloved!  
 Those dear mild Eyes, that see 95  
 Even now the Heaven, I see--  
 There is a Prayer in them! It is for me--  
 And I, dear Sara--I am blessing thee!

Gathering strength and spiritual power from his communion with

Sara, he finds himself able to bless and to feel that the world around him is a blessing, a "Heaven." His ability to bless signifies a release from his previous alienation.

Inside the blessed state the poet remembers a joy-filled evening of quiet, peaceful love. He can now appreciate the calm around him and listen to the "stillness of the Air." He now finds calming comfort in the quietness that so depressed him previously:

It was as calm as this, that happy night	
When Mary, thou, & I together were,	100
The low decaying Fire our only light,	
And listen'd to the Stillness of the Air!	
O that affectionate & blameless Maid,	
Dear Mary! on her Lap my head she lay'd--	
Her Hand was on my Brow,	105
Even as my own is now;	
And on my Cheek I felt thy 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.	110

The image of the poet and the two women affectionately close in quiet, blissful innocence integrates the poet's past joy into a re-sensitized present: he notes the calm, his hand upon his brow. In the language the repetition of "calm," "stillness," and "blameless Maids," along with the head upon his lap, and the play of Sara's eyelash on his cheek lovingly holds the "trance-like Depth." His presence in the world is temporarily felt--"Ah fair Remembrances, that so revive/ The Heart & fill it with a living Power." As Alan Bewell says of "Frost at Midnight," the poet seeks "a renewed vision, a renewed feeling of immediate truth, through remembrance of things past."<sup>13</sup> References to this trance-like state are frequent in both Coleridge and Wordsworth, and are usually associated with the kind of knowing that is called insight.<sup>14</sup> In "A Letter" the insight comes with the ensuing return

to the present; the contrast between the "living Power" enjoyed in the trance of memory and his present situation brings him to the sources of his problems:

Ah fair Remembrances, that so revive  
 The Heart, & 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 115  
 Which even to bodily Sickness bruise'd thy Soul!  
 And yet thou blame'st thyself alone! And yet  
 Forbidd'st me all Regret!

Unlike "Dejection: An Ode," which builds toward a climax in the last stanza, "A Letter" has a sequence of three peaks in the poet's monologue. In three passages, occurring at lines 92-98; 216-225; and 324-339, he feels like blessing joyfully. After lines 113 and 225, the poet falls out of the blessed state. Unlike "Dejection," which tries to resolve the problem of loss of vision and the impermanence of joy through a highly structured ordering of the experience (which includes saving the visionary blessing for the last stanza), "A Letter" records the transitory nature of joyous states (blessed conditions or visionary moments). At line 112, the visionary moment made possible by memory has led him back to his point of departure with renewed insight; in his double awareness of then and now, he acknowledges in that significant pause ("--or did I not strive/ To win them to me?") the necessity of actively shaping one's experience. He considers that one must strive to "win" these redeeming memories to oneself. The poem, in its shift from the prolonged moment of recollected joy to the jarring sense of the loss presently felt, imitates the "transientness" (A.L. 1. 160) of moments of joy that the poet is

striving to accept and deal with in "A Letter." His mind, troubled by guilt and "regret," falls back into dejection, because he recognizes he should have created joy and not pain:

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 & Sorrow thither  
 Where still his Blessings should have call'd down Joy!  
 I read thy guileless Letter o'er again-- 125  
 I hear thee of thy blameless Self complain--  
 And only this I learn--& this, alas! I know--  
 That thou art weak & pale with Sickness, Grief & Pain--  
 And I--I made thee so!

Coleridge had apparently sent Sara a letter that made her ill. There were, however, other causes of his dejection besides Sara. David Pirie, in his article "A Letter to [Asra]," states that "Wordsworth's presence in 'A Letter' is as complex as Sara's, with which it is also closely related" (Pirie, p. 299). Pirie notes that between the two poets "the balanced relationship of 1798 was over" (Pirie, p. 298), and that the difficulties surrounding the second volume of Lyrical Ballads (published in 1801) probably caused Coleridge much stress. For example, Wordsworth composed "Michael" in eight weeks as a substitute for Coleridge's uncompleted "Christabel."

Apart from the unsettling contrast between Wordsworth's prolific creativity in the 1801-1802 period and Coleridge's doubts about his own poetic talents, Wordsworth was about to marry Sara Hutchinson's sister, Mary. Pirie comments that Coleridge "saw the Wordsworths and the Hutchinsons becoming a single family, from which his own discordant unhappiness would have to be excluded" (Pirie, p. 298). In "A Letter" this sentiment appears in the

self-pitying passage:

O for my own sake I regret perforce  
 Whatever turns thee, Sara! from the Course 130  
 Of calm Well-being & a Heart at rest!  
 When thou, & with thee those, whom thou lov'st best,  
 Shall dwell together in one happy Home,  
 One House, the dear abiding Home of All, 135  
 I too will crown me with a Coronal--  
 Nor shall this Heart in idle Wishes roam  
 Morbidly soft!

The earlier vision of Coleridge and the two maidens is usurped by the image of Wordsworth's impending position at the center of Coleridge's beloved women:<sup>15</sup> Sara would probably reside with Mary, Dorothy and William Wordsworth. The reference to Wordsworth's "Immortality Ode"--"I too will crown me with a Coronal"--reveals Coleridge's comparison of his own lot with Wordsworth's. Wordsworth is, in fact, essential to "A Letter;" he is the presence, the creator, the loved--the mirror opposite to Coleridge--a constant reminder of Coleridge's sense of loss, absence, and neglect.

The passage exposes a number of Coleridge's worst personality traits, such as his "collapsing resolutions," self-pity, and fear of exclusion from the attention of those he loves. He resolves to crown himself with a Coronal because he can imagine Sara well and happy in her future home:

No! let me trust, that I shall wear away  
 In no inglorious Toils the manly Day, 140  
 And only now & then, & not too oft,  
 Some dear & memorable Eve will bless  
 Dreaming of all your Loves & Quietness.

Be happy, & I need thee not in sight.  
 Peace in thy Heart, & Quiet in thy Dwelling, 145  
 Healthy in thy Limbs, & in thine Eyes the Light  
 Of Love, & Hope, & 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.

However, his abstract wishes for "Love, & Hope, & honorable Feeling" are unconvincing. He cannot remain apart from those he loves; his mind is obsessed with his exclusion from that "One House, the dear, abiding home of All" (A.L. 1. 135). He is troubled by the exclusion, and by the pressures of time, change, and uncertainty to the point of feeling diseased:

And better seems it for a heart, like mine,  
 Always to know, than sometimes to behold,  
Their Happiness & thine--  
 For Change doth trouble me with pangs untold! 155  
 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, & William, & 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 pleasures a dim Dream of Pain to follow!  
 My own peculiar Lot, my house-hold Life  
 It is, & will remain, Indifference or Strife--  
 While ye are well & happy, 'twould but wrong you 165  
 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?

The "temptation to repine" is barely contained by the self-reprimanding "'twould but wrong you/ If I should fondly yearn to be among you." The poem's branch-like growth, the disease, pain and poison imagery, the hidden jealousy, and the self-pitying rhetoric all come together in the lines:

Wherefore, O wherefore! should I wish to be  
 A wither'd branch upon a blossoming Tree?

Unity is achieved in lines 110-168 of "A Letter" by the images of sickness and health, the "calm Well-being" (A.L. 1. 132), which recalls the "fair Remembrances that so revive the Heart" (A.L. 11. 99-112), and by the repetition of "Heart" (A.L. 11. 112,

132, 137, 145, 151, and 156) and "Dwelling" (A.L. ll. 134, 135, and 145). The "Sickness, Grief & Pain" (A.L. l. 128) extends into lines 160-183: "Poison" (A.L. l. 160), disease, pain and strife (A.L. ll. 162, 164, and 168), "pin'd", suffering (A.L. ll. 170, 176-182). The poem enacts the process of his mind's obsession, "But (let me say it! for I vainly strive/ To beat away the Thought)" (A.L. ll. 169-170).

Though he has promised not to repine, the temptation has been too great. The resolution to keep himself happy separate from Sara soon collapses, "morbidly soft" (A.L. l. 139) into the solipsistic and sado-masochistic fantasy of Sara pining in pain:

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 & be absent! Thy Delights  
 Far off, or near, alike I may partake--  
 But O! to mourn for thee, & to forsake 175  
 All power, all hope of giving comfort to thee--  
 To know that thou art weak & worn with pain,  
 And not to hear thee, Sara! not to view thee--  
 Not to 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, & by this earnest Eye--

This morbid fantasy is important, not only because it contains several repeated unifying devices (presence/absence; comfort/pain, sickness/health), but also because it leads into the storm passage, in which the peaking pattern in the poem is repeated. The transition between the stanzas: "Nay wherefore did I let it haunt my mind/ The dark distressful Dream!" is made in the same conversational tone, with the mind just as self-conscious of its workings as in lines 169-170--"But (let me say it! for I vainly strive/



To beat away the Thought)." He tries again to banish the morbid fantasy of Sara ill from his mind, but it resurfaces in the sounds and voices that he hears in the storm wind.

The storm sequence acts as an amplification of the emotions expressed in the previous sections of "A Letter." The poet's attempt to turn from the concerns that have ensnared him does not work. The storm symbol picks up and prolongs the same images of pain, guilt, disease and destruction present in the lines which precede it:

I turn from it, & 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! 190  
 Jagg'd Rock, or mountain Pond, or blasted Tree,  
 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, & of peeping Flowers, 195  
 Mak'st Devil's Yule, with worse than wintry Song  
 The Blossoms, Buds, and timorous Leaves among!

The "Wind" and "Lute" recall the beginning of "A Letter," but instead of low moans there is a "Scream/ Of agony by Torture lengthen'd out," emphasizing the familiar pain and grief suffered by the poet. Instead of the "tender sounds & gentle Sights/ Of this sweet Primrose-month," we see instead "Jagged Rock" and "blasted Tree," recalling the budding Larch of stanza two and the "blossoming tree" of the Wordsworth group. But the "Blossoms, Buds, and timorous Leaves" (A.L. 1. 197), and the "leafits" (A.L. 1. 27) are blasted with "worse than wintry song." The "Pine-Grove" recalls the "weather fended wood." But instead of a place of protection, a "lov'd haunt," this is a grove so blasted that it is uninhabited. The "lonely House, long held the Witches' Home"

recalls and contrasts with the "dear abiding" Wordsworth home; instead of a home filled with "affectionate & blameless" maids (A.L. 1. 103), it is fit for witches. The destructive perversion of nature in these lines, making a "Devil's Yule," reflects the morbid, dark, distressful fantasy which precedes it. As he addresses this external torturer, the masks turn out to be a series of masks for his own self-torture.

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 from men with smarting Wounds--  
 At once they groan with smart, and shudder with the Cold!

For the last fifty lines he has been an actor, "perfect in all tragic Sounds!" He has been the "mighty Poet, even to frenzy bold." He interprets the sounds of the wind and hears not the pleasant sounds of the "beehive murmuring" (A.L. 1. 90), but instead, screams of agony, "Groans from men with smarting Wounds" --the sounds of his own suffering.

The sounds of pain and suffering are followed by "other sounds," a "Tale of less Affright:"

'Tis hush'd! there is a Trance of deepest Silence,  
 Again! but all that Sound, as of a rushing Crowd, 205  
 And Groans & tremulous Shudderings, all are over--  
 And it has other Sounds, and all less deep, less loud!  
 A Tale of less Affright,  
 And temper'd 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 & fear--  
 And now screams loud, & hopes to make it's Mother hear! 215

The hushed pause, the "Trance of deepest Silence," recalls the "awe-stricken Trance" in lines 109-110. By association the

happiness of that blessed trance is suggested and we begin to receive some relief from the tensions that have been produced by the raving of the poet and storm. The silence is reminiscent of the "calm and quietness" of lines 88-110 and of Sara's home, lines 142-147. "A Tale of less Affright/ And temper'd with Delight" brings to mind the fear of the poet in his imagined absence during Sara's illness (A.L. ll. 169-183). In his fantasy he had feared that he could not be present to make her well, to hope to bring her to health (A.L. ll. 175-183). Now he hears a tale "temper'd with Delights" and associates it with Wordsworth, "As William's Self had made the tender lay" --referring to Wordsworth's infusion of hope in "Lucy Gray." In the last two stanzas of "Lucy Gray" Wordsworth has the traveler hear her voice, instead of the more melancholy sound of the wind:

Yet some maintain that to this day  
 She is a living child  
 That you may see sweet Lucy Gray  
 Upon the lonesome wild.

O'er rough and smooth she trips along  
 And never looks behind;  
 And sings a solitary song  
 That whistles in the wind.<sup>16</sup>

Instead of hearing only the terrors of his condition, the poet in "A Letter" now can hear sounds which comfort him: "'Tis of a little Child/ Upon a heathy Wild/ Not far from home." The child is moaning low in "utter grief & fear," but it is also screaming loud in order "to make its Mother hear!" The mention of home and mother, and the suggestion of comfort and protection recalls earlier references (which brought some relief) and looks forward to lines 223-230, where the poet blesses Sara with wishes for her healing.

At line 225 he also thinks of his own need for healing comfort, and he remembers the "child" he once was. Associations link the sickness and desired healing of Sara to the sickness and desired healing of the poet.

Ambiguity lingers in the storm section of "A Letter" because it is possible that he is fantasizing another tortuous illness for Sara in the storm sequence, where she is the suffering child, "weak & worn with pain" that he "hopes" to "comfort" (A.L. l. 176).<sup>17</sup> Since the next stanza is a prayer for her healing, it seems reasonable. However, he also sees himself as the lost and tortured; Coleridge has a dual conception of himself both as the jaded adult, the "wither'd branch," and as the lost child. The storm symbol dramatizes both his fear of his loss of creative genius and his feelings of insecurity.

The poet's encounter with his fear, vulnerability, and suffering during the storm sequence brings him back to the present ("'Tis Midnight!") with blessings for Sara's peace, protection, and healing:

'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 about her Dwelling,  
 Silent, as tho' they watch'd the sleeping Earth!  
 Healthful & light, my Darling! may'st thou rise  
 With clear & chearful Eyes--  
 And of the same good Tidings to me send! 225

As David Pirie points out, the return to the immediate setting in the conversation poems and in "Dejection" suggests an air of homecoming, peace, and permanence (Pirie, p. 314). However, in "A Letter" the return to a peaceful condition is short lived. This

stage of "A Letter" is one of three such peaks. He blesses while keeping vigil, protecting his beloved. These protective feelings radiate from him; he envisions the stars watching over her dwelling. The image of a dwelling place, the bird's "wings of healing," and the stars gather from other associations in the poem a sense of completeness. However, after only ten lines the poet again laments his separation and loss:

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

The heavenly vision is dissolved by the intrusion of selfish needs. Instead of permanence, change and instability are emphasized.

In "A Letter," time is one of the most pressing problems. Transience troubles him. The poem enacts the problem: it shows his mind wandering in and out of dejection and joy-filled moments. He cannot hold himself in the blessed and blessing state; he is always led out of it by the mind thinking (A.L. 1. 111, 226). Memory and imagination can lead him into bliss but they cannot keep him there.

Pirie believes that after the storm objectifies the poet's emotions, the poet can look back on his loss without nostalgia; however, this is not true; the pain, self pity, and self-deception are still present in "A Letter" (Pirie, p. 316). In fact, the blessing is selfishly connected with his own needs and linked by association to his nostalgic fantasies: the blessing seems to be a wish for the mother's healing in order that she might help

her son! The poem leads directly back into his suffering and continues the disjunction between his own self-conscious misery and the peace of Sara's world. The resolution of the storm-blessing is directly linked to his sense of personal isolation and dejection because it leads into his explanation of why there are two worlds, one for the innocent, and one for the experienced:

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: 235  
 For Hope grew round me, like the climbing Vine,  
 And Leaves & 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!

The difference between "then" and now was the presence of Joy and Hope, conveyed by the imagery of nature--trees and growth. "But now Ill Tidings" from Sara bow these life-bearing branches down and suspend his inheritance from Nature--his "shaping spirit of Imagination." Now he is without hope; his "House" is not a peaceful, blessed dwelling:

I speak not now of those habitual Ills  
 That wear out Life, when two unequal Minds  
 Meet in one House, & two discordant Wills-- 245  
 This leaves me, where it finds,  
 Past cure, & past Complaint--a fate austere  
 Too fix'd & hopeless to partake of Fear!

Being hopelessly in love with Sara Hutchinson, he was the more intensely aware of the shortcomings of his marriage to Sarah Fricker Coleridge. Coleridge was convinced of the "indissolubleness" of marriage (Griggs, II, 417); he complains in his letters of his and his wife's "mutual unsuitableness," she being his

"inferior" (Griggs, II, 417).

The next stanza continues, describing his domestic griefs with such unifying elements as the repetition of "Heart" four times (at lines 250, 259 and 263); the mention of Sara as comfort-er; another fantasy of Sara ill and in pain; the repetition of "Hope" (at lines 253 and 263); and the repetition of "Grief" and "Pain".

But thou, dear Sara! (dear indeed thou art,  
 My Comforter! A Heart within my Heart!) 250  
 Thou, & the Few, we love, tho' few ye be,  
 Make up a world of Hopes & 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! 255  
 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 Grievs, but such as dull and deaden me, 260  
 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 & living Motions for it's Sorrow.

This catalogue of his domestic unhappiness leads to the conclusion that because he has had no nourishment from his marriage, he has had to turn inward:

For not to think of what I needs must feel, 265  
 But to be still & 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, 270  
 And now is almost grown the Temper of my Soul.

In "A Letter," then, the retreat into abstruse research is his only escape from his "coarse domestic life." Unfortunately, though it suited the problem, it has itself become a problem--it has infected him, a repetition of the disease imagery.

The next stanza is also linked by a continuation of the

poet's domestic woes, and by repetition of the bird imagery in the "Wing-feathers" of his mind, and in the mention of "Philomel."

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 275  
 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, 280  
 Turning my Error to 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. 285

His torn and shaken condition is indicated by his identification with Philomel--which also suggests the violence of his feelings, especially the feeling that he is an innocent victim. Confessing his grief awakens his feelings--a reversal of the opening lines--but he is caught again by memory. Just as the memory-vision of his past bliss with Sara makes him recall his present loss more keenly, so here too his mind moves from joy back into dejection: "But what is Bliss, that still calls up a Woe." These are mixed blessings:

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, & the Joy far less.  
 These Mountains too, these Vales, these Woods, these Lakes,  
 Scenes full of Beauty & of Loftiness 291  
 Where all my Life I fondly hop'd to live--  
 I were sunk low indeed, did they no solace give;

The shift from the intensely personal "love song" to the general "scenes full of beauty," and the formality of the diction (A.L. ll. 290-291), indicate that the poet is still alienated from the world, despite momentarily revived feelings. Though he



acknowledges that some solace is given by nature, he repeats the themes of then and now, and his loss of relation to nature:

But oft I seem to feel, & evermore I fear,  
They are not to me now the Things, which once they were.

Pirie is misguided in believing these lines show a release from the poet's "confused apathy" (Pirie, p. 321); on the contrary, the poet is still pathetically alienated, distanced and again fallen into the unfeeling. The next section of the poem, in fact, concerns itself with explaining this fall in philosophical terms.

In both "A Letter" and "Dejection," the two stanzas on joy follow statements by the poet that his relationship to Nature has changed. In "A Letter," however, the stanzas are also introduced by a strong distinction between the past and the present. Furthermore, the poet has just finished detailing his domestic woes, which also began with "There was a time when tho' my path was rough,/ The Joy within me dallied with Distress" (A.L. ll. 232-233). The philosophy of Joy in lines 296-323 grows out of the particulars of "A Letter." The passages on Joy further explain the separation between Coleridge and Sara. Joy is a condition of the pure and innocent; the poet belongs in the realm of the fallen.

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 300  
To the poor loveless ever-anxious Crowd,  
Ah! from the Soul itself must issue forth  
A Light, a Glory, and a luminous Cloud  
    Enveloping the Earth!  
And from the Soul itself must there be sent 305  
A sweet & potent Voice, of it's own Birth,  
Of all sweet Sounds the Life & Element.

The philosophy that "we receive but what we give/ And in our

life alone does nature live" is a departure from Coleridge's earlier, pantheistic views. By 1801 Coleridge had rejected the view that the mind is passive. But though he entertained the notion that the mind projects everything, he was not satisfied with this view either (Pirie, p. 303). Pirie records that Coleridge's reading of Kant and Fichte raised the possibility of a rationalized fusion of the two epistemological viewpoints (Pirie, p. 303). This position depends on "the absolute identity of subject and object" (BL, I, 187). In the Biographia Literaria Coleridge describes the necessary intermediary faculty as imagination:

in the act of thinking there are two powers at work which relatively to each other are active and passive; and this is not possible without an intermediate faculty which is at once both active & passive . . . the IMAGINATION. (BL, I, 86).

Imagination endows humans with the power to balance the subjective and the objective, the ability to "humanize nature, infusing the thoughts & passions of man into everything which is the object of his contemplation" (BL, II, 253). To give nature an "aesthetic transformation"<sup>18</sup> a dialectical relationship is required between being passively open to nature as something separate from ourselves, and actively responding to it. Like religious faith, it is a commitment which returns strength depending upon the strength of faith given. The meaning resides in the relationship. Hence the appropriateness of the marriage metaphor.

The responsibility for perceiving "aught. . . of higher Worth/ Than that inanimate cold World" lies within the self. "Behold" (A.L. l. 299) is an important word, because Coleridge is talking about perception, a way of seeing. The Soul, one's

inner Life, must send forth a "Light," a "Glory," and "luminous Cloud" which will "envelop the earth and it must also "send forth" a voice speaking the joyous power, naming its presence into being, this "beautiful & beauty-making Power." The activity of sending forth this power creates beauty and is in itself beautiful. Joy results from the ideal Wedding of subject with object in the act of perception. The joyous condition depends on a double power in the mind: the ability actively to create and passively to receive in the act of perceiving the natural world.

The wedding metaphor recalls the poet's earlier perception of the vain attempts of Nature to "woo" him (his lack of receptivity), and it recalls the actual wedding from which the poet is excluded. These two stanzas accentuate the distinction between relationships to Nature maintained by the pure and innocent and by his fallen self.

O pure of Heart! thou need'st not ask of me  
 What this strong music in the Soul may be,  
 What, & wherein it doth exist,  
 This Light, this Glory, this fair luminous Mist,  
 This beautiful & beauty-making Power!  
 JOY, innocent Sara! Joy, that ne'er was given  
 Save to the Pure, & in their purest Hour,

310

Only those who are pure and innocent find themselves naturally wedded to Nature; Joy was never given, except to the Pure. Those no longer in a pure state of innocence must find in themselves the power to rejoice with "sweet and potent Voice." If we give light in the world, we receive the power to perceive "a new Earth & new Heaven" (A.L. 1. 318). Just as the actual "wedding" of a bride and groom is performed by the transformational power of love (which is also the reward), so too is Joy the spirit and power

that performs the union between the self and Nature:

JOY, Sara! is the Spirit & the Power, 315  
 That wedding Nature to us gives in Dower  
 A new Earth & new Heaven  
 Undreamt of by the Sensual & 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.

Joy is the "spirit and the Power,/ That [while] wedding Nature to us gives in Dower/ A new Earth & new Heaven." The dowry can refer to either the gift brought to the wedding by the bride's loving act, or to the gift given to the bride by the groom's loving act. The dowry (Joy) can originate from either subject in the wedding. Because the innocents who engage in this relationship are pure, they in themselves rejoice. The key here is that the power to generate and to receive Joy resides with the "Pure & in their purest Hour," a circle from which the poet excludes himself. The many references to Sara's purity and innocence widen the gulf between the poet's dark, diseased world and her light and healthy world. The poet resigns himself to a vicarious experience of her Joy.

The last stanza of "A Letter" emphasizes this joyous state of the beloved:

Sister & Friend of my devoutest Choice!  
 Thou being innocent & full of love, 325  
 And nested with the Darlings of thy Love,  
 And feeling in thy Soul, Heart, Lips, & Arms  
 Even what the conjugal & mother Dove  
 That borrows genial Warmth from those, she warms,  
 Feels in her thrill'd wings, blessedly outspread-- 330  
 Thou free'd awhile from Cares & human Dread  
 By the Immenseness of the Good & Fair  
 Which thou see'st every where--  
 Thus, thus should'st thou rejoice!  
 To thee would all Things live from Pole to Pole, 335

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 & Impulse from above,  
 Thus may'st thou ever, evermore rejoice! 340

The language insists on the "I-thou" distinctions: "Thou free'd awhile from Cares & human Dread," and "Thou being innocent & full of love/ And nested with the Darlings of thy Love." Every word in "A Letter" precludes his inclusion. The image of the mother dove that "borrows genial warmth from those, she warms" is a marked contrast to the bird imagery earlier in the poem. It reminds us that the "wing feathers" of the poet's mind have been plucked, that he identifies with the mutilated Philomel, singing his love song with his "breast against a Thorn" (A.L. l. 285). Sara, on the other hand, is imaged as a nurturing "mother dove."

The dove image presents an uplifting vision of peace, love, and warmth; the protective love of the mother, who is receiving what she gives (warmth), covers and warms her young. The poet has created a vision of a harmonious, joyous relationship between Sara and nature. It is not a vision that includes himself. He remains the outcast Philomel, singing but in pain.

The dove image recalls the major concerns of "A Letter." On this issue Pirie's consideration of the last section of "A Letter" is disappointing. While pressing the view that Sara and the dove image resolve "all that the poem struggles to order," he states that the "final image of affirmation is one that contains and controls reverberations of all Coleridge's anxieties" and that Coleridge's complaints are "mitigated by the ability to bless"

(Pirie, p. 323-324). However, Pirie places too much emphasis on the idealization of the Dove image. Precisely because the dove image recalls so many of the earlier anxiety-ridden associations, the joyousness is undercut. Even Pirie admits that "Coleridge's complaints sound beneath the final blessing" (Pirie, p. 324). More emphasis needs to be placed on the associations that the imagery brings into play.

The language of the last three stanzas of "A Letter" recalls the whole complex of interrelated images and themes in the poem. Joy, first mentioned in the memory-vision of the two maidens (A.L. ll. 108), is associated with an inaccessible state throughout the poem. He has shown how his experiences have made "all Joy hollow" --he is a "wither'd branch." Joy is a condition of the past-- "When like an own Child I to Joy belong'd" (A.L. l. 228), or a condition of children, who can "awaken a Father's Joy: but O! it makes/ The love the greater & the Joy far less"(A.L. ll. 288-298). By describing Joy as a "Light, a Glory, and a luminous Cloud," a "sweet & potent Voice," he brings to mind earlier descriptions of his alienation from Nature--his vain attempts to feel a relationship between himself and "that Green Light which lingers in the West!" or with the "thin clouds" (A.L. ll. 49, 34). References to the "spirit & the Power" (A.L. l. 315) move out of earlier complaints of his loss of creative power, while the poet's painful "Love-song" parallels references to Joy as "strong music in the Soul." The wedding metaphor reminds us of "marriages to be regretted, or envied, or hopelessly desired" (Pirie, p. 324).

In the dove image these associations continue with a result-

ing convergence of thematic concerns. In "Sister & Friend" we remember the Wordsworth grouping, strengthened by "nested with the Darlings of thy Love." The sheltering love of Mother and child parallels the lost child of the storm as well as Coleridge's real children, who exclude him from the Wordsworth group, and it emphasizes again the inaccessibility of the desired world. The bird's wings, "thrill'd" and "blessedly outspread" suggest the "wings of healing" wished for the Lady, but also summon the plucked "wing feathers" of his mind. Though the final stanza presents a living, joyous and reciprocal relationship between Sara and her world, the imagery contextually suggests the poet's continued exclusion.

"A Letter" proceeds through associations, and once present and active, these associations do not disappear. Because all the former associations with alienation return, the joyousness is diffused, and is not, as Pirie argues, reinforced (Pirie, p. 324). Since the earlier relations to the Mother, family, "genial spirits," Sara, light, Nature, bird imagery, health, the Wordsworth group, and innocence were painful and associated by contrast with the poet's dejection, loss, absence, and alienation, these themes, as they converge in the image of Sara as mother dove, reinforce the poet's alienation. The envy latent in the poem lingers as a strong force in the dove image, and continues to be present because of the established patterns of association.

"A Letter" sustains a unity of feeling. The poem is structured by networks of images and themes, which accrue and are linked by the associative process of the poet's mind. Many of

its unifying elements are personal; references to personal memories and wishes repeatedly enter the poem. "A Letter" conveys the immediate experience of the poet's dejection by its self-conscious procedures and by the constant shifts in time that move the poet back and forth between his memories of past joy and his present experience of dejection. The troubled activity of his mind cannot find a lasting refuge from the pain that he feels. The "heartless" grief that exists in the poem's beginning is transformed, through the process of thought, into an unceasing fluctuation of pain. The complex anxieties that provoked "A Letter" are not "contained and controlled" in it (Pirie, p. 324); they recur unrestrained. The poem is about the relationship of dejection to transience, fluctuation and infectious uncertainty. Underlying the division between the poet's inner condition and Sara's innocence and purity is the suggestion that guilt and moral self-condemnation prevent him from participating in the light and health of Sara's world. While Sara is seen as "free'd awhile from Cares & human dread," the poet remains immersed in the collapse of his relationship to the world.

## II

In the Biographia Literaria, Coleridge considered criteria for "Genius" in art. It is important, he says, to reduce the "multitude into unity of effect," and to modify a "series of thoughts by some one predominant thought or feeling," to adapt the versification to the subject," and to "focus on subjects very remote from the writer himself" (BL, II, 14). Though not yet



formulated as such in 1802, this is the effect achieved in the revision of "A Letter" into "Dejection: An Ode." Coleridge may have seen that the subject of "A Letter" was not remote from his private interests. The revisions modify and control the series of thoughts pursued in "A Letter" by concentrating on a predominant thought--the general problem of dejection caused by the loss of creative vision. Confronted in "A Letter" with a complexity of feelings about his fragmented universe, Coleridge responded with reflection, analysis, and revision. His letters and Notebook entries of the period following the composition of "A Letter" show Coleridge's obsession with his dejection, and he often includes excerpts from "A Letter"<sup>19</sup> which he began to revise. There are now seven known versions of "Dejection" in printed form. These are: a newly discovered version of "A Letter to \_\_\_\_\_," written in Mary Wordsworth's hand, forthcoming in Stephen Parrish's book on "Dejection" (1978);<sup>20</sup> the April 4, 1802 "A Letter to [Asra]" (Griggs, II, 438); the July 19, 1802 "Letter to Sotheby" (Griggs, II, 445); the Morning Post "Dejection: An Ode Written April 4, 1802," published, however, on October 4, 1802; the Pierpont Morgan Library copy circa 1804-5 (very similar to the Morning Post version); a single manuscript of excerpts from "A Letter" and Wordsworth's "Resolution and Independence," sent to the Beaumonts on August 13, 1803 (Griggs, II, 511); and the Sibylline Leaves "Dejection: An Ode," published in 1817. Of these revisions the most significant changes occur in the "Letter to Sotheby," the Morning Post poem, and the 1817 "Dejection: An Ode."

On October 4, 1802 Coleridge first published "Dejection: An

Ode Written April 4, 1802," in the Morning Post. Since, as Pirie says, it is unlikely that it is a coincidence that the ode appeared on Wordsworth's wedding day (especially considering how largely Wordsworth figures in "A Letter"), it seems reasonable to consider the Morning Post poem as some sort of acknowledgement on Coleridge's part of the exchanges between himself and his friends at Grasmere (Pirie, p. 305). These exchanges about Coleridge's dejection predate the composition of "A Letter."

Coleridge often shared his feelings about his dejection and despair with the Wordsworth circle. On March 18, 1802, Coleridge visited the Wordsworths in Grasmere. Dorothy Wordsworth recorded in her Journal that they discussed Ben Jonson's odes, Neoplatonism, and Coleridge's dejection.<sup>21</sup> On March 27, Wordsworth wrote the first four stanzas of his "Immortality Ode," a poem that also poses epistemological questions that relate to psychic health.<sup>22</sup> The fourth stanza concludes:

Whither has fled the visionary gleam  
Where is it gone the glory and the dream?<sup>23</sup>

Wordsworth read these stanzas to Coleridge on a visit of the Wordsworths to Keswick on April 4.<sup>24</sup> Later that evening Coleridge wrote "A Letter." Because Coleridge believed that afflictions prevented him from sustaining his "visionary gleam," he may have responded to Wordsworth's question by answering "we receive but what we give." Coleridge visited Grasmere on May 12 and again between June 10-12, and he sent a letter on June 17. Dorothy recorded in her Journal that William began adding the neoplatonic material to his ode.<sup>25</sup> On July 19 Coleridge sent a letter to William Sotheby, which quotes lines 1-16, 21-72, and 94-125 of

"A Letter" (Griggs, II, 445). Concurrent with his discussions with friends about dejection, Coleridge had begun to cast "A Letter" into a new form.

The July 19 "Letter to Sotheby" begins with an account of Coleridge's attempt to deal with dejection caused by his loss of creative power, his sickness, and "other & worse afflictions," by turning to "downright metaphysics." He lies to Sotheby, telling him that he had written a poem to Wordsworth (and not to Sara), "the greater part of [which is of] a private nature" (Griggs, II, 445). . . Coleridge then quotes lines 231-242 of "A Letter," "Yes, dearest Poet, yes! / There was a time when tho' my Path was rough, . . . My shaping Spirit of Imagination!" He leaves two rows of dashes, indicating an omission of material he possibly felt was too "private" to be of interest, and then cites lines 265-271 of "A Letter," "For not to think of what I needs must feel, . . . And now is almost grown the Temper of my Soul." The juxtaposition of these passages suggests that Coleridge was thinking about the connections between the "afflictions" and the abstruse research. Substituting "afflictions" for the "Ill tidings" of "A Letter" shifts the emphasis of the causes of his dejection and unsuccessful remedy (abstruse research) onto more general reasons and away from anything specifically related to Sara Hutchinson. Moreover, by putting these lines together he suggests that the loss of imagination has driven him into abstruse research and not his "coarse domestic life" as cited in "A Letter."

Coleridge then transcribes the introductory lines from "A Letter" (A.L. ll. 1-51), substituting "William" for "Sara" and

concluding with "I may not hope from outward forms to win/ The passion and the life, whose fountains are within." This new supposed context establishes a trend in the revisions toward replacing the private content of "A Letter" with a more general content. The change of addressee from Sara to Wordsworth is one of the most significant changes. It is no longer entitled "A Letter to Asra," but instead, "Letter Written Sunday Evening, April 4, 1802." In keeping with his excision of references to Sara, he omits almost two hundred and fifty lines because they refer to "private" concerns. The problem of dejection posed by the first three stanzas is juxtaposed with the stanzas on Joy. The loss of creative power "My genial Spirits fail," is explained philosophically by lines 296-323 of "A Letter:" "O Wordsworth! we receive but what we give, . . . All colours a suffusion from that Light!"

The entire focus of the poem is altered from the personal to the general by providing a philosophical explanation of the need for "Joy" as a response to the problem of losing one's creative relationship to the world. The "beautiful and beautymaking power" comes of a pure state of mind wherein it is possible to rejoice and creatively interpret the world. This contrasts with the emphasis of "A Letter" in the lines that follow from the "My genial spirits fail" passage (and in the rest of the poem), which focuses on the poet's dependence upon thoughts of Sara to relieve his isolated and uncreative relationship with the world. The "Letter to Sotheby" contains two stanzas that set up the problem of dejection; followed by one short stanza pinpointing the specific reason ("My genial spirits fail;" another stanza that outlines

the general explanation: "we receive but what we give.") and a concluding stanza that reworks that last stanza of "A Letter" but now claiming that Wordsworth possesses Joy and can rejoice, and that therefore, for Wordsworth "all things live from pole to pole:"

Calm stedfast Spirit, guided from above,  
 O Wordsworth! friend of my devoutest choice,  
 Great Son of Genius! full of Light & Love!  
 Thus, thus dost thou rejoice.  
 To thee do all things live from pole to pole,  
 Their life the Eddying of thy living Soul!  
 Brother & Friend of my devoutest choice,  
 Thus may'st thou ever, ever more rejoice!

The arrangement of ideas in the "Letter to Sotheby" version suggests that Coleridge was experimenting with the idea of concentrating on the general and philosophical problems of dejection. The selection of lines 1-51, 296-323, and 334-340 shows Coleridge isolating the passages that deal with the relationship of dejection in general to joy in general. Though he explains some of the causes of his dejection (lines 231-242 and 265-271), he does not arrange the selections so that there is a clear cause and effect relationship. Nor does he incorporate the storm passage. He annexes it as "a fragment" at the end of his letter (Griggs, II, 445).

In the context of the "Letter to Sotheby," the storm passage must be considered as a "fragment" because it does not seem to have any connection with the content of the poem, even though, as Coleridge points out to Sotheby, the Lute image is introduced in the first stanza (Griggs, II, 445). Except in the progression in the stanza on Joy, there is no climax or resolution in the Sotheby version. The conclusion is not a prayer or blessing, but instead is an observation of an already achieved condition--"thus dost

thou rejoice," "to thee do all things live. . . ." Wordsworth's joyous condition appears to be the result of his "Genius" and guidance from above, without any evidence that the poet persona has received the same, and without a specific explanation in the dynamic of the poem of why he hasn't been able to participate in Joy. The Sotheby letter thus commences the transition from a private "renunciatory letter to a public poem."<sup>26</sup> Though he had not found a suitable arrangement of the parts, it is clear Coleridge wished to alter the content of the poem to keep that "of a sufficiently general nature" (Griggs, II, 445).

Coleridge possibly saw that one of the problems with the Sotheby poem was the omission of an adequate explanation of the causes of his dejection. He wrote to Robert Southey only ten days later (July 29), continuing his exploration of the relationship between his claimed loss of vision and his "Metaphysical Investigations:"

As to myself, all my poetic Genius, if ever I really possessed any Genius, & it was not rather a mere general aptitude of Talent & quickness in Imitation / is gone-- and I have been fool enough to suffer deeply in my mind, regretting the loss--which I attribute to my long & exceedingly severe Metaphysical Investigations--& these partly due to Ill-health, and partly to private afflictions which rendered any subject, immediately connected with Feeling, a source of pain & disquiet to me (Griggs, II, 449).

Coleridge then cites "There was a Time when, tho' my path was rough . . . My Shaping Spirit of Imagination;" he acknowledges an omission, and continues "For not to think of what I needs must feel . . . And now is almost grown the Temper of my Soul" (Griggs, II, 449), thereby connecting his retreat into abstruse research

with his loss of imaginative power. Coleridge also reworked some of the details such as changing "This joy within me dallied with distress" to "I had a heart that dallied with distress," and his experiments show he was eager to find a new form to express the more general concern.

The Morning Post "Dejection: An Ode Written April 4, 1802," published in October, is the first version that claims an odic form and it incorporates a number of significant changes. The substitution of an abstract noun for a personal address in the title reflects the change in perspective. It begins with a motto from the "Ballad of Sir Patrick Spence," and it is divided into number stanzas: I-VI, VIII and IX. A set of asterisks indicate an omission of "the Sixth and seventh Stanzas." Although apparently intended as a wedding gift to Wordsworth, the addressee is now the impersonal "Edmund."

Stanza one is the same as in "A Letter" but with an important exception. One of the most important revisions of the Morning Post poem is the addition of four lines at the end of the first stanza:

Those sounds which oft have rais'd me while they aw'd  
 And sent my soul abroad,  
 Might now perhaps their wonted Impulse give,  
 Might startle this dull Pain and make it move and live.

In these lines Coleridge establishes a correlation between the storm, his potential response to the storm, and his potential for feeling and activity. They establish a "present and future"-- cause and effect distinction, and fan expectations in the reader already sparked by the ballad motto. More specifically, the correlation of the coming of a storm with the return of life and

activity anticipates relief--a desired resolution, which, it is hoped, will come in the form of activity, the soul "aw'd," "startled," and "sent abroad."

The storm becomes a logical fulfillment of the bard's prophecy.<sup>27</sup> These are the only lines of the final 1817 version that haven't any counterpart in "A Letter." We are invited, therefore, to assume their importance. These lines refer to a purpose in the persona's mind, a hope that the storm will "raise" him, and they also arouse the reader's expectations: connections are to be made between the storm and startling activity. The persona is asking that his pain be an active, living and productive experience. A distinction is made between inert, dull, death-dealing pain and pain that "moves and lives." The Latin root of dejection means that which is cast down. It is extremely important to note that he no longer hopes to be delivered miraculously into Joy, but to be "raised" from inertia into activity. The persona hopes that the violence of the storm-wind will rouse his dull pain. As he describes the paralysis of his psyche, we realize that he needs something violent to release him. These lines prepare us for the frenzy of activity that the storm will bring in stanza VII of the 1817 ode. The addition of these lines is a structural feat because they allow enactment of the familiar Coleridgean device whereby "the parts of a poem mutually support and explain each other."<sup>28</sup>

Stanza two omits intimate reference either to Sara or to Wordsworth as well as the lines describing the throstle and the Larch tree (which "pushes out in tassels green/ Its bundled



Leafits"); and the reference to being "woo'd" by Nature. Coleridge probably omits these references because he now recognizes that these lines contradict the claims that the poet has lost his relationship to nature and that he has lost his creative power. In "A Letter" these lines show his ability to be "woo'd" by Nature still exists.

In the Morning Post poem Coleridge also removes personal references to Wordsworth, changing, for example, "dear William's Sky Canoe!" to "a lovely sky-canoe." As in the "Letter to Sotheby," stanza III ends with "I may not hope to win/ The passion & the life, whose fountains are within," and stanza IV moves directly into the long, unbroken philosophical explanation commencing "We receive but what we give. . . ." The poet's initial dejection (M.P. ll. 1-47) is counterposed with the animated lines on Joy (M.P. ll. 48-75). In stanza V the poem shifts again to the opposite pose, from the joy of others, namely the pure and innocent, back into his present dejection: "There was a time that, tho' my path was rough . . . My shaping spirit of Imagination" (M.P. ll. 76-87).

The poem now has a dialectical pattern: stanza I details the exterior condition, stanza II details the opposite, the interior condition, and stanza III synthesizes both elements by setting out the relationships between the internal and the external conditions:

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.  
 (M.P. ll. 43-47)

Stanza IV proposes the thesis that the solution to dejection is

Joy--"we, we ourselves rejoice." Joy "is the spirit & pow'r,/ Which wedding Nature to us gives in dow'r" (M.P. ll. 67-68). "A new Earth and new Heaven" is apposite to the dower (Joy). The antithesis of this description of the joyous, self-willed condition is presented in stanza VI, which moves again to the opposite pole--to the reasons why the poet cannot share in the rejoicing--there was a time when he could, "But now afflictions bow me down to earth;" afflictions suspend his "shaping spirit of imagination."

At this point in the Morning Post poem (l. 87), the dynamic literally breaks off. Asterisks mark an omission, and the poem awkwardly shifts back to the present: "O wherefore did I let it haunt my mind/ This dark distressful dream?/ I turn from it, and listen to the wind" (M.P. ll. 88-90). There is no specific reference for the "dark distressful dream," and preparation for the storm passage (M.P. ll 88-119) has to rely on references to the lute, to the possibility of a storm in the first stanza, and to general alienation. Since there is no evidence that there actually were sixth and seventh stanzas, we can assume Coleridge recognized the awkwardness of the transition between lines 87 and 88.

Stanza IX of the Morning Post poem differs from both "A Letter" and the "Letter to Sotheby." In "A Letter," lines 216-224 follow the storm passage and return to the immediate setting in the middle of the poem. Now these lines conclude the Morning Post poem:

'Tis midnight, and small thoughts have I of sleep;  
Full seldom may my friend such vigils keep!  
Visit him gentle Sleep, with wings of healing,

And may this storm be but a mountain-birth,  
 May all the stars hang bright above his dwelling,  
 Silent, as though they watch'd the sleeping Earth!  
 With light heart may he rise,  
 Gay fancy, cheerful Eyes  
 And sing his lofty song, and teach me to rejoice!  
 O Edmund, friend of my devoutest choice,  
 O rais'd from anxious dread and busy care  
 By the immenseness of the good and fair  
 Which thou see'st everywhere,  
 Joy lifts thy spirit, joy attunes thy voice,  
 To thee do all things live from pole to pole,  
 Their life the eddy of thy living soul!  
 O Simple Spirit, guided from above,  
 O lofty Poet, full of life and love,  
 Brother and friend of my devoutest choice,  
 Thus may'st thou ever, evermore rejoice!

Many elements of the poem are gathered together in this peaceful blessing. The uneasiness and disturbance of the storm are quieted in the wish for sleep, health and protection as the poet imagines tranquility, happiness and joy for his friend. Some of the elements, however, do not work in this context: the tenderness seems to be exaggerated because it is directed to the impersonal Edmund; for example, "With light heart may he rise,/ Gay fancy, cheerful Eyes/ And sing his lofty song," borders on the ridiculous.

The reverence displayed for Edmund, though slightly overdone, casts Edmund as a role model: the poet can approach joy with his friend as an example. This changes the situation at the end of "A Letter," where the poet relies more heavily on Sara, as the means for his salvation because his sense of his own isolation is so complete. Here he introduces the notion that it is possible to learn to rejoice and thereby to enter the joyous condition: "With light heart may he rise . . . and teach me to rejoice!" (M.P. ll. 126-128). These lines also suggest that Coleridge may have intended the Morning Post poem as a sign to the Wordsworths

of his ability to resolve his dejection.

G. M. Meyer speculates that Coleridge took some offence at Wordsworth's advice in "The Leech Gatherer," but formed the Morning Post poem to show that Wordsworth "was right."<sup>29</sup> Wordsworth had begun writing "The Leech Gatherer," a poem that suggests that solace can be found in resignation, on May 3, 1802. Milton Teichman argues that Wordsworth's poem is an answer to the dejection of "A Letter."<sup>30</sup> This argument is substantiated by the Coleorton Manuscript of excerpts from the two poems, which was presented to the Beaumonts in August, 1803 (Griggs, II, 511). Since the Morning Post poem did appear on Wordsworth's wedding day, we have good reason to view the poem as an epithalamic gesture, which demonstrated Coleridge's attempt to clear away the solipsism and to recover in art what he had claimed as lost in "A Letter."

The Morning Post poem fails as a poem, however, because it lacks an adequate transition into the storm passage. Coleridge was not happy with this aspect of the Morning Post poem; he wrote to Thomas Wedgwood only sixteen days later and suggested that the seven lines on "abstruse research" (A.L. ll. 265-271) belonged immediately after the line "My shaping spirit of imagination" (Griggs, II, 464). By adding these lines here, Coleridge could present a more substantial and concrete example of "the dark, distressful dream." These lines would demonstrate in the context of the Morning Post poem his response to the loss of his "shaping spirit of imagination" and they would also serve to introduce the unnatural and diseased images that appear in the

storm passage. In "A Letter" these lines on "abstruse research" perform a different function; they argue that abstruse research was his only escape from a "coarse domestic life," from his lack of feeling for his wife, and from the painful feelings aroused by his children (A.L. 11. 258-285). The other serious failing of the Morning Post poem lies in Coleridge's excessive attempt to distance the subject matter. The poem's exaggerated formality may have distressed him, for he changed the addressee back to the more personal "William" in the version he sent to the Beaumonts.

In the August 13, 1803 poem, the Coleorton manuscript, greater informality is accomplished by shifts in emphasis--underlining, punctuation, and capitals. For example, "O Edmund: we receive but what we give" (M.P. 1. 48) becomes "O William! we receive but what we give!" The Coleorton manuscript, titled "Dejection: An Ode" (Imperfect), is roughly similar to the Morning Post poem, but it ends with the lines on the suspension of the shaping spirit of imagination, without proceeding to the storm passage or to any resolution. The poem lies truly suspended in just the place where Coleridge sensed "imperfection" in the Morning Post version. It has, then, only 86 lines in six unnumbered stanzas: I, II and III are basically the same as the Morning Post poem, but the stanza on Joy is divided into two stanzas. Stanza IV ends with "Of all sweet Sounds the Life and Element!" and stanza V begins "O pure of Heart! thou need'st not ask of me," which tends to emphasize the difference between the speaker and the addressee, perhaps even suggesting the irony of it.

There are a number of other small changes in the wording of

the lines on Joy in the Coleorton version. Instead of

Joy, virtuous Edmund! joy that ne'er was given,  
Save to the pure, and in their purest hour (M.P. ll. 65-6),

we have in the Coleorton poem:

Joy, dearest Bard! but such as ne'er was given  
Save to the Pure, and in their purest Hour (C. ll. 64-65).

The addition of "such as ne'er was given/ Save to the Pure" intensifies the innocence of the Joyous condition and reiterates the difference between the speaker, who we find out is excluded ("But now afflictions bow me down to Earth" C. l. 82), and the pure hearted "William." The next few lines in the Coleorton version present a description of Joy that differs from other versions. Having established that Joy is a condition given only to the pure, he states:

Joy, effluent and mysterious, is 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, effluent (that which flows out) and mysterious, is the power that [while] wedding Nature to us [also] "gives in Dower/ A new Earth and new Heaven." The poem continues "This is the sweet Voice. This the luminous cloud,/ Our hidden Selves rejoice!" (C. ll. 70-71). The mysterious wedding of our selves to Nature by Joy takes place "within"--in other versions the lines read: "Joy is the sweet voice, Joy the luminous cloud,/ We, we ourselves rejoice!" Perhaps the wording in this version suggests that the wedding of the self to Nature by Joy occurs unconsciously or un-self-consciously.

The Coleorton manuscript is most significant for its context

in the Wordsworth-Coleridge exchanges of 1802.<sup>31</sup> It is also important because it ends suspended exactly where Coleridge saw the need for a transition in the Morning Post poem.

### III

We have, then, followed the gradual changes "A Letter" underwent to become "Dejection: An Ode." We have seen the movement in revision from a very personal poem with a complex pattern of associative imagery linking the causes of the dejection to several specific influences in Coleridge's private life, to a more streamlined, public poem that links the causes of dejection (in general) to a single universal reason. The 1817 "Dejection: An Ode" poem is different in content from "A Letter" because the poem has been altered to concentrate on expressing ideas about the relationship of the loss of creative imaginative powers to the loss of an innocent, joyous relationship to nature. In "Dejection: An Ode" loss of imagination causes dejection. "A Letter" instead explores the persona's immediate experience of the feeling of dejection in relation to a myriad of causes: disappointments in love, marriage, work, family and friends.

"Dejection: An Ode" is also different in form as well as in content. Part three of the paper will examine the principles of organization of "Dejection: An Ode" to show how the rearrangement of lines produces a poem very different from "A Letter," as the diction, in new contexts, establishes new meanings. I am assuming that meaning can change in context and that the poem/work of art proposes a context/world by the associations and

images it calls up in the reader. The ways in which "Dejection" differs from "A Letter" suggest that ways of thinking about the problem also differ. The emotions and opposing forces that keep the persona's mind immersed in a vacillation between momentary transcendence of his isolation and regressions back into self-torturing awareness of his isolation in "A Letter" are, in "Dejection," transformed into a productive analysis of the problem. For example, in "Dejection" joy acts to counterbalance dejection and to put it into perspective. The memory of past joy does not function to make the persona more miserable or to allow the persona to escape present reality as happens in "A Letter," but instead, joy is presented philosophically to show the opposite of dejection and to focus on its cause: the absence of the "shaping spirit of imagination," which would transform perception of the "afflicted" present and thus mediate between mind and nature. Because the stanzas on Joy describe the joyous condition as an innocent, creative engagement with nature, we are made aware both of the absence of this type of relationship and of its remedy. Responsibility lies within; the imagination must be reactivated. Thus, we are prepared for precisely this event to occur in the storm sequence. The new arrangement and emphasis of "Dejection: An Ode" demonstrates a change of heart, and even though it does not demonstrate that the persona has reached the condition of joy, it shows how the process begins: by the reactivated imagination responding to the storm (nature)--"sounds which oft [had] raised" the poet in the past.

The main differences between "A Letter" and the final



revised ode are: 1) the omission of all personal, private griefs; 2) the concentration upon a single cause of dejection; 3) the emphasis on an expository path to explore the reason for dejection and an arrangement of the poem so as to examine the problem dialectically; and 4) the switch from the unity of feeling in "A Letter," to imaginative unity in "Dejection," relying on the storm symbol and the dialectical interaction between stanzas to augment associative unity.

The physical differences between "A Letter" and "Dejection: An Ode" are obvious. "Dejection" has only 139 lines compared to "A Letter's" 340 lines. "Dejection: An Ode" is divided into eight numbered stanzas roughly even in length (18 lines average) with the exception of one short stanza (III--8 lines) and one long stanza (VII--32 lines), both of which are focal points of the poem. Personal references and private griefs are removed from "Dejection: An Ode." Lines 52-183, 243-264, 272-295 and 324-333 of "A Letter" are omitted in the final version, leaving the loss of imagination as the sole cause of the persona's dejection (D. ll. 39-40 and 83-86). By concentrating on one theme (the persona's loss of a creative-imaginative response to nature) and by eliminating the associative trains of thought which lead the persona of "A Letter" in and out of dejection,<sup>32</sup> "Dejection" takes on a more clearly expository path, examining the causes and effects of dejection. The expository pattern of "Dejection" (as opposed to the associative-spontaneous pattern of "A Letter") is revealed in the interaction between the stanzas of "Dejection." A slight change of emphasis in stanza I, coupled

with the concentration of the theme, prepares for the storm symbol to perform a different function in "Dejection." The first six stanzas of "Dejection" describe the dejection and explain what could relieve it. The storm provides the stimulus for change.

The first stanza of "Dejection: An Ode," as in "A Letter," sets up oppositions that are sustained throughout the poem. However, the notion of impending change--"This Night, so tranquil now, will not go hence"--is augmented in "Dejection" by the inclusion both of the epigraph, which prophesies a storm, and the additional lines (D. 17-20), which link the potential for the poet's arousal to the arrival of violent storm activity:

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!

By emphasizing the connection between positive reactions to turbulence in the past and his hope of arousal in the near future, this passage establishes a past/present/future context with a suggestion of hope for the future. The poet hopes to change his dead pain into a living, moving pain.

The hope for change works against the negative, foreboding associations attached to the deadly, static atmosphere ("the dull, sobbing draft that moans and rakes/ Upon the strings of this Aeolian lute,/ Which better far were mute"), and attached to the old Moon foretelling a storm. Most of us might feel tension because of the prophecy of storm and because of the uneasy calm and eerily lit atmosphere, but these tensions are countered if we associate the storm activity with rescue--with awing and

sending the poet's soul "abroad." In "A Letter," positive associations in stanza I are limited to the beauty of the light of the New Moon and its associations with the throwing off of old life and the triumph of new life. Negative associations suggested by the Old Moon's presence foretelling a storm, mingle uneasily with an undirected desire for a storm.

Hope (for change and relief) is an important issue in "Dejection;" in the revisions most of the references to hopelessness are removed, as are the particular reasons why the persona is heartless and has no hope (A.L. ll. 52-55, 156-183, 227, 243-248, 258-262). Coleridge commented in the Philosophical Lectures that the true condition of slavery was hopelessness:

What makes a slave a slave? If I mistake not it is oppressions--it is the being in a state out of which he cannot hope to rise; and he who is placed where there is no motive for action but where the miserable thing he is must ever remain, in the same sphere, is a slave, and a pitiable one.<sup>33</sup>

By introducing hope in stanza I and again in VII, Coleridge suggests that it is possible for the persona to relieve his dejection.

The abrupt shift between stanzas I and II is identical in both "Dejection" and "A Letter," but while in "A Letter" this transition is unusual, it anticipates several such shifts in "Dejection" (i.e. between stanzas I and II, II and III, V and VI). The revised poem relies much more heavily on the Pindaric unifying device of "that impetuosity of Transition."<sup>34</sup> We can assume that Coleridge was aware of the way Pindaric odes worked during the time that he revised "A Letter." In the "Letter to

Sotheby" on September 10, 1802, he notes:

Young somewhere in one of his prose works remarks that there is as profound a Logic in the most daring & dithyrambic parts of Pindar, as in the "οργα νῶν" of Aristotle --the remark is a valuable one (Griggs, II, 459).<sup>35</sup>

Coleridge made notes from Edward Young's essay "On Lyric Poetry" in 1794, copying:

To sum the whole: the Ode should be peculiar, but not strained; moral, but not flat; natural, but not obvious; delicate, but not affected; noble, but not ambitious; full, but not obscure; fiery, but not mad; thick, but not loaded in its numbers, which should be most harmonious, without the least sacrifice of expression or of sense.<sup>36</sup>


Young also notes that the ode should be in conduct "rapturous, somewhat abrupt, and immethodical to a vulgar eye. That apparent order, and connexion, which gives form and life to some compositions, takes away the very soul of this."<sup>37</sup> Though a Pindaric ode may appear to be disordered, because of the sudden shifts, it has been shown that it is actually highly organized.<sup>38</sup> In "Dejection," the first sudden shift is from the description of external conditions in stanza I to the description of the persona's internal condition in stanza 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-- (D. ll. 21-24).

As in "A Letter," we make the connection between internal and the external, between the tranquil, dull evening and the persona's stifled, unimpassioned condition, unable to participate in the world around him. Lines 25-29 of "A Letter" (the Thrustle in the Larch tree image) were removed in revision probably because they undermined the alienation portrayed in the rest of the

stanza. Without them, the stanza consistently expresses disengagement with nature.

The interaction of stanzas I and II anticipates a pattern that recurs in "Dejection." They articulate a strophe/antistrophe action, Pindaric in nature. Structurally, Pindar's odes consist of alternating systems of strophe, antistrophe, and epode. The strophe and antistrophe work dialectically. The epode is a synthesis or overall analysis. "Dejection" follows a similar pattern of operation. The editing and arrangement of "Dejection" produced structural changes that made a unity that depends not only on the associative play of mind (the spontaneity and immersion of the persona's mind in the immediate experience of "A Letter"), but also on a dialectical examination of the problem of dejection. These are the most fundamental and important changes in the revised poem. The unity of the final version is more dependent upon relationships between the stanzas themselves.

The odic arrangement sets up a dialectic: the external condition described in strophe I is countered by the description of the persona's internal condition in strophe II; we can view the prophecy of the storm as a thesis of change, the antithesis of which appears in the static condition portrayed in stanza II. A synthesizing analysis is provided by strophe III. As an epode, stanza III co-ordinates information from both I and II and reveals the important relationship contained between them: the poet feels dejected and alienated because he has lost his creative powers of imagination, and he is looking to the storm to rouse him, to "raise" him out of this dejected state. 

## 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.  
 (D. ll. 39-46).

By juxtaposing oppositions such as stasis and change, despair and hope, the external and the internal, the interaction between stanzas I, II and III shows how the persona's perception of the outer world is a function of his inner condition.

The diction of stanza III also reveals synthetic activity. Both the problem and the solution are contained in III. The first line mourns the failure of "genial spirits." Etymologically, "genial" is related to the generative and the productive as well as to the creative powers. The last two lines propose that the weight can only be lifted by self-generated activity. Weight is countered by the image of the fountain. The passion and the life (what is absent in I and II) are to be found as fountains within the self. This forecasts the solutions proposed by the rest of the poem and appropriately leads us into the lines on Joy. The brevity of stanza III, without the reiterations of "A Letter" (A.L. ll. 25-30), draws attention to the major statement: the answer to the problem of dejection lies within.

Whereas in "A Letter" these statements about the failure of his imaginative powers to rouse him are followed by thoughts about Sara's power to rouse him from his unfeeling state, "Dejection" instead moves immediately into an explanation for his dejection: "O Lady! we receive but what we give/ And in our life alone does

Nature live" (D. ll. 47-48). Besides the overall effect in keeping with the shift from a private to a public subject, a significant shift in emphasis also occurs. The poet's reliance on memories of his beloved to relieve his dejection in "A Letter" is replaced in "Dejection" by his acceptance and emphasis on the self's responsibility for reviving the "passion and the life." In "Dejection" the synthesis of the problems presented in I and II are summarized in III by "I may not hope from outward forms to win/ The Passion and the life, whose fountains are within" (D. ll. 45-46) are answered by an analysis of the relationship of joy, dejection and perception.

At this juncture the triadic pattern of strophe/antistrophe/epode varies, but still sustains a dialectical operation. Stanzas IV and V counter the lifeless dejection of I and II with a philosophy that reveals the dialectical association of dejection with joy:

## 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!

## V

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,  
 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--  
 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 (D. 11. 47-75).

Recognizing that the persona may not "hope from outward forms to win/ The passion and the life, whose fountains are within," stanza IV asserts that the soul must give, must send forth, must "issue forth" a sweet and potent voice of its own birth. Recovery from dejection is seen as a process of self-creation, which itself depends on a dialectic. Images of both absence and presence are now generated. The poet can now see the possibility of how one can win "the passion and the life" (something he could not imagine in I and II). The light and "fair luminous cloud/ Enveloping the Earth" remind us of the "phantom light o'erspread" and the clouds being moulded by the wind or giving away their motion to the stars, and thus recall the alienation the poet experienced because of his "heartless mood" in I and II. The absence of joy felt by the poet is juxtaposed with the sweet voice and luminous cloud of joy imaged for the Lady. What is important is that between these two poles of experience an activity has been generated, which proposes the solution to the persona's problem. Ideal 'Being' is itself dialectical; joy and dejection are seen as the two poles of experience, which can only be reconciled in the act of perception.

Joy, Lady! is the spirit and the power,



Which wedding Nature to us gives in dower  
A new Earth and new Heaven (D. ll. 67-70).

Either we perceive Nature as living and put on her a wedding garment and marry her, or we see her as dead, separate and other. Later in the poem we see that the reconciliation of these opposites occurs through the activity of the imagination (VI and VII).

In addition to the eddying of images of giving and receiving, presence and absence, wedding and alienation inside the stanzas, the stanzas also interact with each other. Stanza IV explores the inner source of joy; stanza V describes the outer presence of joy. These two stanzas propose that the solution to dejection is a self-generated joyous relationship to the world. Essentially, the thesis is that joy is an innocent condition of rejoicing, which produces a transformational power of perception. Joy is this "beautiful and beauty-making power."

Coleridge is not saying that beauty is only a product of the mind, but that perception of beauty is dependent upon activity of the mind. The mind must be engaged in a reciprocal relationship with nature. By celebrating or rejoicing in ourselves we are both joyous and producers of joy. That we potentially have the power to transform our vision, to "envelope" the earth, is reason enough to celebrate.

And thence flows all that charms or ear or sight,  
All melodies the echoes of that voice,  
All colours a suffusion of that light (D. ll. 73-75).

The question of being able to generate joy works itself out by a principle inherent in the poetic structure. From the soul there must be sent a "sweet and potent voice." The voice of "Dejection"

has enacted the inverse of this by recording the song of grief. Having given form to dejection, the poem accomplishes a "negative engagement" which, once active, has only to be turned around. The language in IV and V prepares us for what could happen (and does happen in VII and VIII) to reverse the poet's initial state of mind. Words such as "suffusion," "effluence," "issue," and "luminous" echo the outward movement in the poem at this point. A joyous relationship with nature brings one out of the self, out of alienation. In joy we enter a "wedded" condition. Notice how blending is suggested by the fluid associations attached to "flows," "mist," "shower," "potent birth." The fertility of this condition is reflected in words like "birth" and "potent."

Whereas stanzas IV and V include a description of the ideal condition of joyful Being, stanza VI presents the antithesis, the persona's real condition. Instead of a creative, spontaneous and joyous relationship to the world, he has a painful, abstract and philosophical one, which keeps him from a joyous perception of the world:

## 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,  
 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 own nature all the natural man--  
 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.

Having described joy in IV and V, the dialectic moves us back into dejection in VI where the contrasts between past and present, joy and dejection, and imagination and abstruse research show that while the poet had joy, hope, and imagination in the past, now afflictions have suspended his "shaping spirit of Imagination," and he has, as a result, taken to "abstruse research." By placing the abstruse research passage after the lines claiming a loss of imagination, Coleridge suggests that abstruse research is substituted for the loss of imagination, and not as in "A Letter," substituted for real pleasures of family life (A.L. 265-271). This keeps the reason for dejection concentrated on the loss of imagination, thus echoing stanza III.

The poet's argument is, however, a circular one. He is claiming that "afflictions" have suspended his imagination and that loss of imagination is the cause of his dejection. It has become a self-perpetuating, vicious circle. He notes that in the past the joy within him "dallied" with distress. When he had hope he could cope with the poles of his experience. (He is not claiming to have existed solely inside joy in the past.) Now, however, without hope, his troubles afflict him and suspend his imagination.

Many critics are dissatisfied with the substitution of "afflictions" for the specific reasons named in "A Letter." These readers are disappointed only because they insist on reading this passage against the verse letter. In the verse letter we are told what the afflictions are explicitly. We don't need the details

of Coleridge's biography to experience the "Ode." For example, we do not need to know that the threat of being excluded from the blissful Grasmere circle "gave rise" to a series of "self-pitying fantasies;"<sup>39</sup> we are able to recognize that the poem presents these fantasies in its own language. The work of scholars such as Cornwell is indispensable for establishing the conditions from which the poem grew, but their discoveries do not determine the meaning of the poem. By the time we get to this stanza in the "Ode" version of the poem, we are prepared by the poetic structure of the rest of the "Ode" to accept the loss of Imagination as more than enough cause for dejection; we are given the dejection so vividly and with such passion (paradoxically) that we do not doubt its authenticity. The grief, as it is sung in the public form of the ode, transcends any personal domestic problems.

Moreover, because Coleridge places the dejection in direct relation to its opposite, joy, we are able to feel the absence of joy more poignantly. In "Dejection" he has equated the loss of imagination with the loss of life itself--supported by the deathly landscapes of stanzas I and II, and by the fruitlessness of alternatives to a life of imagination: the poor life allowed to the "sensual and the proud" and the substituted life of theory both involve a spiritual death that abstracts a part and substitutes it for the whole. The result is poisonous, viper thought.

Stanza VII of "Dejection" is composed of the storm passage (A.L. ll. 184-215). As in "A Letter," the storm sequence presents the poet's subjective response to sounds of the storm. Imagery of disease and destruction ("Devil's Yule," "blasted Tree," "the

wild, raving and mad wind"), reveals the poet's "unnatural" and pained condition.<sup>40</sup> The wildness of the storm outside symbolically provides images of the wildness inside of the poet. His responses to the storm reveal his suffering and fear, and his vacillation between the poles of despair (the first tale) and hope for rescue (the second tale). In both "A Letter" and "Dejection" the persona interprets the sounds of the wind and imaginatively constructs tales, one of fear and suffering, the other of a small child lost but "not far from home." In both versions of the poem the persona's imagination shapes what he hears and creates meaning. Moreover, he creates a positive and active response to nature. (The second tale, is "tempered with delight"; the child is actively seeking its mother; the "utter grief & fear" alternates with "hopes to make its Mother hear!")<sup>41</sup> However, "Dejection" focuses more clearly on this return of the imaginative power because of changes in the overall poetic structure.

How then does a new arrangement and concentration of theme affect stronger emphasis on the revival of the imagination in "Dejection?" Recalling that "Dejection" does not employ the multitude of personal themes that "A Letter" does, the imagery in the storm sequence no longer evokes those personal associations,<sup>42</sup> but instead portrays general alienation, suffering, fear and vulnerability. For example, the "Pine-Grove, whither Woodman never clomb" (A.L. ll. 191, D. l. 101), no longer has connections with Sara's "lov'd haunt" or other cloister-bower images in "A Letter," but instead generally presents an image of nature desolate and

uninhabitable by human-kind. The absence of the group of associations with the Wordsworths, Sara and the poet's own family is also in keeping with the overall shift to a dialectical system of organization.

In "A Letter" the storm passage follows the persona's "temptation to repine," and his morbid fantasy of Sara ill (A.L. ll. 169-183). And although for a second time he tries to "beat away the thought" (A.L. l. 170, ll. 184-185), the pain, pining, and disease resurface in the storm images. Direct, associative and syntactic links occur between the preceding stanza and references to the actual storm. "Nay, wherefore did I let it haunt my Mind/  
The dark distressful dream! / I turn from it & listen to the Wind" (A.L. ll. 184-186) refers to the morbid fantasy. The storm is a climax to the domestic themes traced in lines 119-183 of "A Letter."

In "Dejection" the storm passage is preceded by stanza VI, which states the cause of the persona's dejection: the loss, the "suspension" of his "shaping spirit of Imagination." In stanza VI Coleridge shaped a unit devoted to setting out the cause and the effect of dejection. The first eleven lines describe the dejection (cause) and the newly placed lines 87-93 describe the resulting loss of imaginative power and tell of his desperate and 'unnatural' substitution of "abstruse research" (effect). This is quite different from "A Letter," where abstruse research is undertaken because of an unhappy family life and not as a substitute for imagination (A.L. ll. 265-271). Also, by placing lines 87-93 in "Dejection" before the transition into the storm, the

lines "Hence, viper thoughts, that coil around my mind,/ Reality's dark dream!" are given an antecedent in keeping with the changed poem (in "A Letter they refer to the fantasy of Sara ill). In "Dejection," stanza VII is linked to stanza VI by "hence;" the "viper thoughts" recall and reverse the productivity of stanza VI's "twining vine," and refer to the unnatural infection of abstruse research.

The overall organization of "Dejection" also prepares us for what takes place in stanza VII. To briefly recall the dialectic described previously, stanza I presents a description of the quiet external situation (nature), which suggests that a positive change will occur; stanza II describes the dejected (internal) condition of the persona--a tension is raised between opposites of internal and external, calm and storm, despair and hope, mind and nature, and stasis and activity. Stanza III presents a synthesis linking the effects described in I and II with a cause given in III: "My genial Spirits fail." The inner and outer conditions, juxtaposed in I and II, are directly related in III: "I may not hope from outward forms to win/ The passion and the life, whose fountains are within."

The dialectical shift between opposites continues in stanzas IV and V, where the opposite of the stated problem (dejection) is described in its ideal form (joy). The thesis of IV and V is that joy has an inner source (a response to III). Stanzas IV and V present images of presence and absence, giving and receiving, the isolated self and the wedded self, the innocent and the fallen, thus revealing the polar relationship of dejection to joy in the

dynamic of Being. Ideal joy, given to the Pure in the innocent or "natural" condition, is juxtaposed with the antithetical, unnatural dejection of the poet's present fallen condition. Stanza VI returns us to the poet's fallen condition with an analysis of its cause: the loss of imagination, and with the knowledge that the source for its revival must "issue" forth from the poet. The move back into thoughts on the shaping spirit of imagination echoes the synthesis of stanza III: the revival of genial spirits must come from within! We should also keep in mind that Coleridge saw the imagination as the reconciling agent between opposites. The imagination is the mediatress between mind and nature--the agency of perception.

Stanza VII presents a synthesis by dramatizing the interaction of the poet's mind with the change in nature. As the persona's mind begins to construct meaning from the sounds of the storm, we witness a return of his "shaping Spirit." The storm tales he makes dramatize his confrontation with the agony of his dejection--he feels the pain, and he feels it released!

Max Schulz misleads us by suggesting that the storm is not a symbol of rejuvenation because Coleridge doesn't want it to travel across to Grasmere.<sup>43</sup> Schulz feels that the storm symbol in "Dejection" is confused because it remains a discarded theme from the verse letter of the poet's "coarse domestic life" and of his unrequited love for Sara Hutchinson. An analogy from the Letters helps clarify the problem. In a letter to George Coleridge in October 1803, Coleridge writes of his despondency and quotes "Dejection." He complains that his heart has been "shut up within



itself" and he then cites the section of "Dejection" which laments the infection of abstruse research. He adds "I have sometimes derived a comfort from the notion, that possibly these horrid Dreams, with all their mockery of Crimes, & Remorse, & Shame, & Terror, might have been sent upon me to arouse me out of that proud & stoical Apathy into which I had fallen." In "Dejection" it is the nightmarish visions of the seventh stanza that arouse him and send his soul abroad to Sara. She is not in the same plight originally. She does not need the nightmare/storm to arouse her; she is already seen by the poet as being in a state of joyous arousal. The storm symbol in "Dejection" occupies a more significant structural role than in "A Letter." It is made the unifying focus by the addition of the lines at the end of stanza one of "Dejection"--linking the storm to the prophecy/anticipation of fulfillment. The storm sounds have "raised him" and have startled the dull pain of stanza I and made it "move and live" (D. ll. 17-20). The sounds of the storm raise the poet from his state of unproductive (because inert and unliving) pain, and make his pain alive. The additional lines in stanza I that set this up (D. ll. 17-20) don't say that he wishes to be startled out of the pain--they express his wish to have the pain become a moving and vital path for knowledge. The revision of the poem shows that the poet has used the pain, the energy of the pain, to make something. The activity of the thoughtful "shaping" of his pain brings relief from the death-like stasis of the opening lines.

This relief also occurs in "A Letter," but in "A Letter" the significance of the return of imagination is lessened because it

is intertwined in the web of recurring images and associations that tie the poet into cycles of dejection and relief. In "A Letter" the poet is immersed in the pain and is unable to distance himself enough to break the cycle. He is relieved three times and pulled immediately back into dejection twice. After the storm climax in "A Letter" the poem moves into a stanza that includes a blessing and the turn back into dejection ("For, oh! beloved Friend!/ I am not the buoyant Thing, I was of yore . . ." A.L. ll. 226-227) and into the passage beginning "There was a time when tho' my path was rough . . ." (A.L. ll. 232-248). In "Dejection" there is only one climax, and with the conclusion of stanza VII-- a fantasy of relief for the child--the poem moves directly into a concluding blessing:

'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,  
 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 eddyng of her living soul!  
 O simple spirit, guided from above,  
 Dear Lady! friend devoutest of my choice,  
 Thus mayest thou ever, evermore rejoice (D. ll. 126-139).

Stanza VIII of "Dejection" is composed of lines 216-223 and 334-340 of "A Letter." Instead of having the poem lead back into his dejection, Coleridge added the final uplifting benediction to his good wishes for the Lady. As in other poems of Coleridge such as "Frost at Midnight" or "This Lime Tree Bower My Prison," the persona adopts the role of watching and protecting; he keeps a "vigil," while another receives the blessing.<sup>44</sup> The return to the

opening setting (" 'Tis midnight"), another familiar Coleridgean device, suggests a homecoming, with the persona having gained a release from his "grief without a pang," from his unfeeling condition of dejection. Whereas he still sees himself as an outsider --"small thoughts have I of sleep/ Full seldom may my friend such vigils keep" (D. ll. 126-127)--he simultaneously is released from his conception of a static, dead world and from the prison-house of self because he unselfishly imagines a living world. His blessing includes images of sleep, healing, comfort, protection and peacefulness. Instead of the vacant, restless and oppressive quiet of stanza I, he envisions the silent stars protecting the sleeping Earth. His perception of the stars in stanza VIII is a reversal of his perception of the stars in stanza II, where they are part of a "fixed" heaven that he could see but not feel:

May all the stars hang bright above her dwelling,  
 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 (D. ll. 130-140).

The enduring peacefulness of this image communicates a loving reciprocity between the human and the divine. The mention of guidance from above is a reversal of the alienated isolation of the fragmented universe in the poem's beginning. Here, in a loving prayer, the poet has ceased to be one of those fixed and isolate parts. The blank eye gazing is replaced by the "gay" Eyes. Instead of the poet's dejection he sees her joy, her active, participative relationship with nature: "To her may all things live

from pole to pole,/ Their life the eddying of her living soul"  
(D. 11. 135-136)..

In "Dejection" Coleridge emphasizes the persona's release from himself by concluding with this rejoicing. Since it is an act of rejoicing, he is recreating joy in the Lady's joy. Whereas in "A Letter" the persona immediately remembers himself and his dejection, in "Dejection" we finish with the persona's thoughts for another. His ability to forget himself and his dejection does not automatically transport him into "Joy," but it does demonstrate a change of heart. He is approaching a state of mind described in a letter of 1819:

in Joy individuality is lost and it therefore is liveliest in youth, not from any principle in organization, but simply from this, that the hardships of life, that the circumstances have forced a man in upon his little unthinking contemptible self, have lessened his power of existing universally; it is that only which brings about these passions. To have genius is to live in the universal, to know no self but that which is reflected not only from the faces all around us, our fellow creatures, but reflected from the flowers, the trees, the beasts, yea from the very surface [of the waters] & the sands of the desert.<sup>45</sup>

By concluding "Dejection" with the blessing for the Lady the poet has at least reached a stage where he has been able to come out of his "little unthinking and contemptible self" and to give of himself spontaneously. His dull pain has been startled and moved, and the cause of his dejection (the suspension of his mediating imagination) has been relieved by the return of his "shaping spirit" in his creation of the storm tales.

Because of the dialectical movement of "Dejection" through a tension and juxtaposition of opposites to a climax in his response to the storm (where mind and nature interact) we can regard

stanza VIII as a resolution of the poem's dilemma (alienation). The isolation, suffering, pain and fear vented in VII give way to images of "dwelling" (belonging), "healing" (comfort) and peace in VIII. Though he is not pure like the Lady and is only included in the blessing vicariously, he is, nevertheless, capable of producing the vision, something he previously believed impossible. Readers have argued that the existence of the poem is itself evidence that the poet has overcome dejection.<sup>46</sup> This question leads us to an important distinction between "A Letter" and "Dejection." "A Letter" is an amazing poem of great intensity; in it the poet is involved in the experience of dejection ab intra. "A Letter" shows the experience of dejection to be tied to myriad causes, many of them outside the poet's control. Therefore, in his personal experience of dejection the poet feels that relief is tied to others, especially to his beloved. (Relief occurs through his thoughts of Sara at lines 74-98; 216-225; 324-340 of "A Letter.") "Dejection," however, takes the experience of dejection and makes a general case of it, viewing loss of imaginative power as its simple cause. The poet is involved ab extra, and since the problem is seen to be loss of imagination, its opposite, the revival of imagination is proposed as the resolution. Instead of looking to others for relief, "Dejection" places emphasis on the responsibility of the self. Instead of relying on the beloved to supply release, the poet in "Dejection" discovers the transformational powers of love and joy themselves (stanzas IV and V). By surrounding the storm passage with the principles of giving and receiving, and with the crisis of imagination

conclusion

(the poet's disease), Coleridge shapes a sequence that prepares for the dejection to be relieved by the healing effects of giving, loving, and imaginatively participating in nature. By contrast, the storm passage and following blessing in "A Letter" are surrounded by tortured thoughts of Sara. The disease, pain, and suffering imagery is sustained throughout lines 119-243, linking the storm passage with the poet's dependency upon Sara and the Wordsworths for love and for relief from his dejection. The storm passage and blessing are extensions of his obsession with his exclusion from Sara's world. The distinction is kept explicitly in the blessing ("For, oh! beloved Friend!/ I am not the buoyant Thing, I was of yore--" A.L. ll. 226-227). I have argued that the strong distinctions built up between the poet's diseased self-image and Sara's purity (reinforced by the web of disease imagery) exclude the poet from sharing an innocent, joyous condition. These distinctions are sustained to the end of "A Letter."<sup>47</sup> In "A Letter" the poet has moments of relief where he passes into trance-like celebrations of his release, but these are momentary transcendences and they do not resolve the problem-- which recurs again and again. (Possibly some readers prefer "A Letter" because of its rendition of the transient nature of our experience of joy and dejection.) "Pure Joy" only exists for others and not for the poet in "A Letter."

The revision of "A Letter" suggests that Coleridge wished to communicate publically a recovery from the effects of dejection. The place of "Dejection" inside the context of the Wordsworth-Coleridge exchanges of 1802 also suggests that Coleridge was

trying to recover his past sense of joy. What is meant by a recovery or "overcoming" dejection? It is often debated whether the poet reaches a state of joy in "Dejection."<sup>48</sup> I do not believe we can claim that he attains the condition of Joy described in stanzas IV and V of "Dejection." Though he has minimized the distinctions in "Dejection" between the persona and the Lady, nevertheless these differences are evident. He says in V that Joy (given only to the Pure) is a state of spontaneous rejoicing and in VI that afflictions prevent him from rejoicing. Furthermore, while imagining her peaceful slumber he reports that he has "small thoughts of sleep." The blessing refers consistently to wishes for her ("Thus mayst thou ever, evermore rejoice"--my emphasis). Overtly "Dejection" keeps the poet's experience of Joy vicarious.

However, the activity of the poem reveals characteristics described as belonging to a state of joy. (The poem says one thing but does another.) The poem as song is a Voice, an effusion of "strong music" from the soul. Though it is not a "sweet voice," once the energy is created it has only to be turned around. The re-arrangement demonstrates poetic thinking, acts of a "shaping spirit of imagination." The imaginative tales that the persona hears in the storm present symbolically the suffering and fear that he is experiencing. He had wished to transform his inert and deadening pain into living experience; he had wished to return to life (D. ll. 17-20); his imaginative response to the storm reveals this process in action. With his imagination thus reactivated, hope re-enters the poem; the small child lost (an image of

the poet) hopes to make its mother hear. He says in VI that when he had hope the joy within him "dallied with distress." In the final images of a joyous, living, reciprocal relationship with nature, joy returns to the poet as he evokes it for the Lady. The things he wishes for her have, in part, happened to him--the weight has been lifted from his chest (his heart is lighter); in her life he has felt the eddying of his living soul. Thus, in praying for her, and in loving her, he has created a "beautiful and beauty-making power." He has found passion and life from fountains within himself.

Whether or not the poet in "Dejection" reaches a state of joy depends upon how we describe the boundaries of the condition. I doubt that any of us find ourselves exclusively in one camp or the other. We continually journey between poles of experience. The poet does not return to a pure state of innocent mirth, nor to an intuitive, mystical reunion with nature. (Nor did he claim to have previously enjoyed one.) He does, however, become involved in a process which, I would argue, recognizes that dejection and joy are polar conditions of Being. Of more significance to an appreciation of the poetry of "Dejection" is the recognition that the problems proposed by the poem have been resolved by a dialectical exploration. The poet has, in a sense, returned himself to life by his participation in an active, dynamic exploration of his experience. The "shaping spirit of imagination" is reactivated and the weight of his unfeeling, solipsistic dejection is relieved by feelings of love for someone outside of himself.



In view of their radically different procedures and systems of organization, it is most fruitful to regard "A Letter" and "Dejection" as two different renditions of the experience of dejection. "A Letter" records the activity of a mind immersed in the experience of dejection. The poem's procedures imitate fluctuating responses to a complex set of inter-related problems, especially the poet's sense of fragmented and broken relationships to nature, to friends and to his beloved. The unity of "A Letter" depends on associative imagery and on organic tension of opposites. Though memory of his beloved seduces the poet into moments of bliss, he cannot resolve his problems and the poem repeatedly follows his mind's collapse back into dejection. The network of imagery in "A Letter" (birds, disease/health, pain, mother/child) establishes and sustains the poet's isolation. The weight of "heartless" grief is not lifted, but it is transformed into a keenly felt anguish. His anxieties reverberate through to the end of the poem. Whereas "Dejection" emphasizes the polar relationship of dejection and ideal joy, "A Letter" emphasizes the relationship of dejection to transience and uncertainty. "A Letter" explores the causes of a personal experience of dejection, whereas "Dejection" explores the general causes of dejection per se.

The revisions of "A Letter" eliminate the personal context of dejection and show a movement toward viewing the problem ab extra. Coleridge seemed to be searching for a way to explore the problem from a universal perspective and, at the same time, to free himself from the confines of time and space through the

practice of art rather than through memory of his beloved. Consistently the revisions shift the emphasis from private to public concerns and to a focus on the importance of imagination. He has taken the revived feelings of his pain in "A Letter" and shaped them into a form that demonstrates knowledge of the modifying power of imagination. It is significant that during this period, in a letter to Sotheby (September 10, 1802), Coleridge first defines the imagination as "the modifying, and co-adunating Faculty." The example Coleridge gives illustrates the vital mediation that takes place between individuals and nature through imagination. Speaking of the "modifying, and co-adunating Faculty," Coleridge says:

This the Hebrew Poets appear to me to have possessed beyond all others--& next to them the English. In the Hebrew Poets each Thing has a Life of it's own, & yet they are all one Life. In God they move & live & have their Being--not had, as the cold System of Newtonian Theology represents/ but have (Griggs, II, 459).

Notice the important echo of "move & live," and the role of the imagination in the perception of this living interaction.

In the process of revision Coleridge gradually worked out a new arrangement of the material that alters the dynamic of how this same material operated in "A Letter." For example, removing the personal material and eventually placing the storm passage after mourning the suspension of imagination alters how the storm passage functions. In "A Letter" the storm passage is a symbolic climax to personal and domestic problems; in "Dejection" the storm is the symbolic climax of the crisis of imagination. By adding lines (D. ll. 17-20) to stanza I Coleridge manages to tie this symbolic event to the resolution of his problem. Furthermore,

joy in "Dejection" does not bring momentary releases, which once gone, drag the poet deeper into dejection as it does in "A Letter." In "Dejection" joy is presented philosophically (and not as anecdotal memories) to put dejection into perspective. The stanzas on joy occur in the middle of the poem as part of an expository and dialectical exploration of dejection and its causes. Focus is placed on the absence of the shaping spirit of imagination and on the individual's responsibility to reactivate it. Even though "Dejection" does not demonstrate that the persona leaps into joy at the conclusion, it does demonstrate that the persona has undergone a change of heart because he can now feel (love) for part of the world (the Lady) outside himself. "Dejection" ends with the poet's arousal and outward soaring thoughts, thus indicating a resolution to the opening dilemma. Although "A Letter" also ends with outward soaring thoughts, the oppositions embedded in the imagery and the previous pattern of the poem (alternating movements between dejection and relief) suggest that resolution is only temporary. Because "Dejection" has only one climax and resolution, we are left with a more enduring sense of stability and release.

Reeve Parker cites an important passage from a letter published in Blackwoods Magazine in 1821 in which Coleridge, with his usual keen psychological insight, describes a process that can be applied to the creations of both "A Letter" and "Dejection." Coleridge explains:

We imagine the presence of what we desire in the very act of regretting its absence, nay, in order to regret it more livelily; but, while, with a strange wilfulness, we

are thus engendering grief on grief, nature makes use of the product to cheat us into comfort and exertion. The positive shapings, though but of the fancy, will sooner or later displace the mere knowledge of the negative. All activity is in itself pleasure and according to the nature, powers, and previous habits of the sufferer, the activity of the fancy will call the other faculties of the soul into action. The self-contemplative power becomes meditative, and the mind begins to play the geometrician with its own thoughts--abstracting from them the accidental and the individual, till a new and unfailling source of employment, the best and surest nepenthe of solitary pain, is opened out in the habit of seeking the principle and ultimate aim in the most imperfect productions of art, in the least attractive products of nature.<sup>49</sup>

In "A Letter" the poet was engaged in this process of engendering grief on grief, calling the "other faculties of the soul into action." The process of revision seems to have drawn especially on the meditative power, the mind beginning "to play the geometrician with its own thoughts," abstracting the individual, finding the principle and ultimate aim.

Though we may prefer the emotional intensity of "A Letter," with its intricate web of imagery and its personal revelations, or "Dejection" for its careful balancing of dejection with joy, for its tight structure and universality, we should not, however, use one of these poems to point out the shortcomings of the other. Careful readings reveal that both poems, though different, are highly organized, integral wholes. "A Letter" explores the immediate and overwhelming experience of depression in a manner suited to the mesh of impressions that deluge one in a depression. The poet in "A Letter" struggles to find a perspective in the face of a collapsing set of relationships with the world. Having eloigned himself from the immediate sensations, Coleridge gains a more general perspective on the dejection and deals with the collapse

of his world by turning to a structured, aesthetic answer in "Dejection." Dejection could be countered by the reconciling powers of the imagination. Resolution of the problem is contained in the poem. Art, especially meditative or reflective art, has become a mediator between the poet's mind and nature. The poet has re-established a vital connection to the world through a mental process of exploration, encounter (in the symbol), and release. Relief is not necessarily Joy, but Joy does not come without release. He has prepared the ground for reversing his dejection, first by receiving the sounds of the storm; secondly, by creating meaning from those sounds (and having thus given form to his feelings); and thirdly, by celebrating his release by giving love to another. Art has provided an abridgment between mind and nature for the poet in "Dejection."

## List of References

<sup>1</sup>Because there are numerous versions of "Dejection: An Ode," I will use the following titles to distinguish between them: "A Letter" will denote the verse letter sent to Sara Hutchinson on April 4, 1802, in Collected Letters of Samuel Taylor Coleridge, ed. Earl Leslie Griggs, II (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1956), 438. Further references to other letters from Griggs will appear in parentheses in the body of the essay. The revised ode published in the Morning Post October 4, 1802, "Dejection: An Ode Written April 4, 1802," will be referred to as the Morning Post poem. The manuscript sent to the Beaumonts on August 13, 1803 (Griggs, II, 511), is known as the Coleorton manuscript. "Dejection: An Ode," or "Dejection" will refer to the revised 1817 poem appearing in Sibylline Leaves and reprinted in Coleridge: Poetical Works, ed. Earnest Hartley Coleridge (London, Oxford, N.Y.: Oxford University Press, 1969). All references to this version will be from this edition. Lines cited from the various versions will appear in parentheses in the text of the essay, using the following abbreviations: AL for "A Letter;" MP for the Morning Post poem; C for the Coleorton manuscript; and D for "Dejection: An Ode" (1817).

<sup>2</sup>Early studies include Alfred Ainger's "Coleridge's Ode to Wordsworth," Macmillan's Magazine, LVI (1887); John D. Rea's "Coleridge's Intimations of Immortality from Proclus," Modern Philology, 26 (1928), pp. 201-213; and his "Intimations of Immortality Again," Philological Quarterly, VII (1932), pp. 396-400;

Newton P. Stallknecht's "The Doctrine of Coleridge's 'Dejection' and its Relation to Wordsworth's Philosophy," PMLA, 49 (1934), pp. 196-207; Herbert Hartman's "The Intimations of Wordsworth's Ode," Review of English Studies, 6 (1930), pp. 129-48; and Fred M. Smith's "The Relation of Coleridge's Ode on 'Dejection' to Wordsworth's Ode," PMLA, L (1935), pp. 224-234. More recent studies include William Heath's book Wordsworth and Coleridge: A Study of their Literary Relations in 1801-1802 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970); Milton Teichman's "Wordsworth's Two Replies to Coleridge's 'Dejection,'" PMLA, 86:5 (1971), pp. 982-989; Thomas MacFarland's "The Symbiosis of Coleridge and Wordsworth," Studies in Romanticism, 11 (1972), pp. 263-303; George Whalley's "Coleridge and Wordsworth," in Samuel Taylor Coleridge ed. R. L. Brett (London: G. Bell, 1971); George Wilbur Meyer's "Resolution and Independence: Wordsworth's Answer to Coleridge's 'Dejection: An Ode,'" Tulane Studies in English, II (1950); and a brief but illuminating consideration in Panthea Reid Broughton's "The Modifying Metaphor in 'Dejection: An Ode,'" Wordsworth Circle, 4:4 (1973), pp. 241-249. Geoffrey Yarlott and David Pirie also consider the Wordsworth-Coleridge relations of 1802 in their studies, as does Jared Curtis in his book Wordsworth's Experiments with Tradition (Ithaca & London: Cornell University Press, 1971).

<sup>3</sup>Humphrey House, Coleridge: The Clark Lectures (London: Rupert Hart-Davis, 1969), p. 134.

<sup>4</sup>David Pirie, "A Letter to Asra," in Wordsworth Bicentenary Studies, ed. Jonathan Wordsworth (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1970), p. 339. All further references to Pirie's article

will be cited in parentheses in the text as Pirie.

<sup>5</sup>Charles S. Bouslog, "Structure and Theme in Coleridge's 'Dejection: An Ode,'" Modern Language Quarterly 24 (1963), p. 43. Bouslog is not alone: "Because its original intention was truncated therefore, and material relating to a private theme had now to be objectified, the published Ode presents a number of almost ineluctable problems"--Geoffrey Yarlott, Coleridge and the Abyssinian Maid (London: Methuen, 1967), p. 248. Mary Jane Lupton declares there is "censorship" involved in this essentially "autobiographical poem," in "The Dark Dream of Dejection," Literature and Psychology, 18:1 (1968), p. 39.

<sup>6</sup>See A. Harris Fairbanks, "The Form of Coleridge's Dejection Ode," PMLA, 90 (1975); or Marshall Suther, The Dark Night of Samuel Taylor Coleridge, (N.Y.: Columbia University Press, 1960).

<sup>7</sup>William I. Thompson, "Collapsed Universe and Structured Poem: An Essay in Whiteheadian Criticism," College English, XXVIII:1 (1967), p. 26.

<sup>8</sup>Samuel Taylor Coleridge, "On Poesy or Art," Biographia Literaria, ed. John Shawcross, (London: Oxford University Press, 1907) II, p. 254. All subsequent quotations from the Biographia Literaria will appear in the body of the essay in parentheses, abbreviated as BL.

<sup>9</sup>A. Harris Fairbanks, "The Form of Coleridge's Dejection Ode," PMLA, 90 (1975), p. 881.

<sup>10</sup>Stephen Fogle, "The Design of Coleridge's Dejection," Studies in Philology, XLVIII (1951), p. 52.



<sup>11</sup>Coleridge, The Notebooks of Samuel Taylor Coleridge, ed. by Cathleen Coburn (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1951), Vol. I, 1155.

<sup>12</sup>John Milton, Samson Agonistes, ed. by A. E. Barker (N.Y.: Appleton Century Crofts, 1950), ll. 156-164. All further references to Samson Agonistes will appear in the text, abbreviated as SA.

<sup>13</sup>Alan Bewell, "The Unity of Encounter: A Study of Symbolism in Coleridge's Thought," an unpublished honors essay, Simon Fraser University, 1977.

<sup>14</sup>See John Beer, "Coleridge, the Wordsworths and the State of Trance," Wordsworth Circle, VII:2 (Spring, 1977), for a discussion of the trance as a heightened state of consciousness.

<sup>15</sup>C.f. Coleridge's "A Day Dream," Poetical Works, p. 385.

<sup>16</sup>William Wordsworth, "Lucy Gray," Poetical Works of William Wordsworth, ed. by Thomas Hutchinson, revised by Ernest De Selincourt (London, N.Y., Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1936), p. 65.

<sup>17</sup>Beverly Fields in her psychoanalytic study Reality's Dark Dream (Chicago: Kent State University Press, 1967) shows how the verse letter is "saturated with submerged hostility" toward Sara Hutchinson, p. 136.

<sup>18</sup>A. O. Lovejoy, "Coleridge and Kant's Two Worlds," ELH, 17 (1940), p. 348.

<sup>19</sup>See May 7, 1802, "Letter to Poole," (Griggs, II, 439) and

July 17, 1802 "Letter to Sotheby" (Griggs, II, 445).

<sup>20</sup>Stephen Parrish has prepared a collection of the various versions of "Dejection" for publication in 1979.

<sup>21</sup>Dorothy Wordsworth, Journals of Dorothy Wordsworth 2nd Ed., ed. by Mary Mourman (London, Oxford, N.Y.: Oxford University Press, 1971), p. 105.

<sup>22</sup>Op. cit. p. 106.

<sup>23</sup>William Wordsworth, "Ode: Intimations of Immortality," Poetical Works, p. 460.

<sup>24</sup>Dorothy Wordsworth, Journals, p. 107.

<sup>25</sup>Op. cit. p. 137.

<sup>26</sup>Geoffrey Yarlott, Coleridge and the Abyssinian Maid (London: Methuen, 1967), p. 274.

<sup>27</sup>See Donald Swanson's "The Growth of a Poem: Coleridge's 'Dejection,'" Ball State University Forum, 12:4 (1971), p. 56.

<sup>28</sup>Stephen Fogle, p. 54.

<sup>29</sup>G. W. Meyer, "Resolution and Independence: Wordsworth's Answer to Coleridge's 'Dejection: An Ode,'" Tulane Studies in English, II (1950), p. 73. See also Panthea Reid Broughton, "The Modifying Metaphor in Coleridge's 'Dejection: An Ode,'" Wordsworth Circle, 4:4, p. 242.

<sup>30</sup>Milton Teichman, "Wordsworth's Two Replies to Coleridge's Dejection," PMLA, 86:5 (1971).

<sup>31</sup>See above, p. 46.

<sup>32</sup>See above, pp. 33-34.

<sup>33</sup>Coleridge, Philosophical Lectures, cited in Inquiring Spirit, ed. Kathleen Coburn (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1962), Vol. I, p. 35.

<sup>34</sup>Coleridge, cited in Fairbanks, p. 894.

<sup>35</sup>Edward Young, The Complete Works Poetry and Prose, ed. James Nichols, 2 vol. (Hildesheim: Georg Olms Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1968), I, p. 415.

<sup>36</sup>Coleridge, Notebooks, I, pp. 33-36; and Young, I, p. 418.

<sup>37</sup>Young, I, 415.

<sup>38</sup>See Carl A. P. Ruck and William F. Matheson, ed. Pindar: Selected Odes, trans. Ruck & Matheson (Ann Arbor, Michigan: University of Michigan Press, 1968), pp. 26-35.

<sup>39</sup>John Cornwell, Coleridge (London: Allen Lane, 1973), p. 335.

<sup>40</sup>See above, pp. 19-20.

<sup>41</sup>See above, p. 21.

<sup>42</sup>See above, pp. 19-20

<sup>43</sup>Max Schulz, The Poetic Voices of Coleridge (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1963), pp. 203-206.

<sup>44</sup>Walter Jackson Bate calls this Coleridge's "usher" role in Coleridge (N.Y.: Collier, 1968), p. 50.

<sup>45</sup>Coleridge, Philosophical Lectures, cited by George Gilpin, The Strategy of Joy: An Essay on the Poetry of Samuel Taylor

Coleridge (Salzburg, Austria: Institut für Englische Sprache und Literatur, Universität Salzburg, 1972), p. 74.

<sup>46</sup>See Panthea Reid Broughton, "The Modifying Metaphor in 'Dejection: An Ode,'" and Richard Harter Fogle's "The Dejection of Coleridge's Ode," Studies in Philology LXVIII (1951).

<sup>47</sup>See above, p. 33.

<sup>48</sup>Among those who feel the dejection is unresolved, the following are typical: Fred M. Smith believes that the "grief finds no relief and ends in dejection," in "The Relation of Coleridge's Ode on Dejection to Wordsworth's Ode," p. 224; Charles Bouslog argues that the suffering is unrelieved and painful, but not tragic; Fairbanks thinks it is "implausible" for the reader to expect the speaker to reach a final resolution in such a short span of meditation in "The Design of Coleridge's Ode;" Max Schulz calls it an "unresolved cry of despair" in The Poetic Voices of Coleridge, p. 28; Marshall Suther concludes that by 1802 Coleridge's poetic power was extinguished and on biographical grounds he discounts the possibility of resolution in "Dejection," in The Dark Night of Samuel Taylor Coleridge (N.Y.: Columbia University Press, 1960); and Donald Swanson argues that "Dejection" is the product of a passive mind, which is capable of merely "logical knowledge" a product of "Fancy only," in "The Growth of a Poem," p. 56. Irene Chayes takes a middle position in "Rhetoric as Drama: An Approach to the Romantic Ode," PMLA LXXXIX:I (1960), arguing that the poet is temporarily relieved and that full relief is reserved for the future, p. 719. Of those who argue that the de-

jection is resolved, Panthea Reid Broughton's "The Modifying Metaphor in 'Dejection: An Ode,'" and Richard Harter Fogle's "The Dejection of Coleridge's Ode" are most convincing.

<sup>49</sup>Coleridge, "Letters to a Junior Soph," published in 1821 in Blackwoods Magazine, cited in Reeve Parker, Coleridge's Meditative Art (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1975), p. 183.

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