THE POETIC DELL:
A STUDY OF COLERIDGE'S POETIC QUEST FOR UNIFIED SENSIBILITIES

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ABSTRACT

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Unity is one term consistently used to describe the goal of Samuel Taylor Coleridge's works. Many critics refer to specific critical principles when they use the term, unity. But it soon becomes apparent that unity is a general urge toward synthesis which is the result of some deep, personal motive. And that motive was for Coleridge the need to unify his fragmented sensibilities.

In his earliest work and continuing throughout his career, Samuel Taylor Coleridge displayed two strong, contrasted values, that of unencumbered joy or pleasures of life, and a need to be moral. Of the two, the need to be moral was the stronger motivation; thus Coleridge always moved in the direction he considered strictly moral. This moral sense in part came from Coleridge's well documented lack of confidence and insecurities. In part, it embodied the empirical tradition. And in part, it embodied Coleridge's fear of offending. But, it usually expressed a vague sense of cosmic responsibility. Coleridge's sense of joy came simply from the need for nurturing, from a desire to assuage his bruised psyche.

Simultaneous gratification of his needs of joy and moral security was then a desireable goal for Coleridge. But the two needs were traditionally opposed. Freedom from burden and indulgence in feeling opposed the ideas of duty and social obligation which foster moral assurance. Any action to simultaneously gratify his two needs, then, involved in part a struggle to validate his strivings for what would be considered objectionable qualities. Coleridge's struggle is best seen in his poetic career.

Coleridge did not admit his needs of joy in his early poetry (pre. 1794). Instead, they surfaced as a lack of conviction in Coleridge's Augustan assertion of empirical convention. But, as his sense of his needs developed, so did a form of verse that could adequately express them.

That development was cut short by Coleridge's Pantisocratic involvement. His involvement gave him renewed faith in empirical convention. Eventually though, he came to see how rigorous rationalism wounded men. And with the justification a Hartlian psychology provided, he went on to assert clearly his needs in poems like "The Eolian Harp," and "This Lime-Tree Bower My Prison." The "Annus Mirabilis" was the fruition of this movement.

Coleridge's poetic expression depended on Hartlianism for justification. Without that justification, individual vision was subjective enthusiasm, and consequently was immoral. Thus, as his belief in Hartlianism collapsed, Coleridge had to admit that his visions were subjective. Moral sense censured him and he stopped writing verse. This process is

witnessed in "Fears in Solitude," and "Dejection: An Ode."

Hartlianism never did completely satisfy Coleridge's moral sense. As a result, Coleridge always resorted to style to guard himself from the consequences of his poetic assertions. At first, he isolated his assertions chronologically; his joys were either past joys he now eschewes or joys he would enjoy in the afterlife. Later, Coleridge restricts his assertions geographically. When he wrote poetry or mused, he retreated to a dell. His geographical isolation imaged a moral and psychological isolation of poetry from the world of moral obligation. Coleridge used this method of isolated modes in most of his later poetry. And his metaphor serves as a useful indicator of his poetic confidence; the closer the dell is to the real world, the closer he has come to unifying his dichotomized values. In the end though, even his metaphorical removal of his assertions from the world of moral responsibility failed to provide sufficient moral security. His only alternative was to return to the security of orthodoxy and prose which characterize his later life.

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CHAPTER ONE

Unity is one term consistently used to describe the goal of Samuel Taylor Coleridge's works. And though the application or interpretation of that word may vary, it is used with a certain consistency; at least there is a harmonious resonance or echo between instances of its use. In a most general way the unity is perceived as a synthesis of aesthetic traditions. "The modern and the classical," "the classic premise and the anti-classical" and "the classical and the romantic" are all used to summarize this synthesis.[1] Though conventional, the juxtaposition of these general terms at least suggest the interplay of ideas in Coleridge's mind, and they make clear that Coleridge's thought was not simply--as the old saw goes--the romantic revolt against the outworn conventions of the eighteenth century. Though revolt does imply the direction and strength of Coleridge's achievements, it does not explain the subtlety or fluidity of his thought. For that a concept of synthesis--or unity--is more appropriate.

Some critics though see Coleridge's career as fragmented and his works as random, disjointed and desultory. Usually this opinion results from taking Coleridge's own interpretation of his life too seriously. Unfortunately Coleridge was always apologetic, especially concerning his early poetic and political interests; he saw them as juvenile enthusiasms

which he later overthrew for serious pursuits. H. D. Traill's examination of Coleridge's poetic and political interests shows the disservice this prejorative approach can do Coleridge:

> The various styles which he attempted . . . are forms of poetic expression corresponding, on the face of them, to poetic impulses of an essentially fleeting nature. The political or politico-religious odes were the offspring of youthful democratic enthusiasm; the supernatural poems, so to call them for want of a better name, had their origin in an almost equally youthful and more than equally transitory passion for the wild and wonderous. Political disillusionment is fatal to the one impulse, and mere advance of years extinguished the other. Visions of Ancient Mariner and Christabel do not revist the mature man, and the toryism of [his] middle life will hardly inspire odes to anything.[2]

Traill does Coleridge a double disservice. He first damns Coleridge's poetic and political activities as insignificant. And in turn he uses that conclusion to suggest the incompatibility of Coleridge's manifold interests. But, despite the fact that Coleridge's poetic efforts were short lived and were soon overthrown by interests he considered more significant, it need not be true that any of his work was insignificant. Consider Walter Jackson Bate's analysis of the same facts:

> Coleridge has fascinated the English-speaking world for over a century and a half. To begin with, he had at least three different careers, and if our attention is not caught up by him in one way, it is in another. He is a major poet, though to the writing of Poetry he devoted only a fraction of his time and abilities. Then, during the painful years from thirty-five to his late forties, he emerged as one of the supreme critics and interpreters of literature, partly because his interests extended so far beyond literature in the narrower sense of the word. With his fifties he turned more directly to religious speculation, and became . . . one

> of the seminal religious thinkers of modern times.[3]

And although different interests dominated different periods of his life, they were not necessarily unrelated. McFarland, in fact, suggests a close relationship between all phases of Coleridge's career:

> Coleridge's thought demands for its assessment a recognition . . . that his intellectual endeavour constitutes an organic unity. There is in reality no tripartate division of rhapsodic poet, maundering metaphysician and pious theologian; the same Coleridge philosophizes, poetizes, and theologizes, and, furthermore, the different fields of his interest are mutually interdependent--his poetry, both in theory and practice, is essentially, not accidently, involved with his philosophy, and his philosophy is reciprocally bound up with his theological interest.[4]

And McFarland supports Kathleen Coburn who seems to characterize the present critical attitude when she says, "It is no longer considered sound to think of Coleridge as a poet in youth, a philosopher in middle age, and a theologian in his dotage. He was all of these at all times."[5] At any rate, the frequency with which unity or synthesis is mentioned firmly impresses those ideas on the brain. And once attuned to the idea of unity, it is impossible to escape its ubiquity in Coleridge.

But what is meant more precisely by "Unity?" Walter J. Bate's analysis is pertinent. He sees three different types of contrasted values synthesized in Coleridge's attempt "to rennovate the classic premise and bring into its embrace the anti-classical." First Bate suggests unity is the coincidence of the general and the specific, the formal pattern and its

parts. Paraphrasing Bate, Coleridge's criticism attempts to unify the modern, organic, concrete and vital with classical universality. The result is a new realism. Where the specific and the general merge, where the specific "becomes categorical" and yet maintains uniqueness, that point of unity is reality. On another level, unity was the combination of the ideal with the material. Bate notes Coleridge's love of Shakespeare's characters which are "at once a passion taking its outlet as well as an actual man." In addition, Bate sees unity as a "mingling and interpenetration of reason and imagination."[6] Unity then describes a fairly specific operational principle in Coleridge's aesthetic.

Coleridge's theological quest, too, is described as a search for unity:

> The seminal principle, the original impulse, which was in him from childhood, was a sense of the Whole as a living unity, a sense of God in all and all in God, a faith in a divine spiritual activity as the ground of all existence. . . . His great dread was lest, losing his wholeness of vision, he should be constrained to view the universe merely as an assemblage of parts, 'an immense heap of <u>little</u> things.' 'My Mind feels as if it ached to behold and know something <u>great</u>, something <u>one</u> and <u>indivisible</u>.'[7]

Basil Willey's use of the word "principle" though implies a concreteness or specificity that is inappropriate. The "impulse" and "sense" Willey equals with the "seminal principle" are more suitable words to describe the nature of religious unity; unity was a feeling, not a principle. And it was personal not academic. Coleridge was motivated by a desire to know his place in an ordered or meaningful

universe: "to see all things as one, to sense a unity behind phenomena, to merge the subject and the object--such was Coleridge's lifelong wish. It is there behind his feeling for landscape, there behind his notion of love between persons, there behind his theory of the imagination."[8] In that perspective poetry was, besides a means of personal expression, a tool to explore the universe. As J. B. Beer says:

> In the end, he [Coleridge] was not content with a poetry based purely on individual experience: he looked, on the contrary, for an all-embracing vision which should encompass all things in heaven and earth, reconciling the truths of science with those of religion. He invisaged this interpretation in three dimensions; the plane of relationship between an individual and his fellow human beings, the plane of relationship between man and nature, and the plane of relationship between man and the spiritual order.[9]

Poetry may even have special value as Coleridge's first attempt, his only essentially aesthetic attempt,to realize his desire for unity. As such, it would parallel his later interest in criticism and theology. At least one critic (George Heyburn Gilpin, Jr.) holds this opinion. He devoted his study of Coleridge's poetry "Visions of Joy," toward proving Coleridge used poetry to achieve his vision of unity. Summarizing his own critical method, Gilpin remarks, "Each poem discussed is treated as carrying part of the burden of Coleridge's intense search for a sense of unity with the cosmos."[10]

Unity, then, does not describe general philosophical or critical principles. Rather it describes a general urge

toward synthesis which is the result of some deep personal motivation. Each of Coleridge's pursuits, then, are different methods he employed to satisfy whatever that motivation was.

Other explanations of the ubiquity of the idea of unity or synthesis are less creditable than the possiblity of a personal motivation. Coincidence can be dismissed without a thought. And it is not likely that unity is the uniform effect of a mental habit. It is too easy an answer to mention the comprehensiveness of Coleridge's intellect and suggest that a striving for order is a natural mental habit. It is not an unexpected result that the greater the mind, the greater the striving for unity. This may provide a partial explanation, yet, it is an incomplete explanation; so dispassionate a cause operating in lofty areas of abstraction appears a distant cause at best. Dispassionate and lofty motives are in marked contrast to the personal, immediate emotional qualities which typified the motives and actions of Coleridge the poet. Coleridge characteristically responded passionately to immediate problems and concrete motivations. For as J. A. Appleyard argues:

> The struggle to conceptualize a personal intuition and to unify the concepts in a satisfactory framework requires a motivation stronger than intellectual curiosity as it is commonly conceived. Religious uncertainty, creative incapacity, physical suffering—these were the very existential source of Coleridge's philosophy.[11]

Whatever the influence of mental habits, enumeration of the types and qualities of unity imply a larger whole, a greater

equation in which the observed unities are parameters. And in that equation, attention must be give to the emotional roots of any mental habit or philosophic goal. For significantly, thought was not a dispassionate activity to Coleridge; it began with feelings. The appropriate place to begin an inquiry, then, is in what Coleridge felt, not merely what he thought.

In his earliest work and continuing throughout his career, Samuel Taylor Coleridge displayed two strong contrasted values, that of unencumbered joy, or pleasures of life, and a need to be moral. Of the two, the need to be moral was the strongest motivation; throughout his lifetime the strength of his moral sense was sufficiently strong to inhibit Coleridge from following any course he considered less than strictly moral.

Lack of confidence and insecurities of several kinds led Coleridge to strive for moral certainty. He did not think well of himself, that is clear. Contrasting his "precocity" with his periodic distractions and lack of will, he called himself "an herbacious plant," large, but only "with pith within." As he put it, he "had power not strength."[12] Self-condemnation and effacement run throughout his letters; consider two examples. First, to George Cornish, 12 March 1794:

> I have been the slave of Impulse, the child of Error, and Imbecillity [sic] --yet when I look back on the number and character of those, who have honored me with their regard, I am almost reconciled to myself. . . .

And later to George Coleridge: "I have so seldom acted right, that at every step I take of my own accord, I tremble lest I should be wrong."[13]

Nor did his brothers, perhaps motivated by jealousy, fail to take the opportunity to reinforce his sense of guilt, inadequacy, and dependence. The relation of one incident (in a letter to George Coleridge, 28 November 1791) shows just how well Edward Coleridge could play upon Samuel's weaknesses. Samuel had impulsively written an incensed letter to Edward, an error which he later regretted and tried to rectify. But he was too late:

> I received a very kind answer from Ned--in the former part of it he writes in a violent style, and then very good-naturedly desires me to observe what anti-graces a letter written in the first impulse of passion possesses. Yesterday . . . I wrote him such a letter as will I hope, utterly erase from his memory my later effusion of petulance and passion.[14]

Bate ascribes this self-effacement to Coleridge's long dependence on many individuals.

> Dependent as he was on almost everyone else, and with practically no one dependent on him, the need to ingratiate himself became especially strong, and with it, as correlaries, a readiness of guilt, a chronic fear of disappointing others and a fascinated admiration for people of firm--or at least apparently self sufficient character.[15]

However, the presence of his symptoms at an early age suggest that his dependence might only be a single factor. Two other factors should be noted. One is the lack of a stable family or emotional environment. Another is a very specific distrust Coleridge had of his own emotions and impulses.

Coleridge was the youngest child in the family. His parents were middle-aged when he was born and his brothers were considerably older. Consequently he was somewhat isolated. He was, however, invited into adult companionship and his conversations with elders certainly provided a sounding board and approval.[16] But "his popularity with adults could not compensate for his lack of natural companions."[17] And this deferential treatment certainly alienated his siblings.

Coleridge's father died (in 1781) when he was nine. The financial set-back sent Coleridge first to live a short time with his uncle, John Bowden, who spoiled him and then to Christ's Hospital as a charity case. Scholars disagree about the influence of Christ's Hospital. The facts seem to suggest its atmosphere was rather oppressive, but Hanson, for example, believes Coleridge heightened his privations in his imagination. The consensus though is that with the exception of his acquaintance with the Evans family, Christ's Hospital provided little emotional security.[18] The nurturing influence of Christ's Hospital might best be characterized by Boyer's (The Upper grammar master) response to Coleridge's crying for loneliness:

> Boy! the school is your father! Boy! the school is your mother! Boy! the school is your brother! the school is your sister! the school is your first cousin, and your second cousin, and the rest of your relations! Let's have no more crying.[19]

It is understandable why Coleridge might have felt a strong need for friendship, nurturing and approval and why he might have feared offending those few who did provide those qualities.

In addition, abnormal childhood relationships probably hindered the development of both Coleridge's sense and strength of identity. He compensated for this throughout life with excessive dependence on others. This would explain his fascination with self-sufficient individuals and, as Beverly Fields argues, his general need for people. She believes that Coleridge would efface himself to evoke an opinion of his actions from others:

> It is as though he found it impossible to define himself, to validate his identity, except through submission to the glasses of someone else's eyes, like a child, whose only understanding of himself comes to him through parental responses to his behavior.[20]

Coleridge admitted, sometimes with pride, sometimes with regret, that he lived largely in his imagination as a child. At one time, how his mind had been "Habituated to the vast" as a child explained why he was so suited to deep studies. At another time, he blamed the same open, imaginative quality in his mind for causing his misfortunes. In one such instance, when he was beset by irremediable financial difficulties, he finally wrote to Brother George explaining his situation. He blamed his imagination for his failure to face up to his situation and save himself before all was lost:

> Instead of manfully discolsing the disease, I concealed it. . . --I became a proverb to the university for Idleness--the time, which I should have bestowed on the academic studies, I employed in dreaming out wild schemes of impossible extrication. It had been better for me, if my imagination had been less vivid. . . .[21]

It is understandable how Coleridge could come to distrust his mind.

But if Coleridge distrusted the leaps and convolutions of his imagination, he distrusted feeling and impulse even more. It is easy to see how Coleridge might have been quick to learn hurt and the dangers of expressing his emotions in his family environment. That explains his reticence. However, his restraint came not only from his fear of hurt but also a fear of the impulses themselves. Coleridge remembered one bad incident throughout his life. Coleridge had become extremely angry at his brother for a cruel trick he had played. Coleridge leapt at his brother, their mother intervening just in time--for Samuel had a knife in his hand. Though he had been restrained in time, the implications of the action were not lost to Coleridge. This incident, coupled with other, frequent "disasters" (as he saw them) resulting from impulsive action, explains why he distrusted his feelings. And when coupled with his unstable environment, these fears explain Coleridge's guilt and anxiety.

Coleridge's guilt and anxiety became translated into a sense of indebtedness and a deference to others. That sense is easy to find throughout his works. In some cases, it is found in an explicit admission of debt:

> As to what you wrote to me about my accounts, I do realize your friendliness and love towards me--for you have always been a brother to me in kindness and a father in wisdom, as well I know.[22]

In other cases Coleridge's deference is seen in as minor a thing as the conclusion to a letter: "believe me,/ with sincere affection and/gratitude/Your's ever" or "and believe me with/Love and gratitude/Your's," (Collected Letters pp. 16-17). But, explicit or implicit, his deference and sense of indebtedness were always there. These feelings led to a feeling of social obligation. This feeling of obligation could be fairly specific, a concrete duty to certain persons. Perhaps no obligation was more immediate than a family obligation. Bowing to its weight, Coleridge would act against his own feelings, his sense of justice and his own interest. Noting the smallness and vanity of his brother, Edward, the self interest and superficiality that characterized James, and his own sense of superiority, Samuel nevertheless would submit to Edward's and James' condescensions: he said "I will assume the semblance of Affection--perhaps by persevering in appearing, I at last shall learn to be, a Brother."[23]

Social obligation to Coleridge was more than an acknowledgement of social responsibility. While it could be a specific obligation, as to his family, usually it was more nearly a statement of cosmic responsibility. But, if that feeling was as vague as his childhood impulse to search for a "completely pure virgin," it was certainly more enduring and powerful.

Coleridge's sense of obligation could best be summed as the embodiment of his awe of the empirical tradition and the weight of social-religious orthodoxy. And it was felt as a burden of proof, a need to justify himself. Whenever he differed in opinion from another, Coleridge felt an obligation to prove himself. Understandably, therefore, orthodoxy held considerable power in Coleridge's mind. Thus it is not surprising that Bate records the following phenomenon:

> Constantly, in his mature years, his hunger for approval or love and his dread of disapproval were to lead him to oscillate between two extremes: on the one hand an apologetic self-effacement, in which he could stand aside and find his satisfactions vicariously; on the other hand, an impetuous brilliance of discourse, usually in support of the most approved sentiments.[24]

Although this evidence indicates that his fear of the authority of orthodoxy was a consequence of larger personal uncertainties, his fears were by no means unjustified. Since the philosophical and theological orthodoxies of Coleridge's period supposedly had objective justification and scientific verification, any dissenting assertion carried to its promulgator the burden of proof. And to Coleridge, who dwelt in speculative spheres, exploring the subjective powers of man, the burden was continuous.

Contrasted to the severity of his moral sense is Coleridge's acute awareness of feelings, tender sympathy and search for relief from his severe sense of responsibility. In recognition of this quality, Coleridge has been celebrated as a poet of joy. Stanford, for example, emphasizes the importance of love in all of Coleridge's

pursuits. "His religion, philosophy, and aesthetic stemmed in fact, from ideas of love; and it is as the philosopher of love, sympathy, empathy and union, that he has his all important place."[25] G. H. Gilpin, Jr. finds that Coleridge uses the word joy to "describe his goal of union with God. . . ." Significantly, his means to the goal are "the act of artistic creation."[26] And Coleridge frequently uses the word joy in association with intuitive poetic values. His clearest definition of the word comes in "Dejection: The Ode." There, joy is the pure, animating spirit of the mind. Usually joy proceeds from a sense of freedom from burden, enjoyment of sensuous nature and indulgence in personal feelings and new awareness. In the Pantisocracy poems, joy comes from justice, the removal of oppression, and the awareness that the passions can "weave an holy spell."

These joys, however, were fragile to Coleridge. One reason, obviously, was because of his own disappointed desires for these joys. But equally important, their opposition to his sense of conventional morality also made them seem less available. The values of uninhibited pleasure were associated with the world of vice and certain suffering. Lucyle Werkmeister notes several statements by Coleridge in which he relates pleasure, pain, morality and vice:

> We may be certain, he promises, that "we shall find the loose hour punished by still-attendant disgust and self-reproach. We shall find, that as high as the spirits are artificially raised above their natural standards, so far they must sink below it. . . . Plotinus had already said that men are punished for their abberations in strict accordance with cosmic law, but

> Coleridge seems to suggest that the cosmic law is after all, only Newton's third law of motion, which, in its application to mind, demands that for every pleasure there will be an equal and opposite pain.[27]

Of course, Coleridge here is speaking of inappropriate pleasures--artificial as he called them.[28] But in life, in contradiction to his ethical formulations, he probably was less careful in his distinctions. Any pleasure probably raised his anxiety.

Simultaneous gratification of his needs of joy and moral security was then a desireable goal for Coleridge. But these two goals were opposed both in tradition and in Coleridge's interpretation of them. Freedom from burden and indulgence in feeling opposed the ideas of duty and social obligation which foster moral assurance. Enjoyment of sensuous nature is opposed by both the Christian ascetic tradition and the empirical tradition. They denigrate the physical, or specific, and urge striving for the ideal and the universal. That empiricism rejected subjective opinion, feelings, and imagination as immoral fancy and enthusiasm is a truism. Thus Coleridge's values incorporated the traditional opposition of moral empiricism and immoral indulgence in feeling; moral value was aligned with orthodoxy, with reason and the empirical mode. And Coleridge certainly would feel a strong compulsion toward orthodoxy.[29] However, he could not simply retreat into orthodoxy. For his opposed values were not merely moral expediency opposed to indulgence, but also his own compulsion toward an orthodox ethic opposed by other values important to him. Those feelings which he

feared to indulge were real, human needs. They were essentially emotional, imaginative, intuitive and, unfortunately, traditionally immoral.

Thus, Coleridge found himself straddling a chasm, one foot planted firmly on the eighteenth-century empirical tradition as he interpreted it, the other tentatively settled on the developing mode that would gratify his needs. Since he could find personal gratification only in the new mode, he was forced to it. To gratify all his needs, he would have to bridge the chasm; he would have to unite the empirical mode and the developing mode. But since Coleridge's overwhelming need for moral attitude never receded, since the demands of a moral obligation were always first to be answered, the attempted union essentially became an attempt to make moral, or prove moral, the intuitive mode. And this involved a struggle to find objective verification and rational justification for his subjective, imaginative poetical mode which incorporated the values of feeling.

Perhaps this struggle is nowhere more clearly seen than in his poetic career. Therefore this study is devoted to his early poetic career. For the changes his poetic efforts undergo, including his final abandonment of poetry, demonstrate his attempt to use poetics to reconcile his needs. And from that evidence, conclusions can be drawn about the nature of other unities which scholars have noted. His poetic career, finally, can provide evidence supporting the idea that all instances of unity are derived from one pervasive motivation to bring his world, his dichotomized values,

together. And this implies that his poetry is more important than it is generally to be thought. Hopefully, this study will demonstrate the significance of Coleridge's poetry; hopefully it will prove that Coleridge's poetry can no longer be dismissed as a curiosity; and hopefully it will foster a recognition that Coleridge's poetic impulse shares the goal of his philosophy and theology.

Coleridge's early poetic career (up to his early college years) demonstrates little concern with the need to justify modes of perception; while some unmet needs did surface, he was quick to rationalize them away. He stuck firmly to orthodoxy to avoid conflict. Only when he recognized his unmet needs and awakened to new possibilities did he realize how unsatisfying the Augustan mode, with its strictures against personal feeling, was.[30] Therefore, he began to develop a new mode of poetry that stepped over the old conventions. Coleridge sought a form to adequately embody his thoughts. Poetry then came to express feelings, to image them, or evoke them in a way distinct from prose. There were dangers in this though; Coleridge used the poetic mode to express psychic not rational solutions. His emphasis was on the resolution of mental, not actual, conflicts. Coleridge came to accept the truth of these poetic solutions, but he had to reconcile them to fact (unlike Blake who simply accepted the truth of his visions). Coleridge's problem was how to proceed from intuited, psychic truths in an objective world hostile to those truths. This problem might be simply put as a demanded unification of the subjective and the objective. It is a problem even we

recognize as real; it is a problem we associate with the romantics; and it is a problem that Coleridge's earliest philosophies could not resolve.

Unconsciously perhaps, Coleridge used poetry to resolve this problem. For with poetry he could hedge; he was permitted a significant ambiguity he could use to defend himself from the implications of his assertions. However, the ultimate effect of the problem is not merely stylistic; its ultimate effect was in his decision whether or not to write poetry. Coleridge's career then follows the development of his epistemological struggle. In youth, his poetry was conventional, as was appropriate to his orthodoxy. Developing needs and rising expectations following his late college years inspired his greatest poetry. But these poetic assertions also brought with them the epistemological problem of verifying his poetic intuitions. Thus late in his career, when he had not succeeded in establishing a moral framework for his speculations, when the burden of proof bore too heavily upon him, he eschewed these poetic speculations for the moral security of prosaic philosophic studies. And even then the need to find common ground between his organic nature philosophy and orthodox Christianity[31] pressed him to the problem of knowledge. His final act was to acknowledge his inadequacy and accept Christian orthodoxy.

Scholars and critics were right when they intuited unity as Coleridge's goal. And given the advantage of 170 years perspective, it is easy to see that those elements being unified are what we now term the elements of classicism and

romanticism. But more than the elements of two traditions, they are values that were important to one particular man. This distinction invites a caution: the perspective of 170 years distorts our view by over generalizing. That perspective must be corrected by recognizing the intimacy and immediacy of the problems Coleridge faced. It is our present error to overlook individuals, to be too influenced by the emphasis time gives general principles. In that case, literary history is reduced to the struggle of cosmic principles dramatized by particular authors. These principles overstate what little correspondence exists. Beer, for example, acknowledges that, perhaps rightfully, the term "Romantic movement" is less used. He says:

> Perhaps there was a desire for a movement . . . but the individual differences between artists involved were too great to admit of anyting more. The critic finds himself on firm ground only when he turns from common beliefs to common problems, and common problems do not constitute a movement.[32]

But even if there is a zeitgeist, it is not a general assent to philosophic attitude. It is a correspondence of feeling. For example, we may view the Romantic problem as epistemological; Coleridge, however, saw his problem as an attempt to reconcile opposed needs to maintain psychic equilibrium, to hold his world together.

Granted, the battle may have been fought in the realm of philosophy, but its roots were in feeling. Perhaps W. J. Bate (who in part inspired this approach) best shows the balance between feeling and intellect that Coleridge's

philosophy exemplified:

> No one who has written on literature . . . has more directly and emotionally felt, and . . . understood, the claims of the subjective . . . and at the same time retained so firm a grip on the philosophically objective, the specific, or the claims of the technical. The classical and the romantic, the ideal and the concrete process, reason and feeling, symbol and direct statement, form and mimesis . . . are equally meaningful. And . . . within the theatre of his mind, the drama of speculation is one that seeks to combine them--to conceive them as they exist in active interplay and assimilation.[33]

This is not, however, an argument for the study of psychological determinism in Coleridge. While needs spur the conception, great needs never made a great poet. It is the ability of the author to cope with those needs--what he creates when spurred by his needs--that makes his greatness. Still, without a full understanding of his needs, we cannot appreciate his creative work in resolving his needs.

The advantage of the approach taken in this study, then, is that it accounts for feeling. And in doing so, provides a more accurate picture of Coleridge.

CHAPTER TWO

Coleridge's early poetry establishes an opposition of rational and intuitive poetic modes and their associated values. The opposition begins with Augustan moral sanctions against emotional excess in poetry derived from the traditional dichotomy of reason and imagination (or fancy). This soon develops into a tension between poetry of social obligation and poetry of personal reflection. As a mental process, this development is not strictly logical; it depends as much on association of ideas, simile, and consonance of feeling as it does on rational process. Nevertheless, this development is significant. It reflects Coleridge's first approach to serious questions that he would study all his life: Coleridge's poetic concerns embraced psychology and epistemology as well as ethics and metaphysics. His interest in Bowles' poetry, for example, led to important insights which Lawrence Hanson notes in Coleridge's later reflection:

> To defend tenents based on Bowles' ideas, was to attempt nothing less than an analysis of the nature of poetry; and much of the time of his last years at school was spent in establishing to his satisfaction a solid foundation of poetical criticism "on which permanently to ground my opinions, in the component faculties of the human mind itself, and their comparative dignity and importance."[1]

So circumstances do imply that Coleridge's early poetry is undistinguished, but the objections they raise are answerable.

Coleridge, himself, was effacing in his claims for his poetry. For example, he compared himself to an ostrich--non-poetic wings that gave him a "feeling of flight."[2] But despite the fact that he "describes his interest in poetry as insipid, . . . there is little doubt that he was not even then [c. 1787] wholly without pride in his compositions."[3] Coleridge's own statements again prove untrustworthy. There are also identifiable conventions in Coleridge's poetry that suggest that his work might be uninspired imitation. But those conventions are found in a mosaic of tension that modifies them; the conventions are juxtaposed to other assertions and evaluated in the larger frame of reference their interaction provides. The conventions are not used thoughtlessly.

A reading of Coleridge's poetry best demonstrates the interaction of convention and new values: a reading shows the initial opposition of the rational and intuitive modes, their investment with numerous values, and their increasing sophistication as they are modified by their conflict. In addition, a reading shows that Coleridge's early resolutions of the conflicts were essentially stylistic. And a reading of Coleridge's early poems, in demonstrating the significance of his poetry, dismisses Coleridge's own disclaimers and the derrogation of others.

Coleridge's first poetic statements on the values of poetry take after Pope's pronouncements in Essay on Criticism: Coleridge is modest in his poetic claims, almost effacing; he at once acknowledges the limited value of his poetry and

its vulnerability to criticism. Praise of his muse is qualified by several clauses: "Tho' no bold flights to thee belong;/And tho' thy lays with conscious fear,/Shrink from Judgement's eye severe" ("To The Muse," ll. 1-3).[4] Even the language invites comparison.[5] Certainly part of his disclaimer is traditional. But it is none the less believed.

Coleridge argues, like Pope, that since poetry is subjective, and since human sense is limited and erring, poetry cannot be trusted: he limits the social value of poetry because his poetry is personal--i.e. subjective--which, as the reader knows, subordinates it to social responsibility. This is where tradition bore most heavily on Coleridge; the dual concerns of delight and instruction demanded rigid standards of form and content. The dual concerns especially forced conformity to "common sense" or the legislated ideals of "consensus genetum." Private sense was immoral. Judgement always subordinated imagination with rigorous control.

What was left after "personal sense" was removed was the poetry of the rational mode. It was unsatisfying. As serious poetry, it was above all not speculative; poetry was distrusted to the degree that it was speculative. Rather it was to be rigidly instructive and usually orthodox, with the not unexpected result that the limiting conventions and orthodoxy that wounded Coleridge were advocated. Too, it was mentally and logically rigorous in a way that stifled any uncertainty so necessary to speculation. Musing was not its subject.

Coleridge's early reassertions of poetic conventions, however, are infused with his own values and his own values

significantly modify the conventions he uses. Convention, in Coleridge's mind, is more than codified, appropriate actions; Coleridge offers the rational-empirical mode as a replacement and compensation for lost happiness. The beginning of this investment of value is perhaps found in a well documented personality trait of Coleridge's. As Lucyle Werkmeister suggests, "the point of departure, expressed or implied, of all of the 'metaphysical' juvenailia is . . . the awful fact of guilt and its necessary concomitant, suffering."[6] Coleridge explains his suffering this way: grief is inevitable since youthful joys of unrestrained indulgence in feeling and surrender to impulse are opposed to the sober pleasures of moral action resulting from rational restraint. The development of this opposition begins in Coleridge's earliest poetry.

In "Easter Holidays" (1787), the pleasures of moral action are maturer pleasures which provide a replacement for youthful joys. In the poem, youthful joys, though not yet opposed by moral obligation, are, however, separate from it. And by extension, the poem implies that the pleasures of feeling are limited to childhood and are given up as a part of maturing; indulgence in feelings in maturity is immoral.

"Easter Holidays" begins with a spirited celebration of the Easter holidays, the joys of spring and the unrestrained happiness of children. It is evident that the pleasures of the Easter holidays are important to Coleridge because of his vivacity in celebrating joys and because he is expressing his own experience. Coleridge builds the excitement of the poem through the first three verses. The first is a traditional

salute to spring and all it represents:

> Hail! festal Easter that dost bring
> Approach of sweetly-smiling spring,
> When Nature's clad in green:
> When feather'd songsters through the grove
> With beasts confess the power of love
> And brighten all the scene. ll. 1-6

Its predecessors date from the Middle Ages[7] and it shares with its predecessors a lyric spontenaity. That spontenaity suggests Coleridge's interest. The second verse details the activity of the unrestrained school children. Their liveliness generates considerable excitement; they "All sing the festive lay" (l. 12). The joy of their sounds and actions fill the world of the poem until all ceases with evening. Coleridge is clearly in touch with the joy of the season; his celebration proclaims it. And he celebrates as a participant (he was still entered at Christ's Hospital, age 15).[8] His feelings are sincere even though he expresses them in conventional language. He clearly values his feelings.

Yet if he values these joys of springtime and youth it is strange that he so rapidly eschews them. The reader must assume that he has sufficient cause. Coleridge tries to justify his change in attitude. The "evening" of verse three which ends the children's joys is much more than the end of day; metaphorically it is a later age, an age of discovery that darkens those youthful joys. While discovery is supposed to produce the pleasures of understanding, those pleasures seem less than satisfying. The fourth verse illuminates the pain of knowledge, of eventual initiation into the human condition:

But little think their joyous hearts
Of dire Misfortune's varied smarts
    Which youthful years conceal:
Thoughtless of bitter-smiling Woe
Which all mankind are born to know
    And they themselves must feel. ll. 19-24

Verse four also suggests the immature nature of the children's joys. Their pleasures can be enjoyed only in innocence. When exposed to reality they are illusory. Thus says Coleridge, one must acquire knowledge and virtue to fend off the pains of life. And in that wisdom and that virtue, a mature person finds his joys. Thus the cause of abandonment of youthful joys of feeling is that they are immature. And it is implied that those joys must be abandoned in their time if a person is to grow. They are, after all, "unrealistic." Coleridge then rapidly disavowes, on the basis of expediency, the pleasures of youth, the values that he has just celebrated; their advocacy is based on feeling and their rejection is based on moral obligation. In this poem, then, moral obligation is in ascendancy over personal pleasures of feeling. And those innocent joys are inhibitors of later knowledge.

But Coleridge's explanation for leaving youthful joys is not convincing. The reader wonders if Coleridge is sacrificing just youthful joys or a particular universal kind of joy. Coleridge's alternative does not leave the reader with a sense of satisfaction but rather a feeling of regret. Rather than the alleviation of an unfortunate state of misinformation, this poem seems to portray a loss of important values. As Lucyle Werkmeister says, "One feels the 'lonely pang' even in 'Easter Holidays' when the 'mirthful dance' and 'jocund noise'

of innocent play bring Coleridge's own isolation into focus."[9] There is a sense that Coleridge too is unconvinced by his explanations.

Returning to verse three, the suddenness with which the evening ends the joys and the suddenness with which the poem changes course is significant. It implies that the end of these joys was certainly ominous to Coleridge. An as suggested, he was, perhaps, not filled with true pleasure at the prospect left. His explanation of the weakness of the joys, verse four, then express his resignation to what he sees as a universal situation. And the maturer joys he claims to prefer in verse five, then, are actually only an artificial means to combat the pain of the loss:

> Yet he who Wisdom's paths shall keep
> And Virtue firm that scorns to weep
> At ills in Fortunes' power,
> Through this life's varigated scene
> In raging storms or calm serene
> Shall cheerful spend the hour. ll. 25-30.

What more is this wisdom than acknowledgement of, and submission to, misery? And what more is virtue than a kind of stoicism? And what sort of cheer is left but a pride in one's stiff upper lip? Somehow the hours of bliss he projects lack the emotional value of the innocent joys. His proposals sound like, and are, only a poor consolation. Coleridge's fears, and his response to them, suggest that the fragility of the feelings and the inevitable hurt are what he fears. His real reason for advocating the path that he takes is to avoid what he sees as the vulnerability that innocent joys create. And if the reader agrees that those innocent joys

are simply the joys of feeling through life, then Coleridge could be construed as saying, "I'm giving up feeling because it is indefensible." Feelings are fragile and they cannot stand in the strong light of moral obligation.

Other poems suggest that a rational, conventional life is the best. Since those conventions are the ones that failed to fulfill Coleridge's needs, a conventional life is not likely to satisfy Coleridge.

In "Dura Navis" (1787), rational action is contrasted with the disaster indulgence in feeling is certain to bring. "Dura Navis" proposes a conventional domestic life for the reader. After comparison with the dangers of sea travel, and service in the naval forces, Coleridge's description of domestic life, if dull, seems much more secure. Goads to enlistment, the poet argues, are the snares set by fancy. After a thousand agonies of sea travel are luridly described, Coleridge concludes:

> These are the ills, that may the course attend--
> Then with the joys of home contented rest--
> Here, meek-eyed Peace with humble Plenty lend
> Their aid united still, to make thee blest.
> To ease each pain, and to increase each joy--
> Here mutual Love shall fix thy tender wife,
> Whos offspring shall thy youthful care employ
> And gild with brightest rays the evening of thy Life.
>
> ll. 57-64

The dangers of fancy and the benefits of conventional life then are opposed.

But despite the fact that Coleridge contrasts the joys of home with the despair certain to be a sailor's lot, and despite the fact that he advises against those "Vain . . .

Schemes by heated Fancy plann'd" (l. 6), he is fascinated with the power and strength of the oceans and the pains associated with them. His arguement is somewhat weakened by its form. Coleridge contrasts the worst dangers of the sea with the "best" domestic life offers. One can imagine his belief that if he presented the joys of adventure they would overshadow the joys of home. He sounds like a boy trying to convince himself that his wishes are silly. Too, the blandness with which domestic life is described suggests that it is nothing but an offering of convention. Coleridge concludes that the conventional life is better because it is safer, overlooking the possibility that adventure, for all its risks, might be more fulfilling. At any rate, Coleridge argues that impulse is not an adequate guide and must be cautioned against.

"Nil Pejus est Caelibe Vita" (1787) argues strongly in favor of marriage, not on the basis of love, but on the basis of security. Coleridge sees the benefits of marriage only as a defense against isolation, loneliness and insignificance rather than anything positive or vital. A celibate man suffers only because he is without comforters in a wife and child, and only because his name will perish without any progeny. The sentiment (similar to that in "Dura Navis") is conventional and reeks of the golden mean. As Lucyle Werkmeister interprets, from Coleridge's loneliness, "arises his need to be loved; and, in emphasizing the value of domestic affection, Coleridge is only universalizing this need."[10] Convention is what reason dictates and to Coleridge it is only a compensation.

"Quae Nocent Docent" (1789) is a militant restatement of the opposition of values in "Easter Holidays." In "Quae Nocent Docent" belief in a utilitarian and experimental philosophy implies a moral value in continued hard work and denigrates the importance of joys since they are inutile. In the poem, Coleridge regrets the waste of past hours "In giddy revels, or in thoughtless joy/ . . . producing future woe." Rather than indulge in youthful passions he once enjoyed--indulgence he views as "Folly" or "Sloth"--he now wishes to "seek with care fair learnings depths to sound/ And gather scientific lore;/Or to mature the embryo thoughts inclined,/That half conceived lay struggling in [his] mind." He chooses a severe regimen to effect this end; ". . .O'er midnight lamp [he'd] love to pour" and "The colister's solitary gloom [he'd] round." This emphasis on long, hard, dedicated work is understandable if, as the poet says, "Sage experience comes only with years." Again Coleridge makes the moral distinction between youth and maturity; youth enjoys indulgence in feeling but that indulgence is barely tolerated and any indulgence later is immoral. There is no place for indulgence in feeling. Feelings are dangerous, bringing "future woe." Rational process only is moral. The tension between the needs of feeling and moral certitude is explicit.

Despite his explicit statements advocating vigorous rationalism, it is clear that these early statements suggest other values important to Coleridge. And judging from "Easter Holidays" and selected poems, these values essentially embody the expression of feeling. At first Coleridge can only

accept the values of feeling in the restrictive context of empirical convention. He can accept them because they are past joys which no longer concern him; he can accept them because he acknowledges poetry's inutile nature and promises not to let it interfere with his reason; otherwise he must demonstrate some value of poetry, some way in which it can be socially utile. The last two possibilities are present in "To The Muse." In that poem, the values of poetry are exhaltation of the soul, refinement of feeling, heightening of appropriate pleasures and alleviation of sorrow. Too, feeling has value as a mode of personal communion. But because it is consistently personal, it is relatively useless. In terms of "To The Muse" and "An Invocation" (1790), its most probable use is as a personal solace. And even then its value is limited. The pensive joy of "To The Muse" is only sorrow softened. And, as in "An Invocation," the solace of poetry invites caution. Only when that solace finds general social approbation is it truly a source of joy.

Later, despite the fact that indulgence in feeling is outlawed, Coleridge delves in. Readers must conclude that he was driven to it by unfulfilled needs that he had unsuccessfully tried to compensate with rational process. Indeed his speculations deal with those feelings that are opposed to rational empiricism.

Hope is panegyrized as a positive benefit to man in the sonnet "To The Autumnal Moon" (1788). Hope's allegorical comparison to the moon suggests that hope has a mysterious potential for good. Coleridge's description of the moon

draws upon the symbolic heritage of the moon as a mixed cause of unexplainable effects in the world of man. "Mild Splendour of the Various-vested night!/Mother of widly-working visions!", produces a sense of immanent power. Besides potent, the moon-hope is benevolent; Coleridge's language makes this belief clear. Descriptive terms are gentle and suggest kindness. The "mild" moon's agent, its light, is "Placid." By association hope enjoys the sense of power and benevolence attributed to the moon. Directly hope is shown to act as a pallative for man's mortal woes. Her beneficial rays lighten the burden of care man must bear, " . . . emerging in her radiant might,/She o'er the sorrow-clouded breast of Care/Sails, like a meteor kindling in its Flight." Though sometimes seen dimly or occluded by despair, hope's light, as the moon's, eventually appears "in radiant Might." Because of its constancy, hope's dominance is inevitable. To know then that hope is constant, ageless and beneficial as the moon, is to conclude, as Coleridge did, that hope is "Fair."

In an empirical philosophy, hope has little place, yet in "To The Autumnal Moon" it is of value as an inevitable solace to man. This unique departure suggests visionary values distinct from the empirical. Hope becomes alligned with the intuitive mode. Unlike previous poems which caution against feeling as motivation, the values of hope in "To The Autumnal Moon" are uniquely emotional; there are values in feeling. Despite his intentions, Coleridge is still intimately concerned with feeling.

Sonnet "To The River Otter" (1793) provides the best example that Coleridge is returning to the intuitive mode to compensate for the failure of the empirical philosophy he had been advocating. It reverses the pattern of youthful joys eschewed for the consolation of empiricism; in the world, empiricism now brings men pains. Coleridge sooths those pains with memories of the joys of youth which he longs for but cannot have.

Nature is celebrated for its own vivacity in "To The River Otter." Where Coleridge conventionally manipulated nature in a poem like "To The Autumnal Moon," Coleridge now relies on nature's various, phenomenal existence. To him it was the strength of impression that objective nature provided that gave him immediate and later joys. Originally, the scenes of childhood were sweet. Then they were impressed in his memory. From memory, full phenomenal visions and the associated joy return to him to alleviate his woes in later years.

Though Coleridge personifies the River Otter by address, he does not impose subjective attributes on it as he did on the autumnal moon. The Otter remains "dear native brook" complete with "Thy crossing plank, thy marge with willows grey/And bedded sand that vein'd with various dyes/Gleam'd through thy bright transparence! . . ." Only because of its vitality can the river so impress itself in Coleridge's memory and transport him from care; " . . . On my way,/ Visions of Childhood! oft have ye beguil'd/Lone manhood's cares, yet waking fondest sighs:". It is pleasing to

Coleridge that he can redeem the joys of childhood in memory to restore his mental well being. Yet his wish--"Ah! that once more I were a careless Child!" suggests more than simple nostalgia. There is a special value in childhood that he cannot have. Manhood and its demands weigh heavily on Coleridge. One possibility is that Coleridge wants release from the weight of moral responsibility. "Lone manhood" suggests emotional values lacking in maturity. At any rate, Coleridge is wounded by responsibility and seeks compensation, this time in emotional gratification.

But if he does seek that compensation, he must risk censure by his sense of obligation to orthodoxy. Since he does, there has to be a conflict. Actually it existed from the beginning. At first it was only a subtle tension: empiricism was firmly enthroned by Coleridge's explicit damnation of indulgence in feeling and advocacy of a life of the golden mean; the faint cry of unmet needs was all but drowned by the rumblings of rationalism. But the cry of those needs (both personal and social) continued to echo and slowly became audible to Coleridge. Thus the locus of 1787-1793 sees the increase of the tension to a visible level in "River Otter." The conflict had not yet become open warfare and never would because of Coleridge's deference to orthodoxy. But its insistence was great enough to require resolution.

Since his "poetic theory," if we can call it that at this early age, was essentially a restatement of the Augustan mode, one could expect to find, and one does find, Augustan qualities in his poetry. W. J. Bate documents these qualities:

> In Coleridge's early poems we find two conventional eighteenth-century styles, one of which has completely faded by the time he is twenty-five, while the other persists to the end, remaining as the vehicle for most of the poetry he ever wrote. The first is the declamatory odal style that descends from Dryden. . . .
> But far more alluring to Coleridge from the beginning was the reflective mode of the later eighteenth century--familiar, casual,/uninvolved, often elegaic in tone.[11]

Clearly a new poetry was necessary. Unfortunately it did not exist. However, the reflective mode of the eighteenth century, especially as it had been developed by individuals such as Grey (with whose work Coleridge was familiar), had natural tendencies toward the sort of imaginative poetry we have seen satisfy Coleridge's needs so well. But that poetry had to be shaped. It permitted musing and speculations, but it was naturally apologetic. It was not permitted high seriousness. However, Coleridge's poetic stance was not rigid and he chose to elaborate on the reflective mode because it fit his inhibitions so well.[12] As a youth, he suggested the possibility of a poetry that is less rigorous, more in touch with feeling. On encountering the Rev. William Lisle Bowles' Sonnets Written Chiefly on Picturesque Spots, Coleridge asked what was wrong with literature that "was simply a 'friend'," emphasizing the pleasure and suggesting a new method of apprehension of literature apart from rigorous study.[13] But what did Coleridge mean by poetry that was a friend? Essentially he meant a poetry that would provide him with assurance, a reinforcement for his feelings, a poetry that would permit him to express and gratify

his own needs. This is what we see beginning in the sonnets "To The Autumnal Moon" and "To The River Otter."

But this poetry needs protection from his sense of social obligation; this poetry obviously is subjective. In terms of Augustan theory, the danger was that such loose poetry might be taken seriously. As long as that poetry was recognized as fanciful, and valueless, there was no danger. But fanciful poetry would not permit him the full expression of his needs; he would have to make his new poetry more serious. However, the exact changes that he would make in the eighteenth century convention would be considered a dangerous excess. Thus Coleridge had to justify his new mode. In other words, Coleridge's poetic quest was to find objective vindication and rational justification of his intuitive poetics.

Coleridge's resolution of the problem was essentially stylistic. Since demonstration or consecutive reason only reinforced Coleridge's compulsion toward convention, it could not justify the coexistence of the two modes. Therefore he resorted to stylistic devices to protect the intuitive assertions from the blasts of criticism. He isolated the poetic mode either chronologically, spatially or imaginatively from the mode of reason.

Coleridge's earliest poetry had given him a form that he could modify and use throughout his career. That poetry might well be called the poetry of instructive contrast. It is essentially didactic. In its earliest permutations, it contrasts Coleridge's reminiscent enjoyment of pleasures

past with his sense of duty in the present; it chides or damns him for indulgence in joys and advocates empirical convention; in essence it isolates the mode of joy and the mode of rationalism chronologically.

Coleridge's earliest poem, "Easter Holidays," exemplifies this method. As will be recalled, Coleridge's celebration of youthful joys in that poem is ended and replaced with advocacy of later moral pleasures stemming from moderation and duty. "Quae Nocent Docent" follows the same pattern though its tone is far from chiding. Other poems witness the same pattern. In "Absence" (1791) the seriousness of Coleridge's studious obligations mocks his nostalgic love of youthful joys:

> I haste to urge the learnéd toil
> That sternly chides my love-lorn song:
> Ah me! too mindful of the days
> Illumed by Passion's orient rays. ll. 3-6

He suggests that his loss of youth heightens its joys; that loss makes the joys more desireable. However, his delineation of those joys, as well as his hope for their return, suggests their importance. In his innocent days, "When peace, and Cheerfulness and Health/Enriched him with the best of wealth" (ll. 7-8), his soul was bathed in joy. While he has now given up his youthful pleasures for his obligations, he believes that his joys, like the moon's light, will return. Again, the poetic mode is isolated chronologically in the past and in some unspecified future time. Moral obligations in the present take precedence over those joys. But he can still reflect on them and desire their return.

In "On Quitting School" (1791), Coleridge's reminiscence again establishes values associated with different ages. Youthful pleasures (poetics included) are innocent pleasures. They are unstained with the guilt he now presumably bears:

> Ah! would those happy days return again,
> When 'neath your arches, free from every stain
> I heard of guilt and wonder'd at the tale! ll. 7-9

Apparently growing up has involved developing an awareness of guilt. Growing up involves the shouldering of a particular burden. And its pleasures are much less certain than those of youth: " . . . fluttering round on Fancy's burnish'd wings/ Her tales of future Joy Hope loves to tell" (ll. 3-4). As in "River Otter," he sincerely desires those joys lost. But he retains their chronological separation; they are past joys.

The other form of poetry of instructive contrast suggests that the acceptance of empirical convention will alleviate human suffering. "Anthem: for the children of Christ's Hospital" (1789) provides an example of this form. In it, a general sense of human suffering is contrasted with a facile optimism based on religious truisms. A strong sense of hope reminiscent of "Autumnal Moon" is present. In terms of "Anthem," one should put his faith in the Lord. Presumably, he will step in at an appropriate time and prevent complete inundation by the irresistible tide of woe. Stoicism is the key to happiness. Yet the excursive celebration of the Lord's coming is more in keeping with his imaginative celebration of hope in "Autumnal Moon." That celebration is a celebration of the alleviation of mental and physical suffering rather than a celebration of the arrival of the Lord. It is perceived in a very human way.

It is easy to see how the poetry of instructive contrast becomes the poetry of isolated modes (another form Coleridge is to use later) simply by the removal of the instructive conclusion. Take for example "Sonnet: To The River Otter" (1793). The instructive element is gone. The first twelve lines are a celebration of the vitality of the landscape and the process by which it can now gratify Coleridge in memory. Only at line 13 does he make the distinction between youth and age, and then it is not a comparison that favors the pleasures of maturity. He rescues himself from this untenable situation with the last line which is, in essence, recognition that the imaginative mode of "River Otter" is forever lost in the past and that he necessarily will accept "Lone manhood's cares."

"Sonnet: To The Autumnal Moon" (1788) offers another variation on his technique of isolation. A completely separate world is established for his assertion of the value of hope. In that world nocturnal life is allied with the visionary poetic mode (a commonplace in Coleridge's poetry). The phenomena of night are in a special relationship with that visionary mode; the mystery and fickleness of the fairy powers are implied. That world is enclosed from daylight and the world of care. This minimizes the dangers of the assertions. Regardless, the poem is a very early example of this form, which Coleridge was to use periodically. Most notably it was seen in "Kubla Khan" and "Rime of the Ancient Mariner." In "Kubla Kahn" the paradise is surrounded, Bate argues, to keep the paradise secure.

> The religious censor in Coleridge, even at this stage of his life, is as strong as it was in Johnson. Harold B. Bloom rightly emphasizes that it encourages him to select a "remote dome in Xanadu," and thus avoid "the issue of the poet's relative sanctity against more than natural verities."[14]

The full value of this mode is not seen until later when Coleridge uses it most successfully with his more speculative works. Study of this mode is informative for the reader; this stylistic trait provides an indicator of the success of Coleridge's struggle to unify his opposed needs. The closer the unity, the closer the two worlds are.

CHAPTER THREE

The period of Pantisocracy (summer 1794 into 1795) could be called Coleridge's romantic awakening. It witnesses his first political activism and is a prelude to his most exploratory years--"The Eolian Harp" coming but a short year later. By contrast to his earlier supplication at the throne of convention, his involvement in Pantisocracy was radicalism, and seems typical of Romantic political activism. But to suggest that Pantisocracy indicated a sudden shift in Coleridge's values, to suggest that he had become wholeheartedly aligned with the "Romantic" intuitive mode, would be erroneous. Rather, Pantisocracy displays the same uncertainties or ambivalence that characterized Coleridge's earlier works. For Coleridge's advocacy of Pantisocracy is divided between an imaginative concept of a nurturing society and a rational, mechanistic, political institution.

Coleridge did act upon a new appreciation of human needs in his Pantisocratic involvement. Something, perhaps his conversations with Southey and others, suggested to him that his own sense of suffering was not caused by his own failings but by the inadequacy of political and social institutions. That belief argued strongly for change. And so doing, it promised considerable nurturing for Coleridge. It could alleviate his guilt--his afflictions were <u>not</u> a divine

scourge--and it could minister to his suffering--it permitted the hope that oppression could be successfully defeated. But this hope led, by circuitous routes, to renewed faith in empiricism. Coleridge turned away from his position in "River Otter" where he had begun to acknowledge empiricism as the burden he felt. He endorsed Necessitarianism and Utilitarianism as the best channels to appropriate change. Both philosophies were based in the eighteenth-century empirical tradition. And both were vigorously rational. Thus, whatever the values of intuited needs, the mode used to justify change and the means of effecting change were strictly empirical. In this sense, Pantisocracy is not a Romantic outburst.

Exfoliation of the ideas embodied in Pantisocracy reveals a startling variety of thought. That thought indicates that Coleridge's real interest is not only objective institutional change, but also psychic changes. Coleridge's ostensible egalitarian state actually becomes a metaphor for his long hoped for state of mental relief. This combination is not Coleridge's conscious plan. It is only a confusion caused by consonance of feeling between projected expectations for the egalitarian state and Coleridge's personal desires. Because of this confusion, because Pantisocracy seemed to embody so many values, it pleased Coleridge so much. No doubt, he must have felt his emotional kingdom reinforced as he justified his political democracy. And conversely, Coleridge unconsciously and instinctively used poetic defenses for his political institution. In this unique way, Pantisocracy seemed to Coleridge to provide relief and moral certitude. But as

one would expect, the elements in this precarious union--like the proverbial water and oil--could not permanently mix. Coleridge almost homogenized them for a time, but inevitably he failed. The Pantisocratic society was doomed by its own instability. But while it lasted, its existence bore tribute to Coleridge's ability as a mental chemist. Finally, then, Pantisocracy was a new amalgam of Coleridge's dichotomized needs of moral certainty and personal emotional gratification. Thus to ascribe Coleridge's Pantisocratic involvement to a Romantic awakening is to both oversimplify and confuse his motives.

Coleridge first saw Pantisocracy as a means to alleviate the human woe existing institutions created. But he did not elaborate too specifically on the particular vices the present political-social life contained. His general sense is of ubiquitous oppression, vice and selfishness which Pantisocracy will end by the establishment of a moral environment which causally induces proper thinking in men's minds. The society selectively removes any tainting influences from its environment, beginning with property:

> I returned . . . hot in the anticipation of that happy Season, when we should remove the selfish Principle from ourselves, and prevent it in our children, by an Abolition of Property: or in what ever respects this might be impracticable, by such similarity of Property as would amount to a moral sameness, and answer all the purposes of Abolition.[1]

Some of the best delineations of the system of Pantisocracy are in Coleridge's epistolary arguements with

Southey. (Southey had the ability to facilely ignore parts of the plan that he and Coleridge had formed, necessitating Coleridge's restatement of his ideas.) Two instances are especially revealing. At one point, Southey advocated a division of labor; those less intelligent would do manual labor while brighter people would labor in philosophical inquiry. This incensed Coleridge. He feared it was but one step away from the same inequities that already existed. Even more extreme was Southey's suggestion that servants be permitted in the Pantisocratic society. Coleridge's answer to Southey (21 October 1794) indicates his concern that equality must be maintained to prevent degeneration of the Pantisocratic society into the fallen state of contemporary society. His fear, it seems, is based not only on the fact that servitude would be the continuation of present abuses but also it would put corrupting influences in the mechanistic system by which virtue is cultivated.[2] As Coleridge wrote, "The leading Idea of Pantisocracy is to make men <u>necessarily</u> virtuous by removing all motives to Evil—all possible temptations."[3] Servitude, or any other superiority, would create a temptation. (Coleridge, remember, believed that the removal of inequality would remove the "<u>selfish</u> principle.") Thus it was supposed that institutional change could provide a change of mental attitude in people. What Coleridge then wanted from Pantisocracy was an egalitarian state which necessarily leads its members to a moral life. Coleridge's plan is based on a necessitarian philosophy which admits that "vice is the effect of error and the product of [<u>circumstances</u>]."[4] A permutation

of Lockian psychology can easily be seen in Coleridge's belief. Indeed, at this time, Coleridge considered himself "A complete Necessitarian,"[5] and he was under the influence of a mechanistic philosophy based on his understanding of David Hartley--"I . . . understand the subject as well almost as Hartley himself, but I go farther . . . and believe in the corporality of thought, namely that is motion."[6] That understanding of Hartley could not yet produce a consecrated view of nature, "A vision of the spiritual reality at once immanent in and transcending the world of matter which joins all things together and links the consciousness of man with the rest of the cosmos."[7] That would come with "The Eolian Harp." Instead his vision is of a cold, materialistic mechanism. And except that it is intended to alleviate human suffering, that system is hardly "Romantic."

As suggested, it is safe to say that Coleridge's participation in Pantisocracy was activisim and perhaps sedition (as he later called it), but it would not be safe to say that Pantisocracy was terribly original or Romantic. The most direct progenitors of Pantisocracy were the eighteenth-century utopian dreams. Pantisocracy's tenents, for example, bear close relationship to the idealized offerings of Locke and Rousseau. The "utopian" and "communistic" tendencies of Pantisocracy, " . . . made it clear that Coleridge's Pantisocratic ideals developed largely from the fairly wide-spread anarchism, utopianism, and 'Perfectibilianism' of the eighteenth-century radical political and moral tradition."[8] Like them, Pantisocracy suggests that environment is the determining

factor in Man's development. A good environment produces a good man: a bad environment, a bad man. Thus the noble savage, free in nature, untainted by modern man's corrupt nature and instituions is a spiritually whole man and his institutions are causally egalitarian. And thus, those Pantisocratic tribals, removed from the corruption of English society could, through assiduous mental effort, overcome their own acquired evils and produce an untainted progeny.

Two specific and important sources of the utopian tradition have been discerned, William Godwin and David Hartley. Godwin's influence has been dealt with in detail. Briefly, he was the chief instrument through which Coleridge received the eighteenth-century radical tradition. But as Deen shows, Coleridge moved from the abstract quasi-utilitarianism of Godwin to a more emotional view of political possibilities inspired by Hartley and a radical reading of the Bible. One reason for Coleridge's preference is that "Godwin offered no motive to moral improvement, except the motive power of truth itself."[9] Another reason was that "Godwin was neither a Christian nor a thorough-going utilitarian. Coleridge was both . . . and both beliefs were necessary to his faith in Pantisocracy."[10]

Necessary to Pantisocracy and Coleridge's mechanistic interpretation of Godwin, modified by Hartley and the Bible, is a reassertion of the importance of reason, and a re-definition of the relation between feeling and reason. Coleridge was confident of the success of Pantisocracy because of the mental habits of its proposed members. He was certain that

their strength of mind was sufficient to overcome one source of evil, indulgence in feeling, "I may assert with truth, that they have a sufficient strength of mind to make virtues of the heart respectable."[11] He would not have to fear that their reason might "be entangled in the web which . . . feelings have woven."[12] Continuing in a letter, he suggests that the proper relation of reason and feeling is for feeling to give animation to the dictates of reason, "And they [of the Pantisocratic society] are all highly charged with that enthusiasm which results from strong perception of moral rectitude called into life and action by ardent feelings."[13]

The assumptions in Coleridge's plan are an anathema to the Romantic definition of man and his importance. One can see that Coleridge did partially modify the mechanistic system to admit at least partial activity on the part of man. But the mechanistic qualities still must have posed a problem for Coleridge. After all, how can a mechanistic system which presupposes the sum of man to be the sum of his experience really satisfy Coleridge? Or how can a system that names man as passive, or at best rational, animal--or machine--be reconciled to Coleridge's ideal of the subjective powers of man? If Coleridge's assumptions are correct, Pantisocracy would produce equals, but not equals as he conceived them. Pantisocracy would produce a democratic society of automations! All activity would be Blake's "same dull round." Institutional changes would not necessarily satisfy the particular unmet needs Coleridge had previously expressed.

Those needs expressed in "River Otter" suggest a more personal deprivation than that caused simply by the oppressiveness of a non-egalitarian society. It can safely be said that Coleridge, at the time of "River Otter," was approaching the realization that "Lone manhood's cares" might be the result of the rigorous mental habits he had developed. At least he was aware that the empirical attitudes supposed to peak at maturity were not as gratifying as he had supposed. Then, when he met Southey, the consonance of feeling between Coleridge's losses and the social repression of a monarchy as exposited by the persuasive Southey, led Coleridge into the enthusiastic belief that the egalitarian state would relieve his grief. In this sense, then, it might well be said that, except for the activism it encouraged, Pantisocracy led away from Coleridge's Romantic gratification of the emotional needs of man.

Coleridge's confusion is seen in his claims for Pantisocracy. As shown, his prose demonstrates an alliance to empiricism and reason. And to Coleridge, that rational basis was very important. He depended on the rational basis of Pantisocracy to answer the demands of his personal moral sense as well as to answer his critics; Pantisocracy could be defended by rational argumentation and demonstration. His letter of 18 September 1794 (to Southey) elaborated his rehearsal for the defense of Pantisocracy: he would strap on reason for strength and depend on enthusiasm for animation and endurance:

> Pantisocracy--O I shall have such a scheme of it! My head, my heart are all alive--I have drawn up my arguments in battle array--

> they shall have the Tactician Excellence of the Mathematician with the Enthusiasm of the Poet--The Head shall be the Mass--the Heart the fiery Spirit, that fills, informs, and agitates the whole . . . [14]

It was not long before Coleridge had an opportunity to use his arguments.[15] On or about the twenty-second of October of the same year, he was "Challenged on the subject of Pantisocracy, which was indeed the universal topic at this University." Coleridge recounted the debate: A discussion began and continued for six hours, "In conclusion they declared the system impregnable--supposing the assigned Quantum of Virtue and Genius in the first individuals."[16] One can imagine his elation in the sense of vindication his plan received.[17] It is reason, then, that justified Pantisocracy. Feeling was a subordinate power.

Coleridge's poetry, on the other hand, maintains the sense of "River Otter." The hopes his poetry expresses are for a new mental environment. Of course his concern with a mental environment is not completely lacking in his prose works. Feelings were more important than some of his statements suggest. For example, at the same time he elevates reason to support enlightened self interest, he is easily led away into speculation on the values of feeling. The following takes as its departure point his previous assertion of the value of feeling in animating the dictates of reason, but his emphasis suggests that the dictates of reason are hollow unless the heart assents:

> Of course it is each individual's duty to be Just because it is in his interest. To perceive this and to assent to it as an

> abstract proposition--is easy--but it requires the most wakeful attentions of the most reflective minds in all moments to bring it into practice--it is not enough, that we have once swallowed it--the Heart should have fed upon the truth as Insects on a Leaf--til it be tinged with the colour and shew its food in every the minutest fibre.[18]

This is a much more important role for feelings than his system really admits. It suggests a necessary, active, willed mental activity which transcends mere causality and reason. But he does not carry the thought farther. He drops the subject and its implications--at least for the present. So his attitudes are less monolythic than the majority of his prose assertions suggest.

Coleridge's poetry says very little about the mechanistic system. Nor does it speak at great length of the values of equality. Its concern rather is with a consecrated environment that provides emotional gratification and assures moral action. And it is an environment that provides for his needs without the tiring mental effort of his system.

"Pantisocracy" (18 September 1794) projects Coleridge's hopes for his Pantisocratic Society in the Americas. Whatever his joys in England, he is willing to abjure those "Joys that Were" as they are weighted with the "Shame and anguish of the evil day/Wisely forgetful!" His participation in degenerate political-social institutions place sin upon him by association. Understandably he is excited to seek the place where he can participate in social institutions and remain untainted. In the closed society he seeks he need not worry about virtue straying or the passions misleading him.

His joy, however, is "doubt-mingled" for he recognizes that his passionate involvement, his indulgence in feeling outside of the Pantisocracy, would produce woe. Yet he remains confident that the Pantisocratic colony will be that "cottag'd dell" where that participation is moral and therefore justified.

"Pantisocracy" begins with a sense of moral expediency echoing the implication of "Quae Nocent Docent" that, though youth enjoys pleasures of feeling, those pleasures must be replaced by hard work. In "Pantisocracy" expediency eschews subjective indulgence in joys that were and motivates a dedicated search for moral instituions.

> No more my visionary soul shall dwell
> On joys that were; No more endure to weigh
> The shame and anguish of the evil day,
> Wisely forgetful.

But Coleridge continues not with a call to the cloister of dry objective empiricism. Rather he seeks a place where virtue can move freely without straying: he seeks a place where the passions can be expressed in Dionysian splendor and still "Weave an holy spell." This unexpected shift indicates his need for the subjective joys of feeling that feed his "visionary soul." His concern is for emotional values, not political values. "On the Prospect of Establishing a Pantisocracy in America" uses the same terms as "Pantisocracy" to describe the emotional gratification of a new social system. Instead of tolerating the Anxiety, Care, Woe and Despair of his present existence, Coleridge seeks a new "Clime" filled with content and Bliss.

Whilst pale Anxiety, corrosive Care,
The tear of Woe, the gloom of sad Despair,
And deepen'd Anguish generous bosoms rend;--
Whilst patriot souls their country's fate lament;
Whilst mad with rage demoniac, foul intent,
Embattled legions Despots vainly send
To arrest the immortal mind's expanding ray
Of everlasting Truth:--I other climes
Where dawns, with hope serene, a brighter day
Than e'er saw Albion in her happiest times,
With mental eye exulting now explore,
And soon with kindred minds shall haste to enjoy
(Free from the ills which here our peace destroy)
Content and Bliss on Transatlantic shore.

Certainly the poem is political and geographical. Despotic power is a cause of woe. Coleridge is leaving "Albion," England, that fallen country, for America, "The Transatlantic shore." But, the poem is gratifyingly ambiguous. It permits a more personal and universal interpretation of the poem. Although the lines suggest specific events, the sense of despotism, for example, seems to better describe a mental state. His emphasis is not on objective institutional ills; he devotes most of the poem to the mental agonies now endured and the mental voyage to a new environment. "Other climes" means more than the location of the "Pantisocracy" on the Susquehanna. It suggests a mental environment like that in "Pantisocracy." While Coleridge says that institutions are oppressing the minds of men--a process later suggested in "The Dungeon" (1797)--his main emphasis is not on political change, but on mental change by the quickest means, escape. The qualities of the environments in "On the Prospect of Establishing a Pantisocracy in America" are mental.

Coleridge's prose evaluation and poetic evaluation of Pantisocracy are quite different in their claims. And the

fact that those expressions are separated generically as well as qualitatively suggests that Coleridge did not really see the two sets of needs, their resolutions or their means of expression as harmonious. The prosaic and poetic, the rational and the imaginative, the objective or mechanistic and the subjective were joined to disparate modes. The prosaic mode was rational. Its mechanistic system could justify institutional change. But that mode had little to do with feelings. The poetic mode was imaginative. Its free and visionary forms could gratify emotional needs, but it was essentially unjustifiable, speculative.

Perhaps in the creation of Pantisocracy, as in the creation of his poetry, the basis of motivation is Coleridge's sense of guilt and suffering. Pantisocracy was another attempt to provide an acceptable explanation of his suffering. Where the Neoplatonic metaphysics of his early poetry at least provided a significant, cosmic explanation of his suffering--namely vice and a fallen nature--his Godwinian-Hartleyan-Biblicalism could provide an equally significant and infinitely more acceptable reason for hurt--the oppression of unjust institutions. And where the first explanation provides consolation, the second removes the necessity for guilt and implies that Coleridge's suffering is unjust. Most important, it permits or even demands alleviation of that suffering. Where before Coleridge's only moral alternative was to submit to cosmic afflictions, he now could take positive action to end his suffering. It is easy to see how this possibility enthused Coleridge. Appleyard's discussion of the Pantisocratic background implies Coleridge's change in perspective:

> The optimistic view of man's nature was the offspring of diestic rationalism and "scientific" psychology. Where the classical Christian concept of man, with its reservations about his ability to persevere unassisted in the path of goodness, narrowed into the Calvinistic vision of man's total iniquity and helplessness apart from grace, the obvious counter balance appeared in the idea of natural goodness.[19]

Joseph Cottle's analysis of Pantisocracy, despite its condescending tone, is, then, a fairly accurate, contemporary analysis of the values vested in Pantisocracy.

> The more remote background needs concern us little. As Cottle informs us, "these airy schemes of happiness" have been "projected in every age." Indeed Pantisocracy combines two traditions of human longing, the hope of an ideal commonwealth, and the nostalgic urge of sophisticated peoples toward the simple or primitive life, both of which are traceable back through the literatures of classical antiquity, and undoubtedly much further.[20]

Leo Marx, speaking of the pastoral ideal, is more specific in naming the values of the ideal--which corresponds to Pantisocracy. Though he is speaking of Hawthorne's use of the pastoral ideal, Marx' statements accurately indicate Coleridge's goal: "He [Hawthorne or Coleridge] is describing a state of being in which there is no tension either within the self or between the self and its environment."[21] Pantisocracy was, then, consciously or unconsciously, concerned mainly with feelings. Coleridge was motivated perhaps as much by his passionate yearning for a vague ideal as he was by a concrete understanding of the problems of political institutions. It was Coleridge's error not to recognize this. As a result, he confuses the two contradictory modes. But despite their differences, the two systems have two qualities in common:

both were first to gratify needs; and second, they were to gratify those needs morally. It was the fault of the prosaic Pantisocracy that it had little that could assuage damaged psyches. The poetic Pantisocracy could gratify feelings but it had no rational basis. The poetic Pantisocracy, where Coleridge's real motives are most transparent, was vulnerable. And again Coleridge used techniques of isolation to defend his poetic exposition.

A sense of place is important to the Pantisocracy. It will be remembered that America, not England, was to be the residence of this new society. It was a significant element to Coleridge. As Bate points out, "Coleridge was dissapointed that the Pantisocratic society might have to start in England rather than in America."[22] As we have seen it was important that the society be isolated. Remembering the words of "Pantisocracy," note the great spatial barrier between the old and the new. Even the English Pantisocracy was to be in Wales--about as isolated as you can get in England. A likely reason for the importance of a sense of place is that Coleridge, for all his statements implying his assurance in being able to justify the existence of the Pantisocracy, is still uneasy about the burden of proof. Therefore, as before, he isolates the two worlds. In "Pantisocracy," the necessity to isolate the two worlds of empiricism and subjectivism indicates the dichotomization of the two which anguished Coleridge seeking the values of each. But the isolation is necessary because the joys of vision and feeling are decadent. In an empirical world they are immature joys, they indicate indulgence.

Coleridge resolves his problem by creating a separate world of subjective vision. This world is first isolated from the empirical world for security. It is a small secluded valley across the ocean. That isolation provides an environment in which feelings are moral and beneficial. In the "cottag'd dell," passions are not simply prevented from doing evil by their enclosure. Rather, in this special world, the world of subjectivism, "The wizard passions weave an holy spell." Thus subjective and objective, visionary and empirical are never united. Coleridge has instead developed a separate world of vision that has its own morality. In it Coleridge can enjoy feelings and still be moral. He, too, recognizes the disparateness of the two worlds. His "doubt mingl'd joy" is recognition that what is moral in the subjective world is immoral in the objective world.

But Coleridge has not really resolved his problem. He has only used his strategy of isolation to permit the simultaneous existence of the two modes of Pantisocracy. Time has been replaced by distance. Though he argues for the simultaneity of the two systems, his instincts seemed to recognize the impossibility of reconciliation in present terms. He has used spatial and generic separation to end his problem.

The difficulties of this resolution, however, are seen in the movement of "To a Young Ass" (1794). In the poem, oppression is imaged in the chaining of an animal. Coleridge implies several unfulfilled remedies. First, its master (English social institutions) could show pity. The man remains unmoved. Second, Coleridge can and does befriend

the animal. But that friendship has limits. Coleridge will not or cannot take the animal to the sacred grounds of Pantisocracy. No suggestion is made of bringing the Pantisocracy to England to save the animal. That is impossible. Coleridge can give the animal no concrete help. Coleridge's friendship is only pity. Coleridge must be content with the limitations of Pantisocracy; that society must be restrictive.

In sum, Coleridge's hopes for Pantisocracy were primarily personal and emotional, not public and political. Unfortunately he confused his motives. The values he sought were private, though he thought of them as public (as any good utilitarian would). Those values as Coleridge conceived them were also mutually exclusive. Understandably, in Pantisocracy Coleridge had to resort to his method of isolating the two modes, of reason and of feeling. And since this resolution was artificial, it lacked the values of his later, more integrated solutions, and was doomed to failure.

CHAPTER FOUR

Before his involvement in Pantisocracy, Coleridge was approaching an awareness that the rigorous rationalism he had been advocating failed to gratify his needs. Given time, that awareness might have matured into a new means of gratifying those needs. The seed was present. At that time (c. 1793), as documented in "Sonnet: To The River Otter," Coleridge acknowledged his suffering and sought compensation. In the sonnet, Coleridge's remembrance of youthful pleasures sooths his present woes. To project that trend, his future compensation, like his past compensation, might come in part from emotional gratification from nature, not rational exertion. "Sonnet: To The River Otter" then foreshadows what might have been the direction of Coleridge's resolution.

However, Coleridge's interest shifted to Pantisocracy. It probably seemed a more suitable vessel for his youthful enthusiasm. Certainly its attractiveness to Coleridge is understandable. Pantisocracy might satisfy his moral ideas and free his spirit from the oppression of duty; it was not "vacant liberty" but rather a definite action with specific duties.[1] In addition, that necessitarian thinking Godwin inspired redefined Coleridge's woe; in "Sonnet: To The River Otter," Coleridge saw his feelings as opposed in nature to moral obligation--pleasure versus "Lone manhood's cares;"

but necessitarianism argued that false institutions and not the human condition caused his woes. There was hope for a change. Too, Coleridge's intellectual fascination with system partially explains his interest in Pantisocracy. The systematic mechanisms of Pantisocracy no doubt intrigued Coleridge just as machines and engines now fascinate many individuals. How it worked was just as important in terms of interest as what it did. In addition, Pantisocracy was a rational system of assumptions and theorems that could provide justification. This was more substantial justification than the vague feeling of regret expressed in "Sonnet: To The River Otter." In sum, to Coleridge, Pantisocracy presented a means of compassionate expression and relative moral security, a seeming solution to his problem. It is only regrettable that his interest in Pantisocracy led directly away from his poetic thoughts to the same tradition that weighed so heavily on him, and that his understanding of Locke, Hartley and Godwin, fired by Southey's enthusiasm, led him to renewed faith in the empirical tradition.

There was then a conflict in the formulation of Pantisocracy, which assured its decline. More concrete events, however, put Pantisocracy in its grave. Contention among society members wounded it and Coleridge's decaying relationship with Southey led to the death blow--Coleridge's estrangement from Southey (c. 13 November 1795); without Southey's alliance, Coleridge lacked the will to pursue the plan. Pecuniary interests were a factor too: Coleridge was married and had to worry about support of his family; his time was taken more and

more by his work. Gathering subscriptions for his paper, The Watchman, necessitated much travel and frequent lectures and lay sermons.

Pantisocracy though did not die a sudden death; it faded. The break with Southey only put a stamp of finality on it. The decline can be seen in Coleridge's writing. As time passed, his emphasis shifted from the system of Pantisocracy to the good feelings it engendered. Those feelings were, after all, Coleridge's real concern. The system was gradually abandoned like a dead husk which was no longer adequate to embody Coleridge's vital needs. Thus, as the Pantisocracy declined, renewed interest in human feeling and imaginative preception motivated poetic development that culminated in his greatest poetic production and most successful years.

1795 and the next three years witness the production of Coleridge's most famous and most studied poetry. After that period, his poetic production drops off and what remains is generally less important. A few titles before 1799 include: "The Eolian Harp," "Reflections on Having Left a Place of Retirement," all the conversation poems except "Dejection" and "To Wordsworth," "Religious Musings," "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner," "Crystabel," "France," and "Kubla Khan." It is from these works that the image of "Coleridge the Romantic Poet" is usually conjured. And there is no doubt that Coleridge had reached a fullness of poetic speculation and expression. But, (yes, again another qualification) his poetic excursion is tempered by the predisposition evidenced in his earliest poetry; his poetry is framed again by his attempt to reconcile

poetic speculation with moral obligation. Consider several poems from this period, "The Eolian Harp" first.

"The Eolian Harp," a frequently studied piece, emerges as a cliff of imaginative assertion and recognized human needs thrust above the seas of mechanism. "The Eolian Harp" is not in the vein of Pantisocracy and represents a more successful attempt to unite imagination and human needs with an orthodox religious sense and moral obligation. And it provides a movement away from the excessively rational Deism which Coleridge was proclaiming. "The Eolian Harp" presents a radical concept of nature, God and Man-Poet, drawing God into Coleridge's appreciation of nature and satisfying his emotional needs. In the poem, Coleridge jumped from an absolutely mechanistic philosophy to a subjectivist attitude, from Hartlian objectivism to Berkeleyan idealism.[2]

Generally, study of "The Eolian Harp" intends to discover the limits of Coleridge's speculations; discussion of his disclaimers and revisions centers on the degree of unorthodoxy he is willing to accept. The structure of the poem itself suggests that Coleridge was struggling to identify those limits himself; the poem begins with several statements which become successively more radical and ends with some sort of denial and affirmation. This development of the poem has, with variation, been exposited by most Coleridge scholars. The poem begins with Coleridge and Sara in an intimate, peaceful receptive mood created by impressed sensations from nature. Coleridge then observes the effect of the wind on the harp. The desultory breeze evokes mild and

then stronger responses from the harp in a benevolent way, like a lover. Coleridge responds with an imaginative vision and his first statement, that he would enjoy a world of harmony filled by God's presence. Love and imagination combine to produce a consecrated, unified view of nature and a humble religious sense. In the words of Bernard J. Paris:

> Love inspires an imaginative perception of nature, an imaginative perception of nature leads to a vision of "The one Life within us and abroad," and a vision of the one Life calls forth a feeling of Universal benevolence.[3]

That vision does not reflect the rigorous logic of Coleridge's Deistic views. It was a quieter perception suited to Coleridge's needs. Even the tone shared the kindred spirit that Coleridge saw in Bowles' poetry. And the vision is not heretical. Therefore, it would be less likely to raise anxieties in Coleridge. As he continues, what was a delineation of a Hartlian process of experience leading to moral knowledge jumps to a dangerously pantheistic assertion of God's indwelling in nature. Rational speculation (in the form of analogy) leads Coleridge to an abstract sense of pantheism:

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

Coleridge's abstract argumentation approaches heresy. Coleridge, made aware of his heresy by his wife's glance, quickly recants. He eschews the dangerously subjective speculations. When presented with Sara's meek Christian spirit, he recognizes his error of vanity and pride:

> Well hast thou said and holily disprais'd
> These shapings of the unregenerate mind;
> Bubbles that glitter as they rise and break
> On vain Philosophy's aye-babbling spring.
> For never guiltless may I speak of him,
> The Incomprehensible! save when with awe
> I praise him, and with Faith that inly feels; ll. 54-60

In the end, Coleridge does assert a positive faith based on sanctified feeling which is consonant with Sara's piety. In sum, "The Eolian Harp" documents Coleridge's move from Deism and a rational definition of religion to a personal, emotional apprehension of faith through appreciation of nature. In Paris' words, "Love and imagination have been more intimately connected with religious faith, and their significance has been enriched by the comparison with their opposite."[4]

Comparison, however, does not completely describe the process of evaluation. Resolution of tension seems more appropriate. Both of Coleridge's assertions are a response to a similar environment and their development follows a similar process. In fact, without a very subtle understanding of the whole poem, it is easy to overlook the distinction between the two assertions; even assume that they are congruent if not identical. Their qualities do not lead easily to a comparison. Some motivation is necessary. Until Sara's remonstrance, Coleridge feels no tension. His speculations follow one another freely. But when his wife objects, a tension is created. That tension is at once a moral obligation to reconcile his speculations to the standard Sara represents and an obligation to Sara to justify his personal feelings. The first obligation provides the intellectual interest of the poem, the second its dramatic movement.

It is significant that he does not simply disavow his speculations. While that would resolve the dramatic conflict, it would indicate an abandonment of all the poetic values he has posited. His evaluation involves more than candling his speculative eggs with Sara's standard light. His criteria include (in addition to a sense of orthodoxy, Sara and moral obligation) a sense of feeling and the value of poetic expression. His criteria balance his personal needs with his sense of obligation. His poetic sense as well as his moral sense must be simultaneously satisfied. And poetic sense demands a satisfying emotional solution. The value of the poem would be significantly diminished if, for example, he simply ended the poem with the maudlin, pious sentiments rife in his early poetry. While obsequious orthodoxy might satisfy the dramatic tension of the poem, it would hardly satisfy his philosophic inquiry. It is to Coleridge's credit that he could find a compromise that would both resolve the tension and be meaningful. There is no doubt that Coleridge was uncomfortable with the pantheistic qualities of the poem.[5] But more important, the qualities that form the basis for rejection reflect Coleridge's acceptance of the need for personal gratification. Paris, in evaluating Coleridge's statements, establishes what he believes to be parts of Coleridge's criteria. They emphasize the emotional value of love and vision. The abstract, vain vision is rejected on the basis of several qualities, not simply on the basis of its unorthodoxy. It is a "rejection of introspection and metaphysical speculation as the path to God."[6]

The earlier vision of "love, imagination and religious faith" remains undiminished. What Coleridge rejects, says Paris, is "the sterile process by which he [Coleridge] arrived at them [the second assertion], and he rejects the pride which leads men to believe that they can intellectually apprehend the nature of God."[7] "The Eolian Harp" then rejects reason. Moreover, Paris sees one objectionable quality of the second vision as vanity. His definition of that vanity is significant; "It is vain because it cannot satisfy the most importunate of man's needs, the needs of the heart."[8] If this is so, Coleridge acknowledges the inadequacies of the elaborately rational, metaphysical argumentation seen earlier in his lay sermons. And the spirit of the poem reflects a significant change in Coleridge's attitude.

In "The Eolian Harp" then, Coleridge combined elements to satisfy his opposed needs. Style is the primary tool he used to combine them in a way that would satisfy his emotional needs and moral sense. As Walter Jackson Bate suggests, Coleridge used the "conversational" style to investigate unorthodox viewpoints; the desultory, tentative mode of presentation in the conversation poems permitted Coleridge to explore uncomfortable beliefs without accepting them; Coleridge could always say he was only musing,not advocating.[9] The ambiguity of his retractions provides good evidence of his success; much of the debate to define Coleridge's position would not be necessary were it not for his indefinite reference in his retraction. And while it may plague the critic, it probably satisfied Coleridge. While the retraction fended

off criticism by being general enough to encompass any statement, it did not adamantly refuse any one particular statement. Nor did it deny the total imaginative quality of the poem. It provided Coleridge a middle ground between denial and acceptance that he could negotiate so well.

Bate's observation seemed accurate and prompted a search for other stylistic evidence of Coleridge's uncertainties. That search reveals that Coleridge not only cautiously qualified his assertions in individual poems (as he did in "The Eolian Harp") but that he also characterized the poetic mode in a way that restricted any poetic statement's value. And those restrictions are a direct attempt to relieve his sense of moral obligation.

Coleridge unconsciously characterizes the poetic mode by its place of most frequent operation, a secluded dell. Quick reflection will remind the reader just how frequently Coleridge retires to a private, natural setting to write poetry. Of course that seclusion is an old poetic convention capitalized on by the romantics.[10] And of course Coleridge's poetry depends on natural stimulation. Yet for Coleridge, isolation serves as much as a shield against claims of personal indulgence as it serves as inspiration. Coleridge's poetic dell, like the Pantisocratic dell, is a place where the "wizard passions" can "weave an holy spell." His new dell is singularly poetic. And Coleridge accepts the poetic nature of the dell. He does not try to justify it with reason. But like the Pantisocratic dell, it must maintain its isolation to exist. Or at least Coleridge must recognize the limitations of that mode to ensure his moral security.

One is immediately struck by the similarity of environments in "The Eolian Harp" and "Reflections on Having Left a Place of Retirement" (1795). On the obvious level, both poems are written in and about the same geographical location and the physical details emphasized, too, are similar. But most important, the qualities of the two environments are similar. And the emphasis, by repetition, suggests the importance of those qualities to Coleridge.

In "The Eolian Harp," Coleridge is close to nature. The first section of "The Eolian Harp" documents Coleridge's pleasure derived from intimate natural sensations that sweep over his senses. That pleasure approaches Adam's in Eden. Jasmine and myrtle commingle with the man-made structure of Coleridge's cot to make a love-bower not unlike Adam and Eve's vegetative bower in Paradise Lost. Those plants, too, indicate the blessings of the house and its environs; the jasmine and myrtle that cover his house are "Meet Emblems of Innocence and Love," the dominant qualities in Eden. The parallel between Coleridge's valley and Eden in Paradise Lost is so striking that it suggests that Coleridge was perhaps conscious of what he was delineating. Regardless, there is no doubt this is Eden. Nature nourishes Coleridge both with sensation--they lead to his love of the world and his sense of God--and with physical sustenence (we all know what the bean fields are for). Even the "stilly murmer of the distant Sea/Tells us of silence;" it consecrates the atmosphere just as the hushed tones of the cathedral inspire an awful reverence.

"Reflections on Having Left a Place of Retirement" begins just as "The Eolian Harp," with a description of Coleridge's closeness to nature and his joy at its benevolence. It is represented by his "tallest rose" that "Peep'd at the chamber window." Again the sea's holy murmer-chant is ubiquitious. Both the emblematic myrtle and jasmine are there, and the landscape in general refreshes Coleridge. Coleridge elaborates on the goodness of the dell, relating the effect it has on a merchant:

> A wealthy son of Commerce saunter[ed] by,
> Bristowa's citizen: methought, it calm'd
> His thirst of idle gold, and made him muse
> With wiser feelings: for he paus'd, and look'd
> With a pleas'd sadness. . . .
> . . .
> And sigh'd, and said, it was a Blessed Place. ll. 11-17

Coleridge, even more sensitive to the benevolence of nature, attunes his soul to the "unearthy ministry" and concludes he is blessed--"And we <u>were</u> Blessed" (l. 15).

Hard by and appendaged to the valley was a "stony mount," not unlike the one Moses climbed. Going to the top, Coleridge finds it a temple or an oracle built by God:

> Oh! what a goodly scene! . . .
> . . .
> It seem'd like Omnipresence! God methought,
> Had built him there a Temple; the whole World
> Seem'd <u>imag'd</u> in its vast circumference. ll. 29-40

And in his responsive mood, Coleridge enjoys the vision and the worship. He is even able to bless this time and say, what was so often difficult for him, that he was glad to exist, "No <u>wish</u> profan'd my overwhelmed heart./Blest hour! It was a luxury,--to be!" (ll. 41-42). At this moment, in this spot, as in "The Eolian Harp," Coleridge seems to have gratified

his needs; his bruised psyche is nurtured, his Christian sentiments are supported and he is not burdened by a sense of responsibility. He is, of all things, happy!

Echos of lines should by now suggest that the environment of "The Eolian Harp" and "Reflections . . . " are a more personal projection of the environment of "Pantisocracy." And the gratification achieved is that sought in "Pantisocracy," which was essentially emotional.

Regrettably, that gratification is impermanent. Coleridge continues in "Reflections . . . :"

> Ah! quiet Dell! dear Cot, and Mount sublime!
> I was constrain'd to quit you. Was it right,
> While my unnumber'd brethren toil'd and bled,
> That I should dream away the entrusted hours
> On rose-leaf beds, pampering the coward heart
> With feelings all too delicate for use? ll. 43-48

Again moral obligation has presented its demands to Coleridge and again he abandons his happiness: "I therefore go, and join head, heart, and hand,/Active and firm, to fight the bloodless fight/Of Science, Freedom, and the Truth in Christ" (ll. 60-62). His allegiance to "Science, Freedom and Truth in Christ" is a less convincing statement than that in lines 43-46. The social obligation to his "unnumber'd Brethern" is at least a more concrete motivation than the vacuous symbolism of "Science, Freedom, and Truth in Christ." (That obligation is expressed even more clearly in "Addressed To a Young Man of Fortune" (1796)--"What Nature makes thee mourn, she bids thee heal!") Contrarily, the ringing generalizations seem more to summarize the burden he felt, that stifling burden of ubiquitious moral obligation which impared his poetic achievement and personal fulfillment.

Back in the prosaic world of men, all he is left with is the consolation of memories as in "Sonnet: To The River Otter." Yet, he affirms the value of those memories as a positive good:

> Yet oft when after honourable toil
> Rests the tir'd mind, and waking loves to dream,
> My spirit shall revisit thee, dear Cot!
> . . .
> And I shall sigh fond wishes. . . . ll. 63-67

And while he wants to return to his valley, "the time is not yet," and will not be until the apocalypse, "Speed it, O Father! Let thy Kingdom come!" (l. 71). His woes seem permanent. Yet, he does recognize that it was his choice to enter the vicious world where he lamented a condition he could not control in "Sonnet: To The River Otter." He actually chooses the life in "Reflections. . . . "

His choice is, however, motivated by moral sense. And it is moral sense that demands the isolation of the poetic world. He can have his pleasures in the poetic dell or poetic mode, but he must return to the "real" world. In the real world his poetic sustenance breaks down, his poetic feelings are "all to delicate for use." It is safe to say, then, that the characterization of the poetic dell, and Coleridge's poetic retreat, are the manifestation of the ever present opposition of poetic and moral needs. And it is only in this secluded environment that Coleridge can safely achieve the "poetic state" and even then he cannot remain.

Consider one other poem, "To a Young Friend" (1796). "To a Young Friend" begins with Coleridge again in nature, climbing a mount that pleases him. His path is "sublime" because it is so full of benevolent sensation and because

it presents an ever increasing vision, not restriction:

> How more than sweet, if some dear friend should bless
> The adventurous toil, and up the path sublime
> Now lead, now follow: the glad landscape round,
> Wide and more wide, increasing without bound! ll. 16-19

Coleridge then secludes himself in nature: "Beneath the cypress and a yew more dark,/Seated at ease on some smooth mossy rock;/ In social silence now" he can "Unlock/the treasur'd heart," (ll. 23-25) an important act to him. (This restriction of his openness to this environment reflects his fear of injury in the prosaic world.) Reflecting on the whole experience--nature, friendship, openness--he concludes that "It were a divine lot/To cheat our noons in a moralizing mood" (ll. 42-43).

But again his assertion of pleasure is followed by a downward movement, either of the two friends or of a spring that characterizes the innocence and pleasure of seclusion on the mountain. Although whatever descends carries some of its values with it, it returns to larger company and social responsibility. And though that lower place is not the prosaic world, it is a world where Coleridge has social obligations.

Coleridge was not satisfied only having expressed his pleasures on the mount. For moral security, he turns the poem into an allegory. The hill is the hill of knowledge. On it are many resting places and inspirations. He opens his soul to knowledge and drinks deep. This though is not enough. Though he may delight in learning on the hill, he must return to the world of obligation.

> Then when the mind hath drunk its fill of truth
> We'll discipline the heart to pure delight
> Rekindling sober joy's domestic flame. ll. 72-74

Sober joy, remember, is the term he has applied to manhood and responsibility. And domestic life is inferior to life on the hill. He is bringing something from the hill to "rekindle" his domestic pleasure.

In these poems, then, Coleridge has restricted or defined the values of the poetic mode. And he pursued his other works in this period with that restriction as a given.

CHAPTER FIVE

"Annus Mirabilis" is the term applied to Coleridge's most poetically productive period. It is a particularly fit descriptive term, but it can lead seductively to innacurate ideas of the nature of the period. "Annus Mirabilis" correctly indicates the short span of the period--March, 1797 to September, 1798 according to E. K. Chambers. And it implies the significance of the work produced. But unfortunately the term also suggests a spontaneous outflowing of poetry, isolated from Coleridge's other work both by time and mode, an idea which the poems themselves help to foster. "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner," "Christabel," "Lewti" and "Kubla Khan," for example, are all written in a style distinct from Coleridge's "typical" style. Those poems, then, can lend the idea that the "Annus Mirabilis" was not a poetic peak, but rather a high plateau, lost in the clouds and separated from the surrounding poetic landscape on either side by a sheer precipice. The period was not as level or unique as this idea suggests. Within the period, Coleridge's poetic confidence wavered; in the early part of the period his confidence was ascending with the not unexpected result of great poetry; as the period progressed, his poetic confidence subsided. Despite this fact, his poetic production continued undiminished for some time. (Perhaps their greatness should be attributed to his anguish and poetic momentum).

It is true that the difference in poetic altitude between his earlier poetry and a poem like "Rime of the Ancient Mariner" is enormous. But just because the latter's production is cloud-shrouded and perhaps closer to divine does not mean that it is unrelated to his earlier works. The earlier ground he worked is of the same substance as the solid granite of his greatest works; in the later works the material is more solidly congealed but not different. His same concerns, difficulties and defenses are present. Finally, his arrival in this period, though rapid, was still by degree; he was not flown by a new Pegasus to a plateau, but rode his old one up the side of Parnassus.

Although "This Lime-Tree Bower My Prison" (June, 1797) was written one-half year after "To a Young Friend" and "Addressed to a Young Man of Fortune" (December, 1796), two years after "The Eolian Harp" and "Reflections on Having Left a Place of Retirement" and four years after "Sonnet: To The River Otter," it still represents a continuity of thought proceeding from these earlier poems. The poetry written in the intervening six months, as much as time itself, disguises the similarity of thought in "This Lime-Tree Bower My Prison" and the earlier poems. The poems of that six month period, though important in their own right, are less distinguished. Representative of the period are: "To a Friend Who had Declared his Intention of Writing No More Poetry" (31 December 1796), "Ode to the Departing Year" (31 December 1796), "The Raven" (pre-February 1797)[1] and "To the Rev. George Coleridge" (attributed by Coleridge to 26 May 1797 and first published

as the dedication to the poems of 1797). But despite the intervention of time and sundry pursuits, Coleridge again evaluates his poetic mode in "This Lime-Tree Bower My Prison," just as he did in the earlier poems.

"This Lime-Tree Bower My Prison" takes as its beginning a restatement of the conclusion of "To The River Otter" and "The Eolian Harp." The former begins and the latter ends with an assertion of the Hartlian process. Fairly explicit parallels clearly define the common ground. But "This Lime-Tree Bower My Prison" continues from a statement of the Eolian process as a phenomenon limited to the sublime poetic dell to assert its general applicability in the world.

Coleridge's mood at the outset of the poem echos that in his earlier sonnet "To The River Otter." In that sonnet, he longingly celebrates the ability of nature in and surrounding the river to nourish his memory with "sweet sensations," sensations that later may sooth his cares. In "This Lime-Tree Bower My Prison," Coleridge laments that he is cut off from another place of pleasure: " . . . I have lost/ Beauties and feelings, such as would have been/Most sweet to my remembrance even when age/Had dimm'd mine eyes to blindness! . . ." (ll. 2-5). Presumably the same nurturing process found in "To The River Otter" exists but he is unable to partake of it because he cannot view the sublime scenery that would inspire and fill his memory. Coleridge mentally follows his friends over the landscape describing the beauties that would stimulate him were he able to go. He takes a moment to compare the benefits of nature with the

woes of its absence. His friend Charles Lamb is a case in point; Charles, he assumes, is refreshed by nature, since he has been "In the great City pent," where he must endure "Evil and pain/and strange calamity . . . " (ll. 30-32). The descent of the sun turns his reflection to the feelings of his friends. He finds that they are transported by the scenery as he was before, "Struck with a deep joy . . . / silent and with swimming sense" (ll. 38-39). In this elevated state the landscape changes: "Yea, gazing round/On the wide landscape gaze till all doth seem/Less gross than bodily" (ll. 38-40). Nature has become less material or general ("gross") and more singular or unified ("bodily"). Viewed by a sensitive observer, nature images the divine. The landscape is "Of such hues/As veil the Almighty Spirit, when yet he makes/Spirits perceive his presence" (ll. 41-43). The eolian process has again worked, this time inspiring Coleridge's friends.

Coleridge's vicarious experience of that inspiration leads him to a new awareness: inspiration visits both Coleridge and Lamb, just as the sun shines on both, even though he has not been able to enjoy the pleasing sensations of his special place; careful observation reveals that nature drapes even the lime-tree bower with beauty--"Nor in this bower,/This little lime-tree bower, have I not mark'd/Much that has sooth'd me" (ll. 45-47). All that is necessary is the proper spirit to perceive it:

> . . . Henceforth I shall know
> That Nature ne'er deserts the wise and pure;
> No plot so narrow, be but Nature there,

> No waste so vacant, but may well employ
> Each faculty of sense, and keep the heart
> Awake to Love and Beauty! ll. 59-64.

And in a wider statement, he concludes that all sensation contains divinity: "No sound is dissonant which tells of Life" (l. 76). In this perspective his incarceration is a good thing: "Sometimes/'Tis well to be bereft of promis'd good,/That we may lift the soul, and contemplate/With lively joy the joys we cannot share" (ll. 64-67). Coleridge, then, comes to recognize that all nature is consecrated and that sensory experience of it leads to awareness of God. Where before, Coleridge could only be influenced by the divinity of nature in certain sublime areas (we can enumerate them--The River Otter, the proposed Pantisocratic dell and his poetic dell by his cot), he now believes that the benevolent influence of nature exists in the world as a whole. In the end, the unification of what Coleridge previously saw as separate environments is represented by the rook which flies over both Coleridge's and Lamb's heads, through both environments, disappearing into the sun, the emblem of life's unity.

This process of generalization in the poem concerns more than extending the accessibility of divine nature throughout the world (contrasted with its accessibility limited to certain sublime environments). Coleridge is also speaking of the ability to have his poetic visions outside of his poetic dell. Remember, before the value of his "blessed place" was not just its inspiring beauty, but also the protection it afforded; he could feel morally assured only when he isolated his poetic effort to the seclusion of the dell. The original

separation, then, between Lamb's location and Coleridge's is not geographical and aesthetic but psychic and moral. And the awareness Coleridge reaches is not that "Nature ne'er deserts the wise and pure," but rather that the outside world may be seen as infused with meaning; it may be viewed imaginatively. Poetic perception is everywhere justified. Thus, "This Lime-Tree Bower My Prison" witnesses Coleridge's romantic debut; it witnesses his acceptance of the poetic mode.

Given his care in the past to restrict his speculations to his poetic dell, the assurance of "This Lime-Tree Bower My Prison" is striking. Part of his assurance is philosophical; he had at the time of this poem come to accept Berkeleyan idealism.[2] That belief permitted him to accept his visions as a divinely consecrated source of truth. However, even more assurance is generated by Lamb's assent to Coleridge's poetic experience. Lamb's ability to experience the same poetic sensations as Coleridge reassures Coleridge. Lamb's correspondent response to nature is proof enough for Coleridge to accept the universal validity of the eolian process.

But validation of Coleridge's poetic mode depends on a non-existent incident. Lamb's feelings that Coleridge records are projected by Coleridge. Essentially Coleridge uses Lamb (and to a lesser extent Lamb's companions) as puppet characters to mouth vindication of his own hopes. Consider again the movement of the poem. Coleridge watches with certainty as the party leaves him: "They meanwhile/ . . . /On springy heath, along the hill-top edge,/Wander in

gladness" (ll. 5-7). But from there on, he is speculating; they "wind down, perchance,/To that still roaring dell, of which I told" (ll. 8-9, emphasis mine). And it soon becomes apparent that the dell "of which I told" is not merely the physical dell-full of good sensations. Rather it is the visionary landscape of "Reflections on Having Left a Place of Retirement" and "The Eolian Harp." Present are both the secluded vally--"O'er wooded, narrow deep/And only speckled by the mid-day sun" (ll. 10-11)--and the mount of vision--where they "View again/The many-steepled tract" (ll. 22). Coleridge has placed his friends in a mental environment by the confusion of metaphor and fact. The facts of the valley correspond to the metaphorical image of a nurturing society. At this point he projects his feelings on Lamb:

> . . . But thou, methinks, most glad,
> My gentle-hearted Charles! for thou hast pined
> And hunger'd after nature, many a year,
> In the great City pent, winning thy way
> With sad yet patient soul, through evil and pain
> And strange calamity! ll. 27-32

This description parallels Coleridge's own in "To The River Otter" and "Reflections on Having Left a Place of Retirement," where he is hurt and seeks nature to assuage his cares. One can imagine how Lamb's expression of the same feelings could provide verification of Coleridge's sense of unjust suffering, even if those feelings are only projected in a poem.

Next, Coleridge's friends have the same vision he had in "Reflections on Having Left a Place of Retirement." Though he qualifies his narration to suggest that their vision is only a possibility, his language disguises the

qualification: "So my friend/Struck with deep joy may stand . . ." (ll. 37-38). "May" is ambiguous; in this use it seems to mean "is permitted" more than "might possibly." He still encourages the illusion that Charles Lamb, and not he, S. T. Coleridge, had the vision. The fact that others perceive the world in the same fashion as he does constitutes a vindication of his poetic mode.

This vindication spurs Coleridge to assert the similarity of Lamb's location and his own, bridging the gap with the sun's light. Coleridge, remember, is still in the Bower-Prison, in the empirical world. Lamb is in the imaginative world, embodied in the landscape of the dell. When Coleridge asserts the identity of his and Lamb's locations, that they are both filled with the same nature, he is actually infusing the empirical world with the values of the imaginative. Again, using the dell's ambiguous image, he imaginatively vindicates his vision. What he ostensably offers is a logical demonstration of the similarity of two environments. What he actually gives is an assertion that his poetic perception need not be limited. Coleridge's conclusion ("Henceforth I shall know/That Nature ne'er deserts the wise and pure"), then, really means "I really am wise and pure, henceforth my vision of nature need not be restricted." After all, he was the one who had abandoned nature in the dell, abandoned his poetic perception.

The image of the rook then unifies Coleridge and Lamb in agreement on Coleridge's principles. Coleridge blesses the bird and sends it to Lamb, for whom it has a charm. In sum,

Coleridge infuses the world of the poem with his values and has Charles nod his assent to this conception.

It is true that Coleridge's justification depended on an artificial event. But all that was required to vindicate it was Lamb's approval of the poem at its reading. That would imply his assent and remove Coleridge's uncertainties. Presumably, Coleridge got the needed approval. The poem then justifies for Coleridge the idea of a world infused with divine values and the ideal of poetic perception of the world. And, as will be seen, such an affirmation of poetic values is a necessary preface to the "Annus Mirabilis."

Because of their distinctive qualities, "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner" (1797-1798) and "Kubla Khan" (date uncertain) are usually offered as primary proof to defend the idea of the "Annus Mirabilis" as a unique period; critics consistently note the qualities of these two poems (as well as "Christabel") that set them apart from the rest of Coleridge's work. And rightly so, for this highly imaginative, assertive poetry contrasts with the fairly concrete, desultory tone of Coleridge's other work. But unfortunately this emphasis often leads to study of the poems and the period as unique, having little to do with the whole of Coleridge's poetry and the continuity of thought it expresses. For example, some critics seem content to take Coleridge's explanation of the one--"Kubla Khan"--as an opium dream or to create a mistique about the unfathomable ways the imagination operates in both. In either case, the poems are attributed to irreproducible or fleeting causes which deny the possibility of any continuity. At any rate,

these explanations fail to come to terms with Coleridge's poetic corpus.[3] This is regrettable because the two poems are revealing; they are valuable imaginative investigations of the tension between personal indulgence in imagination and social obligation that has come to characterize Coleridge's poetry. And while they express a confidence that is nowhere else seen in his works, they still use poetic defenses to protect his assertion.

Of the two poems, "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner" is the most clearly related to the whole of Coleridge's poetry; in it he defines the limits of his poetic powers imposed by social obligation. The first hint of his intent comes from an analysis of the poem that enjoys general critical assent. This interpretation first notes that, in the world of the poem, there are spirits and values beyond sensual or empirical knowledge: "The epigraph from Thomas Burnet's Archaelogicae Philosophicae emphasizes the central premise . . . the mystery surrounding the human soul."[4] Knowledge of these values is not easily gained. And an orthodox life would never bring a man in contact with this higher knowledge. Therefore, the mariner must trespass convention to gain the knowledge. The mariner,

> like romantic heros, only by slaying the Albatross, a guilty, perhaps antisocial act, can he experience a relationship with these unknown powers.
>
> In this act, the hero is either freed by his act, finding the social-moral restraint in err, or his act is against a meaningless world of no significance, or as in Mariner, the hero acquires a deep knowledge of the metaphysical basis for morality, which others may follow, though only superficially.[5]

Needless to say, this interpretation mirrors Coleridge's value

system. Social obligation, represented by the mariner's responsibility for his shipmates, is countered by a need for new knowledge and significance. The acquisition of knowledge entails a definitely antisocial act, whith its dire consequences. The only choices the mariner has are the same as Coleridge saw--uninspired, socially acceptable behavior, or new knowledge, a more significant life and certain moral censure.

The consequences of the mariner's act are great; he pays for his awareness with severe pains. And those pains are less physical privation, which he shares with his shipmates, than the stings of moral censure; the pains of conscience he bears alone. Since "Death-in-life" wins the mariner, he must carry his burden alone, fully self-conscious--just as he will be in "Frost at Midnight." The death and supernatural animation of the crew chiefly spur on his sense of guilt. The men's deaths poetically point to the mariner's act:

> Four times fifty living men,
> (And I heard nor sigh nor groan)
> They dropped down one by one.
>
> The souls did from their bodies fly,--
> They fled to bliss or woe!
> And every soul, it passed me by,
> Like the whizz of my cross-bow! ll. 216-223

And a moral comparison is made between the mariner and his comrades:

> The many men, so beautiful!
> And they all dead did lie:
> And a thousand thousand slimy things
> Lived on; and so did I. ll. 236-239

The men's eyes are the eye of the mariner's own conscience:

> An orphan's curse would drag to hell
> A spirit from on high;
> But oh! more horrible than that

> Is the curse in a dead man's eye!
> Seven days, seven nights, I saw that curse,
> And yet I could not die. ll. 257-263

And again:

> All stood together on the deck,
> For a charnel-dungeon fitter:
> All fixed on me their stony eyes,
> That in the Moon did glitter.
>
> The pang, the curse, with which they died,
> Had never passed away:
> I could not draw my eyes from theirs,
> Nor turn them up to pray. ll. 434-441

The mariner's situation, then, is similar to Coleridge's. Coleridge is now aware that poetic assertion leads to new gratification, but an assertion is also anti-social action. And to Coleridge, the consequences of any anti-social action were as severe as they were for the mariner. Too, the mariner's responsibilities extend indefinitely: his reappearing compulsion to tell his tale is continued penance and enforced socially utile action. The compulsion and the memory haunt him--an appropriate psychological punishment. And his example and tale are a moral proverb. Coleridge's gloss makes these values explicit: "And ever and anon through out his future life an agony constraineth him to travel from land to land; And to teach by his own example, love and reverence to all things that God made and loveth."

"The Rime of the Ancient Mariner" embodies Coleridge's values in another way. The mariner, despite his anti-social act, is seen as a penitent promethian hero, suffering for knowledge's sake. He is truly contrite, not at all a Faustian figure, a likely interpretation Coleridge would like his actions to have.

Consider now the stylistic qualities of "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner." Its world is highly imaginative and removed from the real world. The technique might be called poetic distancing since it serves to isolate poetic assertions from any reference to the real world. (This quality seems typical of Coleridge's poetic defenses in the past.) Could Coleridge, for example, have been comfortable recounting "The Rime of the Bristol Mariner" who left from that port and now lives in the lake country? It is doubtful. That concrete a story would present a problem, not because it would restrict the use of supernatural machinery that is an integral part of the poem, but rather because it would place the moral conclusions of the poem in the real world where they would be untenable. No knowledge could justify the death of two hundred men: the mariner would probably be lynched by an irate mob.

The poem is not distanced from the empirical world soley by its style. Within the poem itself, the mariner's metaphysical discoveries are isolated. They are made in a world which does not represent the real world. In opposition to what some critics maintain, the mariner's ship does not, like the Pequod, represent the organized social world. The "Harbour," "Kirk," "Hill" and "Lighthouse," which the ship leaves, stand for social-religious-political institutions and their security. When he leaves land, the mariner enters another imaginative environment ruled by the sun and the moon, representatives of supernal power. The ship is a society, but a special society. When the mariner returns to the harbour, all remnants and pieces of it, of the imaginative world, shatter and disappear. The two worlds

cannot coexist; the infusing angels, the transformed ship, the world altered by the mariner's vision all disintegrate. The mariner's actions are appropriate to these facts. In the imaginative world on shipboard, the mariner is fascinated by his visions that discover the "metaphysical basis for morality." But, on his return to the harbour, his fascination leaves him. He is truly contrite and desperately frightened--"O shrieve me, shrieve me, Holy man!" he exclaims (l. 574). "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner" then is an autobiographical fantasy in which Coleridge explored the ultimate limits of his poetic mode, and having discovered them, covers his speculation with poetic protection; he does so by projecting his fantasy in a highly imaginative environment, disguising the connection between the mariner and himself, and between the imaginative seascape and late eighteenth-century England. Beverly Fields' comments help to clarify Coleridge's tactics: "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner"

> . . . was Coleridge's second sustained attempt, after Osario and before Christabel, at self-recognition and self control under the pretext of an elaboration of the nature of evil and within the narrative framework of the paradise lost story. . . . [The poem is complete because in it Coleridge found] a narrative device for expressing brilliantly the essentially unfinished business he undertook repeatedly in his poems. The ancient and durable notion of the man condemned to live forever and to relate forever the circumstances of his experience is perfectly suited to the repetitious compulsion that forced Coleridge to write again and again different versions of the tension between the fantasies of usurpation and the fantasies of passivity.[6]

Of course Beverly Fields is speaking of sexual "usurpation"

and "passivity." But the structure she discusses is equally significant to this author's definition of usurpation and passivity. Usurpation could be Coleridge's poetic self-assertion (flavored with negative moral connotation). And passivity could be his effacement and acknowledgement of moral responsibilities. The mariner's compulsive repetition suits Coleridge's frequent outbursts to justify himself. In the context of his whole career, "various versions of the tension" quite aptly describe his poems. "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner," then, typifies his poetic struggles and his stylistic defenses of the poetic mode. And since "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner" is, perhaps, his most positive poetic assertion, it appropriately belongs to the period of "This Lime-Tree Bower My Prison." Indeed, without the confidence expressed in the earlier poem, Coleridge could never have written so daring an exploration of his tension.

The dating of "Kubla Khan" has been controversial. Coleridge claims it was written in "The summer of 1797." His editor, Ernest Hartley Coleridge, claims that May, 1798 is a more likely period. Others hold out for yet a later date. This author can offer no new external proof of any date. But, on the basis of content, he can assert that it is definitely related to "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner," probably coming shortly after it. The 1798 date, as will be seen, is most probable.

If recent criticism of the poem indicates one thing, it is that "Kubla Khan" is particularly resistant to explication. Though possible sources have been found for many of the images, their significance is hardly penetrated. So it shall be. It

is sufficient to see the first part of the poem as a description of an enclosed vale of pleasure, and the second part of the poem as Coleridge's response to the vale.

It might be tempting to interpret several images (the River Alph as the spring of poesy, for example), but it is enough to recognize two qualities of the garden, its pleasure and its enclosure. Both these qualities associated in a pastoral image by now should arouse suspicion. In the past, the conglomerate represented Coleridge's world of feeling and poetry. This critic believes the same is true in "Kubla Khan." In its widest outline, the vale of the Khan is a representation of Coleridge's magical world; as in "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner," it is an extremely imaginative representation, far removed from reality. Perhaps this representation serves the same purpose in both poems, to protect Coleridge from fears of censure, to remove his speculative vision to a safe world.

We may never know what Coleridge meant by the images in "Kubla Khan." The obscurity of his images suggest that whatever they represent, it is something personal. That interpretation would be consonant with Beverly Fields' analysis: "Apparently the poetry-making power in Coleridge was the ability to transform his unconscious tension into objective expression, to move freely between the conscious and unconscious parts of his experience, so that he could speak, as a man of intense sensibility, to other men, about the inescapable facts of the human situation.[7] The content of the garden of pleasure could express the values he has hidden there. It is unfortunate that they are so well disguised. But perhaps that is an indication of the dangers they held for Coleridge.

The second stanza of "Kubla Khan" records Coleridge's delight with, and desire for, the fields of pleasure; if the Abyssinian maid's symphony could renew his power, he could reconstruct the now lost pleasure-palace with song. And its recreation would be a delight to Coleridge. Significantly, the dome, and perhaps the dell of poesy, is gone. And Coleridge lacks the power to recreate it. Foreshadowing "Dejection," the dell is lost because a part of Coleridge's mental capacities is lost: "Could I revive within me/Her symphony and song,/To such a deep delight 'twould win me,/That with music loud and long,/ I would build that dome in air,/That sunny dome! those caves of ice!" (ll. 42-47). The next five lines record society's response to Coleridge's desires. They see him as dangerous.[8] "And all who heard [the song] should see them [the dome and caves] there,/And all should cry, Beware! Beware!/His flashing eyes, his floating hair!/Weave a circle round him thrice,/And close your eyes with holy dread" (ll. 48-52). And why? Because he is inspired: "For he on honey-dew hath fed,/And drunk the milk of Paradise" (ll. 53-54).

"Kubla Khan" then embodies Coleridge's statement in "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner;" the poet is seer, a man intimate with the workings of the universe. But because of his enthusiasm he is dangerous to society. Too, "Kubla Khan" foreshadows "Dejection" (1802). As in the later poem, the vale of poetry is lost and Coleridge cannot reconstruct it. Style and content, then, date "Kubla Khan" with the "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner" and "Dejection." The most appropriate date is between the two, May 1798.

Coleridge's assertions in "Frost at Midnight" (1798) are more guarded than they were in "This Lime-Tree Bower My Prison," which suggests that his poetic confidence had begun to subside. Yet, his confidence is far from gone, it is just lower-keyed. More revealing are the subsequent revisions of the poem. They show explicitly how his poetic confidence was destroyed through progressive years. The three revisions (1809, 1828 and 1829) retrench from, omit, qualify and disclaim what he asserted in 1798. For this reason "Frost at Midnight" is a particularly valuable poem.

"Frost at Midnight" is written in a special environment reminiscent of Coleridge's poetic dell. He is relaxed, sitting in relative solitude, observing phenomena around him. Of course this special environment does serve as a good setting for a poem of reflection. But it also suggests that the opinions Coleridge promulgates in the poem make him slightly uncomfortable; though he has seemingly justified his poetic mode of speculation, he is still restricting his activity to the wee hours of the morning, alone in place and time apart. There is one distinctive quality in his environment that has a profound effect on him: its calmness. It is so silent that Coleridge feels extremely self-conscious, always an uncomfortable state for Coleridge and one which characterizes "Frost at Midnight." That self-consciousness forces Coleridge to face the possibility that his visions are entirely subjective. His responses indicate his degree of confidence.

Coleridge, in the state described, lets his mind idly wander until it fixes on the one variable phenomenon in the room:

> Sea, hill, and wood
> This populous village! Sea, and hill, and wood,
> With all the numberless goings-on of life,
> Inaudible as dreams! the thin blue flame
> Lies on my low-burnt fire, and quivers not;
> Only that film, which fluttered on the grate,
> Still flutters there, the sole unquiet thing. ll. 10-16

The fascination it holds for him reaches consciousness and he muses on it: "Methinks, its motion in this hush of nature/Gives it dim sympathies with me who live,/Making it a companionable form,/With which I can hold commune. Idle thought!" (ll. 17-20). Idle thought?, perhaps. But Coleridge seems unconcerned by it. In fact, he seems pleased by the act of imagination or will:

> But still the living spirit in our frame
> That loves not to behold a lifeless thing,
> Transfuses into all its own delights,
> Its own volition, sometimes with deep faith
> And sometimes with fantastic playfulness.
> Ah me! amus'd by no such curious toys
> Of the self-watching subtilizing mind,
> How often in my early school-boy days
> With most believing superstitious wish,
> Presageful, have I gazed upon the bars,
> To watch that fluttering stranger! ll. 21-30

His mind impregnates the object with human significance (in a manner not unlike the imagination operates in his later definition). He responds to his mind's activities, sometimes "with deep faith," other times with "fantastic playfulness" or yet in youth when he was not self-conscious ("Amus'd by no such toys/ of the self-watching subtilizing mind"), he could believe his fantasies out of superstitious desire. He is able to recognize each attitude. He is not misled by them. And he enjoys his indulgence. Presumably his enjoyment does no harm.

But this confident expression is from the 1798 edition of the poem. Through successive revisions of the poem, what is now confident awareness of the powers of the mind becomes an

acknowledgement of the mind's penchant for fantasy and a condemnation of himself for his subjectivism.

In the edition in the Poetical Register, (1812) he still delights in the pleasures and powers of the mind demonstrated by the same incident, but awareness of possible censure has begun to creep in: the flame is a "companionable form"

> With which I can hold commune: haply hence,
> That still the living spirit in our frame,
> Which loves not to behold a lifeless thing,
> Transfuses into all things its own Will,
> And its own pleasures; ll. 20-24

Word order and choice have been changed. The idea of "will" now preceeds mention of "pleasure" (which is seemingly only appended). And the word "volition" (previously implying his assent to his mind's activity) is replaced by the stronger word will. Rather than a passive act, the projection is now an active, controlled effort. Coleridge presumably tries to indicate that he will not let his imagination run away. In the same edition, Coleridge has included an explicit apology for his personal indulgence and deviation from common sense: his mind,

> . . . Stealing pardon from our common sense
> Smiles, as self-scornful, to disarm the scorn
> For those wild reliques of our childish Thought,
> That flit about, oft go, and oft return
> Not uninvited. ll. 26-28

Also included is a by now familiar distinction between his youthful pleasures and his present moral obligation; that distinction is made to partially distance himself from his "childish thought"--"Ah, there was a time . . . " he continues (l. 30). Still, the thoughts "return/Not uninvited" and they do evoke a sigh of pleasure.

In the 1828 edition of "Frost at Midnight" (in Sybilline Leaves), Coleridge abbreviates the section under discussion, possibly because of discomfort with the assertions. The flame is now a companionable form,

> To which the living spirit in our frame,
> That loves not to behold a lifeless thing,
> Transfuses its own pleasures, its own will,
> And makes a toy of Thought. ll. 20-23.

While pleasure and will are reinverted, the sense is that both qualities are projected. Their inclusion is entirely subjective and bad. Such indulgence threatens derangement. As indicated in the new line, "And makes a toy of thought," the power of the mind is fallen, it misleads.

The final version of "Frost at Midnight" (Sybilline Leaves, 1829) is by far the most negative. Coleridge deprecates his own indulgence:

> Methinks its [the flame's] motion in this hush of nature
> Gives it dim sympathies with me who live,
> Making it a companionable form
> Whose puny flaps and freaks the idling Spirit
> By its own moods interprets, every where
> Echo or mirror seeking itself,
> And makes a toy of Thought. ll. 17-23

Not only is his musing wrong, it is also egocentric. The syntax of the passage emphasizes Coleridge's weakness in a manner reminicient of his earlier effacements. Reading lines 18 and 19 leaves the impression that the "sympathies" and "companionable form" are leading to a comparison of the flame and Coleridge's spirit. Thus, when line 19 is read, the sense is that "puny flaps and freaks" perhaps refer to the "idling spirit." Of course the next line corrects that impression, but not until the words have had their effect. In the reader's mind, the

"puny flaps and freaks" are in some way indicative of Coleridge's spirit. Note, too, that it is the "idling spirit" that makes a toy of thought. It implies negative moral values that go back to "Quae Nocent Docent." And they are in marked contrast to the positive values of the idle mind in "The Eolian Harp" and "This Lime-Tree Bower My Prison." Where Coleridge's idle spirit before has led to beneficial receptiveness (as Wordsworth's did in "To His Sister"), it now serves as proof of his negligent attitude.

The next section of the poem remained unchanged throughout its publication. But its meaning is markedly influenced by the changes in the preceeding section. This section recounts how Coleridge's imagination was excited in youth by the superstition he mentions. Coleridge's fantasies produced superstitious expectations that

> . . . Stirred and haunted him
> With a wild pleasure. . . .
> . . .
> And so I brooded all the following morn,
> Awed by the stern preceptor's face, mine eye
> Fixed with mock study on my swimming book:
> Save if the door half opened, and I snatched
> A hasty glance, and still my heart leaped up,
> For still I hoped to see the stranger's face. ll. 31-41

The filmy-flame on the grate was sometimes called a "stranger" because superstitious belief had it that such a film indicated the approach of a visitor. In the early versions of "Frost at Midnight," the incident is offered as a tender scene characterizing the joys of imagination. In the last two versions, the incident serves as an object lesson. The remarks introducing the incident help to clarify this change in meaning. In the early versions, Coleridge's comments indicate his amusement

(ll. 20-23, 1828 version, above; 1829 version the same). In the later versions of "Frost at Midnight," the moral is clear. As he said in "Quae Nocent Docent," "Let follies past to future care incite" (l. 15). Do not let indulgence in feeling interfere with your work, "sage experience only comes with years" (l. 18). The thoughts expressed in the first two sections of the poem explain why he still wrote in the protected poetic mode. The possibility of subjectivism they presented was a definite threat to Coleridge. And as that threat caused him to retreat, he covered his retreat with his old technique of chronological disassociation.

The third section of "Frost at Midnight" is a description of the eolian process Coleridge hopes will instruct his son. Coleridge's own development--flawed by his enforced withdrawal from nature--is contrasted with his son's assured happiness. His son's intimacy with nature in their country home presumably will ensure the right stimulation which will instruct him in the ways of God.

> . . . I was reared
> In the great city, pent 'mid cloisters dim,
> And saw nought lovely but the sky and stars.
> But thou, my babe! shalt wander like a breeze
> By lakes and sandy shores [and other beautiful things]
> . . .
> . . . so shalt thou see and hear
> The lovely shapes and sounds intelligible
> Of that eternal language, which thy God
> Utters, who from eternity doth teach
> Himself in all, and all things in himself.
> Great universal Teacher! he shall mould
> Thy spirit, and by giving make it ask. ll. 51-64

And finally, with this assurance, Coleridge concludes the poem with a celebration of the pleasures that stem from eolian instruction.

The third and fourth sections of the poem are related to the first two by poetic logic that typifies the conversation poems. Their relation is indirect and desultory. There is a poetic logic to the transition. The flame and the baby are the only two animate objects in the room with Coleridge. Naturally Coleridge's attention would be directed toward one or the other. And his thoughts would naturally go from his own youth to his babe's. These two influences are present in all versions of the poem. But while these facts can account for the transition, they cannot explain why he sought a transition. Did he wish to state a relationship between his mind's activity, the subject of the first two sections, and the Hartlian system, the subject of the rest? In the case of the first two versions, the relationship can be seen as harmonious compliment. Coleridge first asserts his experience that shows the goodness of the imaginative frame of mind. Coleridge's assertion of his hopes for a system which produced his enlightened sensibilities follows quite naturally. In the last two versions, reconciliation is difficult. At first any relation seems tentative. The two statements have little to do with each other. Coleridge is in a difficult position. Surely he was aware that his denial of the imaginative act expressed in the second section undermined all justification for his idealism. In this light, his return to quasi-Hartlianism was a return to more concrete and more justifyable grounds. Hartlianism was a safer philosophy in which to embody his hopes. Appropriate to this intent, Coleridge's statements in the third section emphasize the pleasures found in the Hartlian system, moral instruction is mentioned only in passing.

The form of Coleridge's Hartlian statement is appropriate to his own inhibitions. He was probably aware that his own example was not the best proof of the virtues of the mind. Thus he explains his shortcomings in terms of his removal from good sensations--the exception that proves the rule. And he relies on a projected demonstration to reach the point where, having acknowledged moral obligation, he can feel assured of his joy.

Coleridge, then, in "Frost at Midnight" is made self-conscious of the operation of his mind. In that situation he is forced to judge his thoughts. Though he never embraces subjective idealism, he approaches it in 1798. But he is soon led back to safer ground in Hartlianism. And the ease with which he radically shifts his viewpoint with so little alteration is a good indication of his ability to "hedge" in his conversation poems.

"France: An Ode" (February, 1798) is perhaps the most direct approach Coleridge ever took in reconciling his personal poetic vision with the external world to which he was morally obligated. In it he presents the claims his vision makes, and the claims social responsibility makes. Weighing the two, he comes to what he sees as a mutually agreeable accommodation. But that accomodation is a modest statement; ideals, in this instance freedom, wrought by his poetic experience fall before the demand of social usefulness. His "Arguement" of the poem serves as a useful summary of this process.[9]

The first stanza is "An invocation to those objects in Nature the contemplation of which had inspired the Poet with a devotional love of Liberty." In other words, Coleridge

celebrates the process by which he comes to universal knowledge, his eolian visitations. The second stanza, "The exultation of the Poet at the commencement of the French Revolution," reflects his pleasure when his vision appears vindicated by concrete events. The evils the Revolution fostered are the subject of stanza three. "Reason, indeed, began to suggest many apprehensions:" reality presented its evidence against his ideals. In the fourth stanza, the evidence becomes overwhelming. Since his vision has been proven false, in the prosaic world, he must accommodate his vision within the realities of that world. The fifth stanza is that attempt. The "Arguement" is worth quoting in full. Stanza five is,

> An address to Liberty, in which the Poet expresses his conviction that those feelings and that grand ideal of Freedom which the mind attains by its contemplation of its individual nature, and of the sublime surrounding objects (see Stanza the First) do not belong to men, as a society, nor can possibly be either gratified or realised, under any form of human government; but belong to the individual man, so far as he is pure, and inflamed with the love and adoration of God in Nature."

In one sentence, he denies the validity of his vision in the prosaic, objective world. His discoveries cannot serve as a spring to action. The significance of his original title, "The Recantation: An Ode," transcends politics. The conclusion of "France: An Ode" is a striking contrast to his conclusion in "Reflections on Having Left a Place of Retirement" and "To a Young Friend." In the latter, he merely said that the poetic vision must be acted upon to be valid.

Coleridge never denies that the ideal he sees is real. Coleridge is at his strongest, since he can assert the truth of

his ideal in the face of contrary evidence. But he denies his ideal utility. There is no possibility of unity and that prospect must have been withering. Thus, it is no surprise to soon find Coleridge back in his poetic dell in "Fears in Solitude."

"Fears in Solitude" (April 1798) stands at about the same altitude of poetic confidence as "Reflections on Having Left a Place of Retirement." But where "Reflections on Having Left a Place of Retirement" was on the upward slope, the approach to his poetic peak, "Fears in Solitude" is on the descending slope, not far from the abyss of despair that would cut off his poetic career. In "Reflections on Having Left a Place of Retirement," Coleridge looked upward with confidence toward future expectations brought about by assurance that his poetic discoveries were valid. In "Fears in Solitude," he looks down toward humble domestic occupations, bidding what seems a sad, permanent farewell to Parnassus.

The parallel structure of the two poems does much to suggest their comparison. In "Fears in Solitude," Coleridge has returned to his poetic dell. Presumably, it serves the same purpose it did in "Reflections on Having Left a Place of Retirement," defense of the poetic mode.

"Fears in Solitude" begins with a description of the landscape of his location, his poetic dell. Again Coleridge describes the influence of the dell on his spirit. But where he was intimately involved in the process in "Reflections on Having Left a Place of Retirement," he now carefully distances himself from the process. He projects the influence

on another person, which is, of course, Coleridge in disguise. Coleridge is careful to project in that person a moral image.

> Oh! 'tis a quiet spirit-healing nook!
> Which all, methinks would love; but chiefly he,
> The humble man, who, in his youthful years,
> Knew just so much folly, as had made
> His early manhood more securely wise! ll. 12-16

Coleridge's detatchment indicates his lack of confidence. And his statement is an attempt to justify himself in terms of his earliest entreaties to empiricism. Coleridge has not forgotten his earlier motto, "Let follies past to future care incite" ("Quae Nocent Docent").

Coleridge continues with a description of the eolian process:

> Here he might lie . . .
> While . . .
> . . .
> Sweet influences trembled o'er his frame;
> And he, with many feelings, many thoughts,
> Made up a meditative joy, and found
> Religious meanings in the forms of Nature!
> And so, his senses gradually wrapt
> In a half sleep, he dreams of better worlds,
> And dreaming he hears thee still, O singing lark.
> ll. 17-27

His aspirations are "<u>dreams</u> of better worlds," as repetition suggests. And his dreams are sharply contrasted to the phenomena of the real world represented by the lark. He can hear the lark, objective reality, <u>despite</u> the fact that he is lost in the clouds. Reference to "France: An Ode" further restricts the value of his visions. There, fine feelings are useless to the exigencies of the corporal world. Again in "Fears in Solitude," poetic discoveries cannot be justified.

Coleridge's implied recognition of these limitations again forces him to reconcile his own personal interests, represented by the pleasant dreams, with his social obligation, represented by his patriotic obligations during the alarm of an invasion:

> My God! it is a melancholy thing
> For such a man, who would full fain preserve
> His soul in calmness, yet perforce must feel
> For all his human brethern--O my God!
> It weighs upon the heart, that he must think
> What uproar and what strife may now be stirring
> This way or that way o'er these silent hills--
> Invasion. . . . ll. 29-36

Coleridge was presented with a similar situation in "Reflections on Having Left a Place of Retirement:"

> Ah! quiet Dell! dear Cot, and Mount sublime!
> I was constrain'd to quit you. Was it right,
> While my unnumber'd brethern toil'd and bled,
> That I should dream . . . ? ll. 43-46

In the earlier instance his feelings were a spur to action. In "Fears in Solitude," the confrontation of poetic vision and moral obligation was not followed by a confident assertion of hopes and activity. Rather what follows is a ranting jeremiad. Its content represents the world as a grinding machine that maims human bodies and souls. But its tone implies Coleridge's powerlessness and frustration. He can only rail.

His lament ended, Coleridge reviews his development to show that he is really a true Briton. Here, more blatantly than anywhere else, he uses Hartlianism to justify his opinion and his existence. England, he proclaims was the source of all influences in his life:

> . . . O my Mother Isle!
> How shouldst thou prove aught else but dear and holy
> To me, who from thy lakes and mountain-hill,
> Thy clouds, thy quiet dales, thy rocks and seas,
> Have drunk in all my intellectual life,

> All sweet sensations, all ennobling thoughts,
> All adoration of the God in Nature,
> All lovely and all honourable things,
> Whatever makes this mortal spirit feel
> The joy and greatness of its future being?
> There lives nor form nor feeling in my soul
> Unborrowed from my country! O divine
> And beauteous island! thou hast been my sole
> And most magnificent temple, in which
> I walk with awe, and sing my stately songs,
> Loving the God that made me!-- ll. 182-197

This quote is rather extensive, but it aply shows the lengths Coleridge would go to, to justify himself.

Coleridge is brought back to consciousness by the setting sun. And realizing the hour, he begins to leave the dell. As he heads home, he stops again on the mount of inspiration. "I find myself upon the brow, and pause/Startled!" (ll. 211-212). But his exaltation is moderated. He does not see divinity imaged in nature. Instead, the world presented in "this burst of prospect" seems "like society," "Conversing with the mind, and giving it/A livelier impulse and a dance of thought" (ll. 219-220).. Coleridge's house is also in view. He is reminded of his social responsibility. His vision has made him "worthy for society." His poetic experience in "Fears in Solitude" produces sufficient effacement rather than energy. And Coleridge, with a final adieu to the dell, returns to domestic responsibility.

CHAPTER SIX

Coleridge's poetry diminishes significantly after July 1798, both in quantity and quality. But that date is not when Coleridge's interest in poetry ended. Though he was not producing poetry, he was certainly working with it (on Lyrical Ballads). And several significant poems were yet to be written, among them "Dejection: An Ode" (4 April 1802). It might seem that his change in activity was a result of his conclusions in "Fears in Solitude." But, despite the future influence of those conclusions, for the present, specific needs focused his attention on matters other than new poems. One need was to prepare for his fall trip to Germany, which he had fixed upon in the spring of 1798. Another need was to prepare Lyrical Ballads for publication. This entailed negotiations between Wordsworth, Cottle and himself, as well as accommodations between Wordsworth and himself. Finally, once in Germany, Coleridge's attempt to assimilate all that he could filled his hours. Coleridge was not retreating from poetry, he was simply occupied by other matters.

However, during this interruption, numerous influences reached him that did lead to his poetic decline. The most debilitating influence on his poetic drive was the mental habits he cultivated while he was at work in Germany. As E. K. Chambers recounts, Coleridge was very busy in Germany,

especially in his studies at Göttingen (12 February 1799 onward). Collecting materials for a projected life of Lessing came to occupy his time exclusively. And Coleridge pursued these researches with an uncharacteristic assiduousness. The influence of this changed life style is worth careful attention. It is clear that Coleridge had special values vested in this project. Coleridge's hard work was first intended to justify the inconvenience and expense to family and friends that his trip incurred. But as Coleridge succeeded in asserting his will toward this goal, the positive results that accrued began to argue for the validity of this mode as a general principle of perception and action.

Coleridge had accumulated debts with friends. The immediate value of the Lessing work was to make himself solvent. But the more general goals, less immediate but equally significant, were to prove himself "industrious" instead of lax, "reflective" rather than impulsive, and to prove himself a man of "erudition" and "genius" rather than eccentricity.

> Coleridge . . . explained that, with reading and transcribing from eight to ten hours a day, it would still take him into June to finish collecting materials for a work, no doubt that on Lessing, which alone could save them from embarrasment and debt, and would also establish his character for industry and erudition, and he hoped, also for reflection and genius.[1]

Coleridge was trying to justify himself. All the socially acceptable values are incorporated into his actions. His attempt is seen in the slight flavor of asceticism in his life: "At Gottingen, he took cheap lodgings 'in a damned dirty hole in the Burg Strasse' and bought his own food at a cook shop."[2]

His efforts were an attempt to justify himself by a return to the Cloisters of "Quae Nocent Docent." Coleridge's specific accomplishments must certainly have suggested that this method of study had a more general validity. It certainly provided him with a sense of worth. Perhaps, after all, this was an appropriate life style. Unconsciously this study had tested and proved empirical convention. Now it seemed the empirical mode did hold the promise of self fulfillment and the fulfillment of social obligation.

With Coleridge's renewed hopes for the empirical mode came a reassertion of reason and a denial of imagination. Thomas Poole warned Coleridge of the power of his imagination. He said it caused a debility that many friends of Coleridge "'falsely called irresolution.'" Coleridge acknowledged the truth of Poole's assertion and "hopes if he cannot cure it, to suspend its operation for the next three months."[3] His attempt foreshadowed the future where poetry would be put aside for "abstruser musings."

The nature of Coleridge's work and his environment had an inevitable effect on him. It was much more abstract. And Coleridge could not compensate for its one-sidedness, as he had in the past, by spending time in the country. Though he still traveled, he had less time to range about the countryside. Instead, he spent most of his time in libraries and towns. In sum, his study and a lack of variety in his pursuits generated a frame of mind that was not suited to poetic production. And it was a frame of mind that was to characterize him for the rest of his life. His response to the news of his son's

death indicates his state of mind. His response was

> one less of grief than of intellectual perplexity. "For the death of the baby I have not wept," he wrote; and again "The few, the slow, the quiet tears which I shed are the accompaniments of high and solemn thought, not the workings of pain or sorrow." He turned into the fields and mused on the riddles of life. . . .[4]

Coleridge's interest began to shift to abstract conceptions rather than the concrete apprehension of poetry. Though he continually mocked metaphysics, "he spent thirty pounds on buying books, chiefly on metaphysics." And the particular value he hopes to derive from study of those books is moral assurance. They were purchased "'with a view to the one work to which I hope to dedicate in silence the prime of my life'."[5] No emphasis is necessary to bring out the orthodox values vested in this statement. He hopes to consecrate his life by serious endeavour which bears no trace of egotism. He is trying to justify himself by his self-effacement and advocacy of socially acceptable values. Another passage characterizes Coleridge's humility. He subscribed a letter to his wife, "'after the antique principles of Religion, unsophisticated by philosophy'."[6] Whether he meant it or not is uncertain, but to have said it must have felt good.

It is no wonder that Coleridge's poetry declined following his trip to Germany. He had abdicated his poetic mode to accept a more orthodox life. But this solution was too easy. For Coleridge discovers in "Dejection: An Ode" just what his "abstruser musings" from 1798 to 1802 have meant.

"Dejection: An Ode" (4 April 1802) describes a situation in which the eolian process has broken down. The sensations are there but Coleridge remains unaffected; for all the influence it has, the eolian lute "better far were mute" (l. 8). Coleridge recalls that the moon he sees, "the New-moon winter bright/And overspread with phantom light," is supposed to foretell of a storm, and he wishes it were already here. Its more violent sensations might arouse him. His comment implies that the eolian system is still intact and that he is just less sensative. Presumably stronger sensations will break through and again stir him. However, Coleridge would be satisfied if it only removed his pain:

> And oh! that even now the gust were swelling,
> And the slant night-shower driving loud and fast!
> Those sounds which oft have raised me, whilst they awed,
> And sent my soul abroad,
> Might now perhaps their wonted impulse give,
> Might startle this dull pain, and make it move and live!
> ll. 15-20

The second stanza makes clear Coleridge's problem: he is remote from his feelings. He is unmoved by sensations. He intellectually comprehends sensations, but he is emotionally untouched: "I see them [various scenes] all so exceedingly fair/I see, not feel, how beautiful they are!" (ll. 37-38). His grief "finds no natural outlet, no relief,/In word, or sigh, or tear--" (ll. 22-23). As Coleridge indicated in "The Dungeon" (1798), this is a dangerous mental condition. Possibly:

> Each pore and natural outlet shrivell'd up
> . . .
> His energies roll back upon his heart,
> And stagnate and corrupt; til changed to poison
> They break out on him like a loathsome plague-spot.
> ll. 6-10

Coleridge concludes that stimulation will not serve (as it had to before) to raise him from his emotional coma. And the reason why is significant; he spontaneously asserts that the values of stimulation reside not in objective phenomena but in his own subjective perception.[7] As he says in stanza three:

> My genial spirits fail;
> And what can these phenomena avail
> To lift the smothering weight from off my breast?
> It were a vain endeavour,
> Though I should gaze forever
> 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.

The importance of this assertion cannot be underestimated. In it he denies the process by which some intrinsic quality in nature "informs the soul." The Hartlian-eolian system is dead. In stanza four, he declares:

> O Lady! we receive but what we give,
> And in our life alone does Nature live.

And what follows is a brief celebration of the mind, the shaping imagination.

Having metaphorically hypothesized value as an infusion of a spiritual quality, he goes on to prove that this quality is joy that comes from "the purest heart" (here again, he sanctifies the imagination by a statement of consecration). When man is infused with that joy and embraces nature--"weds it"--the world is transformed. "Nature gives us in dower/A new Earth and a new Heaven,/Undreamt of by the sensual and the proud" (ll. 68-76). Coleridge's visions, then, are his own subjective creations, a possibility that he was so careful to avoid for moral reasons. Quick reference to earlier works will

indicate how heretical his new belief is. Before reality rested in God-created matter. Then his poetic visions only revealed objective fact. Truth was concrete.

Inevitably, Coleridge's celebration flows into an acknowledgement that, though his dreams have been beautiful, they have not been truth. Speaking of the role of joy in his life, he admits that it confused him and inspired a false optimism:

> 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.
> ll. 76-81

Joy could help him over adversity, but in a false way. Just as it had in his college days, adversity became translated into fantasies of fulfillment. Hope was morally objectionable because it was delusion.

Despite the implied moral repugnance of subjectivism, Coleridge laments the loss of his "Shaping spirit of Imagination" (l. 86). Without that spirit he ached. But the alternative, though morally feasable, is unsatisfying. A world without imagination is essentially the world of "Quae Nocent Docent." But painful experience has taught Coleridge that it is an unsatisfactory world:

> 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. ll. 86-93

Empiricism, the life style he established late in 1798, offers no solace. It only infects. But only empiricism is justifiable.

Faced with this dilemma, Coleridge cries out and tries to dismiss the demon:

> Hence, viper thoughts, that coil around my mind,
> Reality's dark dream!
> I turn from you, . . . ll. 94-96

Coleridge returns to a fit of poetic frenzy. The storm has come. It is easy to appreciate Coleridge's fear, distaste and despair. For the first time he has wholly confronted his values. And the terrible dilemma he faces is truly "Realities dark dream"—the truth that his values were irreconcilable. The dream was real, he saw his values in their full significance. And the dream was dark because the truth hurt, because his prospects were dismal. The oppression he suffers under the truth is clearly expressed in "The Night-mare Death in Life" (also titled "Reality's Dark Dream" 1803?):

> I know 'tis but a dream, yet feel more anguish
> Than if 'twere truth. It has been often so:
> Must I die under it? Is no one near?
> Will no one hear these stifled groans and wake me?

Even then he is trying to put his world together without facing the truth. But denying it does not help; no one wakes him.

In "Dejection: An Ode," Coleridge's response to the threat is also to deny it. Coleridge spends the rest of the poem trying to dismiss the dream. He presents an imaginative vision of love and sentiment to attest to the value of joy. Presumably he could not vindicate joy more concretely.

"Dejection: An Ode," then, is Coleridge's response to reality. It is his acknowledgement of the loss of poetic joy without compensation. It is his hurt resignation to the derangement of abstruser musings.

Needless to say, with the admission made that his visions were subjective, Coleridge's poetic career was all but ended. All his significant poetry in which imagination serves as a tool of discovery and expression was finished. All that was left was orthodoxy, or at least prosaic researches. Beverly Fields evaluates Coleridge's dilemma:

> In "Dejection," the cost, he felt, of subduing the emotions by means of the intellect, had grown too great; . . . The fact is that these "researches" could not possibly have engaged his intellect without disturbing his emotions. The effort to arrive at an ontological premise took him perilously close to the precipice where Kant himself had to back away: the heights of independent and lonely self assertion that were the result of the conviction that existence proceeds essence--that man is free not only to assert himself but also create himself; and in despair, in order to avoid the leap of Empedocles, Coleridge like Montaigne before him took instead the leap of faith.[8]

It is not coincidence that in late 1803 Coleridge decided to have his children baptized. Coleridge's attempt to vindicate his poetic vision had failed.

NOTES

CHAPTER ONE

[1]Walter Jackson Bate, Coleridge (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1968), p. 146, et passim.

[2]Henry Duff Traill, Coleridge (Republished, Detroit: Gale Research Co., 1968 [first edition, 1884]), p. 65.

[3]Bate, Coleridge, p. ix.

[4]Thomas McFarland, Coleridge and the Pantheist Tradition (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969), p. xxviii.

[5]Kathleen Coburn, "Poet into Servant," Proceedings and Transactions, Royal Society of Canada, LIV (1960), ii, p. 10.

[6]Bate, Coleridge, pp. 150-152, p. 94.

[7]Basil Willey, Nineteenth Century Studies: Coleridge to Matthew Arnold (New York: Harper & Row, 1966), p. 4.

[8]Derek Stanford, "Coleridge as Poet and Philosopher of Love," English, XIII (1960), p. 4.

[9]J. B. Beer, Coleridge, the Visionary (London: Chatto and Windus, 1959), p. 31.

[10]George Heyburn Gilpin Jr., "Visions of Joy," Dissertation Abstracts, 28 (1967):1784A-85A, (Rice).

[11]J. A. Appleyard, Coleridge's Philosophy of Literature: The Development of a Concept of Poetry, 1791-1819 (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1965), p. 9.

[12]Bate, Coleridge, p. 8.

[13]Collected Letters of Samuel Taylor Coleridge, ed. Earl Leslie Griggs (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1956), Vol. 1, p. 40, p. 76.

[14]Collected Letters, 1, p. 18.

[15]Bate, Coleridge, p. 1.

[16]His uncle's deference toward Coleridge is typical of the adulation and privilege Coleridge received: he ". . . spoilt [sic] him by treating him as a prodogy, and letting him talk and drink at coffee-houses and taverns beyond his years." (E. K. Chambers, Samuel Taylor Coleridge [Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1938], p. 7.).

[17]Lawrence Hanson, The Life of S. T. Coleridge: The Early Years (New York: Oxford University Press, 1939), p. 2.

[18]Hanson believes that Coleridge, as well as his friends, Lamb and Wordsworth ". . . seem to have been at some pains to draw a pathetic picture of the 'liveried school-boy,' the 'poor friendless boy' whose few acquaintences soon tired of his visits and neglected him" (Early Years, p. 17). "The conditions at the school must indeed have seemed grim to a newcomer", as Hanson admits, but compared to the advantages accrued, those hardships seemed less serious (Early Years, p. 17). Chambers is more sympathetic with Coleridge. He does believe that some portraits of suffering were overdrawn, that Coleridge "was not quite so friendless as Lamb thought." "But," he concludes, "no doubt the boy was lonely enough" (Chambers, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, pp. 8-9).

[19]Chambers, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, p. 11.

[20]Beverly Fields, Reality's Dark Dream: Dejection in Coleridge (: Kent State University Press, 1967), p. 13.

[21]Collected Letters, 1, p. 62.

[22]Collected Letters, 1, p. 42.

[23]Collected Letters, 1, p. 96.

[24]Bate, Coleridge, p. 2.

[25]Stanford, "Coleridge . . . Poet . . . of Love," p. 4.

[26]Gilpin, "Visions of Joy," p. 1784A.

[27]Lucyle Werkmeister, "The Early Coleridge: His 'Rage for Metaphysics'," Harvard Theological Review, LIV, p. 119.

[28]Coleridge was simply advocating eudomonism, the belief that pleasure and pain can be the basis of an ethic. In an eudomonistic teleology, right actions necessarily lead to pleasure and vice to pains. A series of entries in his notebooks (The Notebooks of Samuel Taylor Coleridge, ed. Kathleen Coburn, Vol.1, 1794-1804, Text New York: Pantheon Books, 1957).

> From the narrow path of virtue pleasure leads us to more flowery fields, and the Pain meets & chides our wandering--
> --of how many pleasures, of what lasting happiness is pain the Parent of Woe, the Womb!
> (item no. 17, no pagination)

> Real Pain can alone cure us of imaginary ills! We feel a thousand miseries till we are lucky enough to feel Misery. (item no. 28)

> Affliction cometh not forth from the dust, neither doth trouble spring out of the ground. Job, V. 6.
> (item no. 7)

[29]At an early age, this compulsion was given added impetus by his superiors. For a period of time, Coleridge, influenced by Voltaire and Erasmus Darwin, "sported" with atheism, a game abruptly ended by Boyer: "Boyer, who must have been regarding this era of mysticism and skepticism with considerable impatience, at last fell upon his metaphysical--atheistic pupil and administered a sound flogging." Coleridge's later response indicates the power of orthodoxy: "this particular punishment . . . earned Coleridge's gratitude in after years. He said that it effectually drove all temptation to continue infidel from his mind" (Hanson, Early Years, p. 22).

[30]One principle cause usually cited is Coleridge's introduction to the poetry of William Lysle Bowles. v. Lucyle Werkmeister, "Coleridge, Bowles, and 'Feelings of the Heart'," Anglia, LXXVIII (1960), pp. 55-73.

[31]Bate, Coleridge, p. 196.

[32]Beers, Coleridge, The Visionary, p. 4.

[33]Bate, Coleridge, p. 145.

CHAPTER TWO

[1]Lawrence Hanson, The Life of S. T. Coleridge: The Early Years (New York: Oxford University Press, 1939), pp. 26-27.

[2]Walter Jackson Bate, Coleridge (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1968), p. 111.

[3]Hanson, p. 20.

[4]S. T. Coleridge, Poetical Works, ed. E. H. Coleridge (London: Oxford University Press, 1967), p. 9. All references are to poems in this edition. They will be handled in the text.

[5]cf. Alexander Pope, The Twickenham Edition Of The Poems Of Alexander Pope, gen. ed. John Butt (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1961), Vol. 1, "Pastoral Poetry And An Essay On Criticism," eds. E. Audra and Aubrey Williams. Essay On Criticism, i, ll. 50-52 and ll. 94-97 display interesting similarities to Coleridge's assertions in "To The Muse".

[6]Lucyle Werkmeister, "The Early Coleridge: His 'Rage for Metaphysics'," Harvard Theological Review, LIV, p. 106.

[7]v. Early English Lyrics, Amorous, Divine, Moral & Trivial, compiled and edited by E. K. Chambers & F. Sidgwick (New York: October House, 1967), p. 4, pp. 8-9.

[8]E. K. Chambers is perhaps in error when he says that Coleridge "probably did not himself share" the joys of Easter holidays (v. Samuel Taylor Coleridge [Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1938], p. 15). In his letter of 26 May 1787, Coleridge indicates the preparations he was making with great pleasure for other vacations (v. Collected Letters Of Samuel Taylor Coleridge, ed. Earl Leslie Griggs [Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1956], Vol. 1, p. 5.

[9]Lucyle Werkmeister, "Coleridge, Bowles, and 'Feelings of the Heart'," Anglia, LXXVIII (1960), p. 59.

[10]Werkmeister, "Coleridge, Bowles . . . ," p. 59.

[11]Bate, Coleridge, pp. 43-44.

[12]Bate, Coleridge, p. 44.

[13]Bate, Coleridge, p. 9.

[14]Bate, Coleridge, p. 79.

CHAPTER THREE

[1]Collected Letters Of Samuel Taylor Coleridge, ed. Earl Leslie Griggs (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1956), Vol. 1, p. 163.

[2]Collected Letters, 1, pp. 112-115.

[3]Collected Letters, 1, p. 113.

[4]Collected Letters, 1, p.

[5]Collected Letters, 1, p. 137.

[6]Collected Letters, 1, p. 137.

[7]Bernard J. Paris, "Coleridge's 'The Eolian Harp'," Papers of the Michigan Academy of Science, Arts, and Letters, LI (1966), p. 571.

[8]Leonard W. Deen, "Coleridge and the Sources of Pantisocracy: Godwin, the Bible, and Hartley," Boston University Studies in English, V, p. 243.

[9]Deen, p. 239.

[10]Deen, p. 236.

[11]Collected Letters, 1, p. 97.

[12]Collected Letters, 1, p. 122.

[13]Collected Letters, 1, p. 97.

[14]Collected Letters, 1, p. 103. Again Coleridge's statements seem to echo An Essay On Criticism. cf. Alexander Pope, The Twickenham Edition Of The Poems Of Alexander Pope, gen.ed. John Butt (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1961), Vol. 1, "Pastoral Poetry and An Essay On Criticism," eds. E. Audra and Aubrey Williams.

[15]Contemporary opinion of Coleridge's Pantisocratic scheme was indeed bad. He constantly was on the defensive. For example, v. Collected Letters, 1, p. 112.

[16]Collected Letters, 1, p. 119.

[17]An elation that was short-lived. Returning home from the debate, he found Southey's letter suggesting that servants be included in the Pantisocracy. Needless to say, his suggestion was a gross violation of Pantisocratic principles.

[18]Collected Letters, 1, p. 115.

[19]J. A. Appleyard, Coleridge's Philosophy of Literature: The Development of a Concept of Poetry, 1791-1819 (Cambridge, Mass:.Harvard University Press, 1965), pp. 29-30.

[20]Appleyard, p. 34.

[21]Leo Marx, The Machine in the Garden (New York: Oxford University Press, 1970), p. 13.

[22]Walter Jackson Bate, Coleridge (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1968), p. 200.

CHAPTER FOUR

[1]Walter Jackson Bate, Coleridge (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1968), pp. 16-17.

[2]Perhaps just as Godwin's failure to account for feelings led Coleridge to prefer Hartley, so the intrinsically mechanistic system of Hartley, in the end, proved too unfeeling to satisfy Coleridge's needs. v. Bate, Coleridge, pp. 31-32.

[3]Bernard J. Paris, "Coleridge's 'The Eolian Harp'," Papers of the Michigan Academy of Science, Arts, and Letters, Vol. LI (1966), p. 573.

[4]Paris, p. 582.

[5]Paris, p. 580, n.

[6]Paris, p. 580.

[7]Paris, p. 581.

[8]Paris, p. 581.

[9]Bate, Coleridge, pp. 48-49.

[10]For a full analysis of the values vested in this tradition, see Leo Marx, The Machine in the Garden (New York: Oxford University Press, 1970). Derek Stanford also offers an explanation:

> The poets in the Coleridgean tradition looked at nature not to discover her but to escape from themselves, from their insufficiency, their awful weakness. But "only the brave," only the strong, finally "deserve the fair." In his escape from society (that touchstone of the norm and of adjustment), the Romantic poet seeks to hide himself, to lose himself within the womb of nature. In this oblivion of the self there is always ecstasy, but no lasting union is achieved.

CHAPTER FIVE

[1]"The Raven" has sometimes been called the first of the so-called supernatural poems.

[2]Coleridge sent a variant version of "This Lime-Tree Bower My Prison" to Southey in a letter (c. 17 July 1797). In it he footnotes the line, "On the wide view may gaze till all doth seem," with the assertion, "You remember, I am a Berkleian [sic]" (Collected Letters of Samuel Taylor Coleridge, ed. Earl Leslie Griggs [Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1956], Vol. 1, p. 335.)

[3]The opaqueness and resistance to criticism of "Kubla Khan," for example, lends credibility to the idea that it is a poem of pure imagination or a psychological curiosity. As a result, some studies try to show the similarities between the poem and other opium dreams to prove that the images are spontaneous. (v. John Charpentier, Coleridge the Sublime Somnabulust [New York: Dodd, Meade & Co., 1929]). Of course psychological studies abound. Beverly Fields, for example, tries to show that the images were personal symbols for Coleridge's libidinous states (Reality's Dark Dream: Dejection in Coleridge [:Kent State University Press, 1967]). S. K. Heninger, Jr. turns the poem into a hunting ground for archetypal patterns ("A Jungian Reading of 'Kubla Khan'," Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism, 18, pp. 358-367.). Even John L.Lowes consummate study of "The ways of the imagination" leads away from the poem as an expression of Coleridge's feelings (The Road to Zanadu [Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1927]). R. H. Fogle correctly assesses the problem. Proceeding from the idea expressed by some critics that "Kubla Khan" is a mysterious work, he points out that such an idea "discourages" critical analysis.

> And it likewise plays into the hands of those of our contemporaries who incline to look upon Romantic poetry as a kind of moonlight mist, which dissolves at the touch of reality and reason.
>
> . . . only recently, with the work of Elizabeth Schneider and others who have pointed the way, has it become possible to think of "Kubla Khan" as other than a kind of magnificient freak and to treat it as an intelligible poem which lies open to critical examination. ("The Romantic Unity of Kubla Khan," College English, 13, p. 13.)

The study he mentions is Elizabeth Schneider, Coleridge,Opium, and Kubla Khan (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1953). Earl Leslie Griggs' study ("Samuel Taylor Coleridge and Opium," Huntington Library Quarterly, 17, pp. 357-378) is also valuable. He presents facts and an unpublished contemporary account by Dunn's (Coleridge's chemist's) assistant.

[4]Walter Jackson Bate, Coleridge (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1968), p. 57.

[5]Bate, Coleridge, p. 58.

[6]Beverly Fields, Reality's Dark Dream: Dejection in Coleridge (:Kent State University Press, 1967), p. 84.

[7]Fields, p. 4.

[8]Interestingly enough, it is the poet's appearance, like the mariner's that indicates his threat.

[9]S. T. Coleridge, Poetical Works, ed. E. H. Coleridge (London: Oxford University Press, 1967), p. 244.

CHAPTER SIX

[1]E. K. Chambers, Samuel Taylor Coleridge (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1938), p. 111.

[2]Chambers, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, p. 111.

[3]Chambers, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, p. 111.

[4]Chambers, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, p. 110.

[5]Chambers, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, p. 107.

[6]Chambers, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, p. 109.

[7]He had also done so in "Lines written in the Album at Elbingerode in the Hartz Forest," 17 May 1799. But then the full weight of the statement was not realized. Indeed, Coleridge seemed almost pleased by his discovery.

> . . . I moved on
> In low and languid mood: for I had found
> That outward forms, the loftiest, still receive
> Their finer influence from the Life within;--
> Fair cyphers else: fair, but of import vague
> Or unconcerning, where the heart not finds
> History . . .

[8]Beverly Fields, Reality's Dark Dream: Dejection in Coleridge (:Kent State University Press, 1967), p. 106.

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